

MARY LEE

or The Yankee in Ireland

BY PAUL PEPPERGRASS, ESQ.

CHAPTER XXI.

MR. WEEKS GROWS ELOQUENT AFTER THE SECOND TUMBLER, AND MAKES A CRACK SPEECH, BUT DECLINES A DUEL WITH THE LIGHT-KEEPER AS NOT BEING IN HIS LINE.

"Well," said Weeks, making another start, "Zeph lived at a place called Pratt's Corner, five or six miles from Ducksville. She was kinder related to us somehow by the Bigelows, and mother and she terrible intimate. Zeph used to invite mother to prayer meetings, and mother, in return, sent Zeph presents of apple-sauce twice a year regular. Well, Zeph got to be considerable old, you know, and kinder wrinkly about the nose, and, as a matter of course, pious in proportion—but to balance the wrinkles, Zeph had the cash."

"Ho! ho!" cried the captain, did the wind blow from that quarter? "She had two sawmills of her own, and some twenty thousand dollars in railroad stocks besides. Well, I made up my mind one day to try if I couldn't induce Zeph to take a partner to help her manage her business affairs, and forthwith set about making the necessary preparations. I felt kinder green, then, you know, in the religious line, and so thought better attend two or three prayer meetings in Ducksville beforehand, to get into the way of it, like."

"Capital! capital!" ejaculated the captain. "When the day came for my first trial, I shaved clean as the razor would cut it, mounted a black suit and half yard crepe on my hat, and then put for Pratt's Corner. As I entered the room, Deacon Lovejoy was holding forth strong against the old Pope, (his favorite theme); so, sinking in with a face as grave as I could conveniently command, I sought a seat in the rear of the church, and my seat longed for Zeph, without seeming to notice who was in it. After the deacon resumed his chair, Zeph turned her head a little more sideways, and six she, in a low, touching voice, 'O Mr. Weeks, how I do rejoice to see you at last among the servants of the Lord.' 'Ah!' said I, looking up in her face kinder dreamy like—'Ah! how pleasant it is to dwell in the assembly of the faithful—O dear—'

"You've been a wanderer," said Zeph. "Alas! alas! I have, said I, looking up at her again. 'I've been a poor, sinful wanderer, seeking for the waters of life among the swamps and quagmires of a wicked world; but Heaven has praised, the blessed light hath come at last to guide me to the pure spring.' "Excellent! capital!" shouted the captain, rapping the table till the tumblers rang again. "Ha, ha, ha! by Jove, Weeks, you're a clever fellow. Gentlemen, let us postpone the courtship for the present; I see the ladies coming; and fill your glasses—fill them up; bumpers let them be—nothing less than bumpers. I give you Mr. Weeks and the stars and stripes forever."

The company rose and drank the toast with a hip, hip, hurrah! and nine times nine; and Kate, no longer able to restrain her curiosity, came tripping in from the drawing room, accompanied by half a dozen ladies, declaring she could sit no longer among a parcel of silly, mooping girls, with such distinguished company in the house. "Besides," she added, glancing archly at Mr. Weeks, "I want to hear a speech. I'm actually dying to hear a speech from a citizen of the great republic."

"Gentlemen, please take your seats," said Captain Petersham, with a wave of his hand; "I see Mr. Weeks is about to speak. As for you, ladies, you're a set of saucy, impudent baggage, to intrude upon us here over our cups."

"Mr. Weeks," "Mr. Weeks," "Mr. Weeks," was now heard from all parts of the room. "Ladies and gents," said the latter, rising slowly, and running one hand into his vest pocket, while he rested the other on the table—"ladies and gents, I ain't a goin to make a speech; I ain't a goin to sit in my line. But I ain't a goin to sit in my line, either, when such honor is done to the flag of my country. Ladies and gents, 'I'm an American born, of the true blue Puritan stock, a citizen of the model republic of the world.' 'Hear! hear!' 'I ain't given to braggin' much, I expect, and besides, it don't become a foreigner to brag of his country in a strange land; but speaking as this here gent and I were (turning to Father John) about religion, I ain't afraid to assert that you can't find, in all creation, a class of men professing a more enlarged and liberal views of religion than the merchants and traders of New England."

