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KATE ASHWOOD.

CHAPTER I.

No more the glassy brook reflects the day, But, choked with sedges, works its weedy way; Along the glades, a solitary guest, The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest; Amidst the desert walks the lapwing flies, And tires their echoes with unvaried cries. Sunk are thy bowers in shapeless ruin all, And the long grass o'er tops the mould'ring wall. GOLDSMITH.

Let us imagine ourselves for a while in the North of England, where a beautiful landscape lies before us: hill and dale as far as the eye can reach; the exquisite colour of the foliage contrasting well with the rich golden shade of the now ripe harvest. On one side stands the simple country church, beside it the pretty vicarage, half-smothered within its luxuriant decorations of roses.

In the distance, the river may be seen winding its fantastic way, till we lose sight of it in the valley. The merry voices of reapers may be heard in the fields. They are singing and talking while pursuing their daily avocations. The comfortable village speaks of peace and plenty. The whole scene is of a nature to soothe the troubled heart of man.

Not far from where we stand, on the slope of the hill, is Warrenstown, the seat of Mr. Ashwood. Let us take a stroll in that direction, and examine the place. The gate is very handsome, and leads into a fine avenue between rows of oak and elm trees. The house is a very large Elizabethan structure, covered with ivy. The arms of the family are cut in stone over the hall-door, and large mullioned windows tell of antiquity. But why are they barred up? why are panes broken? why is the avenue covered with weeds, and the pleasure-grounds a wilderness? Why has the whole place an air of desolation?—And yet within these walls was often heard a merry song and a hearty laugh; and oftentimes did the old oak-board bend under the weight of blithe and gay dancers. To give an answer to all these questions, we must take a retrospective glance of the Ashwood family. The story is not without interest; and we shall first introduce our reader to the three daughters of Mr. Ashwood. Our tale opens on a lovely September morning, when Warrenstown was in its full beauty, before desolation or decay had entered there. These three sisters were seated in the drawing room, engaged in various amusing toils, and talking as girls ever will talk, of fine and wet weather, as the French say; which, however, is a very comprehensive term, as it includes small talk of every description. The subject at present under discussion is a ball given at the Hermitage two days ago by dear kind old Aunt Sarah.

'Kate,' said her sister Maria, 'tell us more of that handsome Irishman who was so very attentive to you. Did you ever meet him before?'

'Yes, at the Verners,' responded Kate; 'he is a cousin of Mrs. Verner's; you know she is Irish.'

'Well, tell me more of him; has he a brogue? Is he pleasant? What has he to say for himself? a good deal, I imagine, if we are to judge by the length of time his conversation lasted. I assure you you made yourself quite remarkable.'

'Well, I own he is agreeable,' said Kate; 'but you will soon have an opportunity of judging for yourself, as he will be here some day this week, as Mrs. Verner said she and her party would drive over.'

Maria was on the point of adding her remarks, when a ring was heard at the hall-door: and immediately after, Aunt Sarah, or as we shall call her, Miss Primrose, entered the room. She was attired in a plain black-and-white shepherd's plaid gown, a large black shawl, and simple straw bonnet, ornamented, or, more properly speaking, covered, by one band of black ribbon. These, with gray gloves, and a large pair of thickest walking-shoes, finished the toilette, which my readers will acknowledge was neither fashionable nor elegant. Good Miss Primrose had been engaged in many useful works that morning. She had been up betimes, inspected the schools, visited the poor and sick, distributed, from her well-stocked store-room, many pounds of tea and sugar, and warming clothing. Mrs. Ashwood and Miss Primrose were sisters, but there was little similarity between them either in appearance or character. Mrs. Ashwood had married when very young, and for some years had frequented a dashing worldly set in London; and gradually the old-fashioned steady principles laid down at the Hermitage had worn away, and she had often laughed at the odd notions entertained by her family of life, and the way to spend it with profit.

Aunt Sarah lived quietly at home with her maiden sister and two bachelor brothers; and as summer wore into winter, and winter again gave place to spring and summer, little changed at the Hermitage; and save that Aunt Sarah's hair grew white, and that Uncle John and Charles

became deaf, and by degrees lame and rheumatic, no one would have noticed the number of years that had passed since Aunt Sarah had figured at the balls at Shepstone, and the two brothers had danced at these reunions, and been speculated upon by managing mothers and young ladies tired of being called Miss. However, all to no effect; they obstinately persisted in adhering to bachelorhood, as the two sisters had preferred remaining the Miss Primroses, unfettered by any tie save the strong one of brotherly and sisterly affection. The nices loved good Aunt Sarah, and she was a welcome guest at Warrenstown, especially when any trouble or sorrow cast its dark shade over the usually bright abode. She had, to the astonishment and marvel of every one, given a ball for her nices; and the entertainment gave universal satisfaction. No fault could be found. The supper was excellent, music first rate, sufficient number of guests; and a spirit pervaded the whole which continued unflagged till an advanced hour in the morning.

And now we shall give a slight sketch of our hero and heroine; for we do not pretend to mystery, and admit at once that Kate Ashwood is to be the prima donna of the story; and the Irishman, whose name is Fitz James O'Brien, is to occupy the next place in the interest of the reader.

Kate Ashwood was just twenty, with a determined spirit, ardent and constant affections, and an energetic self-sacrificing temperament capable of making any great exertion for those she loved, and of taking pleasure in the very extent of her self-abnegation. She was tall and slight, with dark-brown eyes and black hair.—Such eyes that seemed to read one's inmost thoughts. She had been slightly impressed by the appearance of the handsome Irishman, as Maria called him; and now we must describe him to our readers.

Fitz-James O'Brien came of an old but impoverished Irish family. He still held in name many broad acres, and numbers of half clad tenants