"We are liberal in all things where conscience merely is concerned, and conservative only with a view to preserve order in society, that trade may flourish under its protection. Yes, ladies and gents, whatever tends to cripple trade or impede the progress of social advancement, whether it be a new theory or an old theory, a new creed or an old creed, we struggle it. We struggle it as the heathens in olden times used to strangle deformed children. Business men in our country ain't so very particular as to difference in religious denomination. They don't care much whether the creed be Orthodox, Universalist, Episcopalian, or Baptist, if it only gives free scope to intellect, and a clear track for human progress. There's but one creed they object to; and that is—Excuse me, friend," said the speaker, turning to the priest—"that is the Roman Catholic. 'Hear him! hear him!' cried Captain Petersham; "that's the kind of talk I like." "Hear him! hear him!" echoed half a dozen others, following the lead. Well, the fact is, ladies and gents, they can't go that kinder doctrine, no how; it tightens them up so they can't move one way or other. The laws and rules of the Catholic Church hain't got no joints in 'em; you can't bend 'em no shape or form. Then they have what they call 'confession'; and if one of their society happens

to speculate beyond his means, the priest brings him right chook up for it; so he hain't got no chance to risk any thing in the way of trade, no how he can fix it. Again, if a Catholic happens to find a pocket book, for instance, with five or six thousand dollars in it, he must restore it to the owner right straight off, when, by waiting for twelve months or so, he might make a few hundreds by the use of it to start him in business. Such a creed as that, ladies and gents, no true American can tolerate. Well—he wouldn't deserve the name of a freeman if he did. The question for Americans is, not whether any particular form of religion be young or old, true or false, divine or human, but whether it suits the genius of the country; that's the question—the only question—to decide. Our country is young, ladies and gents; she has done little more, as yet, than just begun to develop her resources—the greatest resources of any nation throughout all universal space; and we feel it's our best policy to moderate the rigors of the gospel—to temper it, as it were—well, to make it as little exacting as possible. Hence our ministers, as a general thing, especially in cities and large towns, seldom preach about sin, or hell, or the ten commandments, or business subjects, because such themes are calculated to disturb and perplex business men, to the injury of trade. And we have long made up our minds that trade must be cared for, whatever else suffers. Yes, ladies and gents," continued the speaker, growing more animated as the old Irishmen began to warm up his blood, "our country is bound to go ahead of every other country in creation. Excuse me, ladies and gents, for speaking my sentiments right out on the subject; but they are my sentiments and the sentiments of every native born American."

"Bravo, bravo, Weeks!" cried the captain; his fat sides shaking as he clapped his hands. "Bravo—that's the talk."

"Yes," continued Weeks, "I'm a Yankee, and then sentiments are true blue Yankee sentiments. We ain't agoin to be fettered by any form of religion under the sun; if it don't encourage trade and commerce it don't suit us—that's the hull amount of it. Had the United States hung on to the old worn-out creeds of Europe, what should our people be now?—perhaps in no better condition than yourselves, ladies and gents, at this present moment."

"That's cool," muttered some one in an under tone. "It's a fact, nevertheless," said Weeks, catching the words. "The antiquated religion of our grandfathers would have acted like a strait-jacket on the nation, cramping its energies and stunting its growth. Had we not shaken ourselves free from the trammels both of pilgrim and priestly rules, could we have become in so short a period so intelligent, enterprising, and powerful a nation? Yes, ladies and gents, could we have flung our right arm across the Gulf, and laid hold of Mexico by the hair of the head, as we do now, and be ready to extend our left over your British American possessions, at any day or hour we please to take the trouble, and sweep them into our lap? I ask, ladies and gents, could we have done that?"

"Hurrah!" shouted the captain—"capital! glorious!" "I don't profess, ladies and gents," still continued Weeks, "to belong to any particular religious denomination myself. My creed is, 'a first cause and the perfectibility of man'; that's the length, breadth, and thickness of my religious belief, and I stand on that platform firm and flat-footed. Still, I go in for three things in the religious line, as strong as any man—almshouses, observance of the Sabbath, and reading the Bible. These are excellent things in their way, and ought to be encouraged by every man who loves order and likes to see trade flourish. But I can go no further; I can never believe, sir, (turning to the priest) that the Founder of Christianity intended a nation so intelligent, so intellectual, and so civilized as ours, should be bound down hand and foot by the strict rules of the gospel. No, sir; He intended we should moderate and adapt them as far as possible to the interests of the state and the requirements of society. With these ideas and these principles, ladies and gents, we are bound to go ahead—we must go ahead—we can't help it—prosperity forces itself upon us—we on our part have only 'to clear the track' for it. Nothing can bar our progress, for our destiny is universal empire. Nothing can stop our course—no obstacle, moral or physical, on earth or air, or sea, or laws. Yes, our energies are immense, and must be expended. Ladies and gents, were it necessary to bore the earth through, we should do it. Yes, by crackie, tunnel almighty creation to find an outlet for our resources."

"Glorious, glorious!" shouted the captain; "hurrah! for the stars and stripes!" Well, done, Weeks; bravo, bravo! my boy."

"And 'bravo, bravo!' echoed from all parts of the room; even the ladies stood up and waved their pocket handkerchiefs. In the midst of this general acclamation, however, and just as Mr. Weeks had hitched up his shoulders for another start, a loud, piercing shriek came from the entrance hall, which startled and silenced the noisy company in an instant. "What the fury is that?" demanded the captain. "Ho, there, James, Thomas—go instantly and see what that noise means."

"The same, sir." "And what do you want here, sir?" "Excuse me, sir, I—"

"I shan't excuse you, sir; you have no business in my house, you canting rascal; out of it instantly." "But the lady there, sir."

"Lady, what lady?" "Hush, hush! brother Tom," whispered Kate, catching him by the button-hole, and whispering in his ear; "it's Baby Deb."

"What one of the Hardwinkles?" "Yes, yes," she replied, convulsed with laughter; "her sister Rebecca—ha, ha, ha—her sister Rebecca—ha, ha!"

"Cease your folly, Kate, and tell me." "Well, she's—ha, ha!—gone off with—"

"Eloped?" "Yes, fled away with—O, dear!" "Rebecca Hardwinkle eloped?" "Nonsense, Kate, you're fooling me."

"It's a positive fact," said the light-hearted, mischief-loving girl—"ask Baby Deb, there, if you don't believe me."

"O, dear! O, dear!" cried the latter, clapping her hands; "she's gone! she's gone!"

"Well, there," ejaculated Weeks, when he heard what had taken place, "there I eloped! if that ain't going it strong, I don't know what is. By thunder, if this ain't the most infernal country—"

"Miss Hardwinkle," said the captain, kindly taking the disconsolate young lady by the arm, "let me conduct you to Aunt Willoughby's room. And tell me as we go how all this happened."

"Won't you send the police in search of her, captain? I came all the way with Mr. Sweet-soul to entreat you to send them."

"Certainly, certainly, my dear young lady, I shall do so forthwith; but how did it happen?"

"Why, a man came to the house in Ballymaghey where we had been distributing tracts, and told Rebecca a dying woman wanted to see her immediately, and have some spiritual conversation with her before she departed."

"Humph! I see; well?" "Well, poor Rebecca!—you know, captain, how eagerly she thirsted for the salvation of souls—"

"Yes, yes, I know all that—well?" "The instant the man delivered the message, she started off as quickly as if—"

"Yes, of course—I understand you; well?" "Her holy zeal, you know—"

"Never mind her zeal. What the fury have I to do with her zeal—excuse me, Miss Hardwinkle, but can't you tell me how she was carried off at once?"

"O, dear! you hurry me so—and then I'm almost dead with the fright."

"Listen to me—did you see her carried off?" "Yes, yes, did you actually see her?"

"With my own eyes." "Then how was she carried off?" "Behind a man! O, dear! O, dear!"

"Behind a man?" "Yes; in an—on—a— Here Deborah tried to blush and cover her face."

"Confound it, on what?" roared the captain, losing patience altogether. "Can't you speak at once if you wish me to take measure for your sister's recovery? How did he carry her off?"

"On a—on a—O, dear, on a pillow! behind him."

"Phew! on a pillow! Ha, ha! By the Lord Harry, that was a sight."

"It was shocking—in broad daylight too; O, dear!"

"There was villainous," said the captain, endeavoring to smother a laugh—"most atrocious to carry such a saintly young lady, and one so reserved in all her habits of life, over the open country in broad daylight, on a pillow."

"S' death! the scoundrel should be hung for it."

"And O, captain," said Deborah, "I can never forget the terrific shriek she gave, as she flew past me behind the inhuman wretch. It still rings in my ears—it was heartrending."

"Who could have played this trick, Kate?" said the captain, turning to his sister; "eh—what does it mean?"

"I confess I don't understand it."

"And how can I?" replied Kate, covering her face with her handkerchief; "how can I, if you don't?"

"Kate!" "Look up."

"There—what's the matter?" "This is some of your devilry."

"Mine!" "Yours. Come! come! no evasion now; you're in the plot, whatever it is, as sure as your name's Kate Petersham. It's exactly like you—you needn't try to look serious."

"Why, brother Tom?" "Paugh—brother Tom!—that won't do, Kate. I vow to Heaven, you're the most mischievous— but stop—wait a minute," he added, as a sudden thought seemed to strike him. "Miss Hardwinkle," said he, again approaching the afflicted young lady, "Miss Hardwinkle, do you remember to have seen the man before?"

"What, the wretch who—?" "Yes—have you any recollection of seeing him before?"

"No; for I could see nothing but his form, he flew by so fast; and besides, he kept whipping the wretched animal so dreadfully all the time."

"He, he, he!" chuckled Uncle Jerry to himself all alone on the sofa; "it must have been an amusing sight."

"You're a barbarous man," said Kate, overhearing the words as she passed him by—"you're a barbarous man to say so."

"O, you young trickster," exclaimed Uncle Jerry, shaking his finger at her as she turned back her laughing eyes upon him; "the plot is of your making, as sure as the sun."

"What was the color of his clothes?" again inquired the captain; "or did you see any thing remarkable in his form or appearance?"

"Nothing—I could see nothing distinctly, except that he wore a cap."

"A cap—what kind of cap?—black or blue?" "No, I rather think," replied Deborah, "it was a sort of fur cap; it looked rough rather, and somewhat high in the crown."

"Whitish?" "Yes. Something like a hare or rabbit-skin cap."

"That's enough!" exclaimed the captain; "that's quite enough; I know the villain! I know him! I suspected who he was from the beginning; he's the most daring, impudent, reckless rascal, that, in all Christendom."

"Who is he—who is he?" demanded half a dozen together. "Lanty Hanlon, of course; who else could he be? No man but Lanty in the three baronies would dare play such a trick."

"Lanty Hanlon," screamed Baby Deb, in semi-hysterics; "O, my gracious!"

"Don't be alarmed," said the captain; "your sister's in safe hands."

"O, no, no, captain; that man will murder her!" "Not he; nor hurt a hair of her head, either."

"Why, you surely mistake, captain," said several of the company. "Lanty Hanlon's the most notorious robber and wrangler in the whole neighborhood."

"I can show you a wound he gave me here on the top of my head, captain," said the colporteur, sneaking into the room.

"What, you! Out of my house, you scurvy vagabond," shouted the burly captain, collaring the Bible reader, and sending him head-foremost from the room. "Ho, there, fellows, James, Thomas, bundle out that snivelling rascal, the Lord Harry, if he comes in my sight again, I'll horsewhip him."

"Well, but, captain, you must be mistaken about this Hanlon," said one; "it was he beat my game-keeper."

"The same fellow robbed my salmon box," said another.

"And poached on my premises," said a third.

"Yes, and by crackie, it was that tarnation villain dressed me first with pocket-whiskey, and then danced me to death, at the wedding, put in Weeks."

"He the most provoking rascal, too, I ever met, for he keeps as cool as a cucumber all the while."

"Gentlemen," said the captain, "you may say what you please of Lanty Hanlon, and think what you please, too; but I know him better than the whole kit of you put together; and by the Lord Harry, he's one of the best specimens of his class I ever saw. He's an honest-hearted, reckless, rollicking, light-hearted Irishman, who likes his bit of fun as well as the best of us, and will have it if he can; but tell me the man ever knew Lanty to do a mean thing. He may have speared your salmon, and shot your game, and broken your bailiffs' head; but where's the harm in that? Can you call it a crime to kill the trout that swims in the mountain brooks, or the black cock that feeds on the mountain heather? What right have you to forbid a man to catch the trout that jumps in the stream before his own door, or kill the game that feeds on his own pasture? May the devil take such game laws, say I, and many the man that respects them never knew the taste of a white trout at breakfast, or a black cock at supper."

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HERSELF AND HIMSELF.

He sat down under the shade of the veranda, and taking off his hat, he wiped the perspiration from his forehead with the back of his hand, and then ran his fingers vigorously through his gray hair, combing it against the grain. His face told you many things, among others the following: That he was over fifty years of age; that he was of the Irish race; that there was grit in him; that he was hurried and in a bad humor; that something of an unpleasant and exasperating nature was crossing his mind, causing him to frown and scowl in a way that was not at all encouraging. While one of the darkest frowns was on his brow, a figure came into the open door of the dining room, in front of which he was sitting. A solid, matronly figure it was, of a woman still lingering in the autumn of middle age, but with many a silver streak in her thick, brown hair. There were lines across her forehead, and a look of pain in the kindly hazel eyes, and on the sweet though homely face lay the shadow of sorrow. She carried a towel which she handed to the perspiring man at whom she looked wistfully, asking in an emotionless matter of fact way:

"Will you wait for a drink of water or will you wait for tea?"

"I'll have the water now if you put a drop of something in it," he said in a pause, mapping his head and face with the towel and without turning to look at her. She re-entered the house and soon returned with the drink. She handed it to him in silence. In silence he finished it and gave her back the empty tumbler. Without a word she received it from him, but instead of going away she crossed her arms over the ample span of her apron and remained standing almost beside him. There she remained for full two minutes, neither of them speaking, Himself and Himself, man and wife, the partners of more than half a life-time—sharers in the weal or woe which had come to them, sharers now, to all appearances, in a common misfortune.

"Were you far?" asked Himself at length.

Himself frowned a dark and sullen frown and mumbled something about having been "far enough." It was not polite, but Himself did not show any sign of resentment. She meekly and silently turned away and went indoors.

Himself remained sitting under the veranda, evidently a prey to unhappy meditations. Though the rifts in the leafy screen of the aromas and eucalyptus groves he could see broad stretches of the level camp beyond. Through the long vistas of the peach orchard behind him the camp breezes came in from the South and fanned him. In the branches of the tall poplars near by, the doves were cooing the soft, low, flute-like coos which always seem to be a prelude to some sweet dirge for a love that is lost.

There was no other intrusion on the silence. Quiet, warm summer quiet, lay all around. The distant creak of the large gallopes, the wing of buildings where the men ate and slept, all were steeped in sun-glass and silence. The dogs slept peacefully under the veranda, the fowls lay quietly in their cool nests of clay under the peach trees, the stately chief of the turkey family was off duty and lay dreamily on his side among his people, solemnly holding his tongue, and for the moment troubling no one by himself with the conception of his individual importance. It was a scene good to look at. It spoke of comfort, order, industry, thrift and prosperity. But Himself, as he contemplated it, showed no sign of appreciation, although he was the lord of all he surveyed; it was all of his own making.

He it was who had built every wall, planted every tree, laid down every corral; not a brick, or least, or strand of wire, or grain of iron had not been magnificently heaped but represented a drop of his sweat or a thought of his busy brain, or a pulsation of his toughened heart. He had found it years ago—a gently sloping swell of the bosom of the Pampa—treeless, houseless, bare of all save the grasses; and now, after all the years, amid all the fruits of his endeavor, he sat there brooding in sullen anger.

At length turning his head an inch or two towards the open door, but keeping his eyes on the towel, he asked:

"Are you there?" "I am," came back the answer from Himself in even, quiet tones as she came forth from the house. Himself now put his elbows on his knees and looking away into the distance he said:

"I'm goin' to put a stop to this nonsense once for all. I'll let the scamps before they know where they are. They think they can defy me, because the law of the land, bad luck to it! gives them the right to squander a certain share of what we made by the sweat of our brows, you and me, but I'll go to a country where the law lets a man do what he likes with his own."

He paused, but Himself said nothing, although the pensive melancholy of her face grew visibly more intense.

"Yes," went on Himself presently, "you and me—we worked and slaved and struggled. From your marriage day until Tommy was a n't to school you and me never knew a day's idleness. I see you may a time with one of them at your skirt draggin' out of you, and another of 'em in your arms, while you were gettin' the meals. I see you stayin' up three nights at a time to make coffee for me and the men I had with me round in wet weather. You slaved, year in, year out, to get the price of a bit of land together, and if we prospered we deserved it."

"God was very good to us," said Himself. "We thought more about His goodness than times than we did after. Maybe that's the reason—"

"No, it isn't," broke in Himself, glaring round at her. "You're comin' over what the priest said at the other day. Don't be a parrot, woman. I think myself just as good a man now that I own four leagues of land as I did when I only owned half a league. It's the devilment that is in the country—borns that's changed things, and not us that's changed."

"God knows!" said Himself sighing. "I know!" insisted Himself. "Dang well I know where the trouble is! It's the curse that's on the country and

everything born in it is cur leave it. I'm not goin' to see the sons we reared a staped up nights and nights sickness, and that we held and hushed to sleep, and against us in love—I'm not goin' to be bullied by them to law by the scamps that I on me now like over-fed dogs out and go home, and I bully me if they dare. I'll come up before they feel."

Herself only sighed, and her chin with her right hand, sorrowfully at the ground. "I'm not goin' to stand er," continued Himself dropping at his toes and harping same idea. "I'll sell out of I'll talk to them—to the them. There's the sons we to the dogs. The three p to please themselves and I, me. I told you so at the and in to them now, sleep, and on you bye and bye."

"Indeed they're not!" Himself. "They have the of trouble have the girls, them, without makin' it for."

"Then why are they with the boys against me?" "They're not goin', if what can't you see, if the them sure they can't t' say. Herself with a break and fearless agony twitch brave face."

"That's right," grow "stand up for them. The for you, will they? A nic doin' it. Here we are in with an empty house—beca them we reared to stay their duty. Tell me, ho it since Tom was here las "

"He left last Tues weeks," replied Herself, face with her hands and one of the pillars of the "

"He did, and ever spongin' from Bridget's from Mary's to Ellen's here two days ago, beca a lazy-goody nothin'."

"He left at S' o'clock in the and never a foot he'll p door again while I own self raisin his voice an foot."

Herself shivered and leaped against the pil turned away from him. "I know where he went on Himself, he ston in his heart sh every line of his stern fa in every tone of his vo where to find him and to-day after breakfast, time he done this," said "I'll not have it happe month or two more f comin' home from scho led astray with bare ex regulate, right off the br "

"Don't, Jim, Jim," c "Oh, call the boy c don't. I can't bear it."

"Can't you! Well, bear worse than that, until you hear about pet. I found him wh him, down at Dunle's cards with a crew of the pulpit in his hand sh every one and come home wifused. He said a wo hound that he'll reme day."

"Oh me boy! me bo self, the big tears com fingers. "Oh Mary Mo us!"

"Aye and ask her s such a reneger. But with him. No man liv upon me before they're freed. The sneakin', c did he think he could changed and let him words—did he think stand that from him b and other backguardr he did, he made a bi stepped across him wit—once, twice, left a over each impudent e."

"Oh Jim—Jim—!" Himself, as she threv her husband's neck a on his knees. She w like a log at his feet were it not that his held her. He was utterly stupefied. It it was only by insti The shock drove the heart, and when it w with mingled throbs and despair. Himse pected, because he sionate to notice it, wounding her to the now, gazing on her st she was dead. He self believed the w with all his knowle heroism which he h ing heartache from d ing to conceal it to Himself could not a another light than Dead Limp, and H Himself dead!—for it was only by insti The shock drove the heart, and when it w with mingled throbs and despair. Himse pected, because he sionate to notice it, wounding her to the now, gazing on her st she was dead. He self believed the w with all his knowle heroism which he h ing heartache from d ing to conceal it to Himself could not a another light than Dead Limp, and H Himself dead!—for it was only by insti

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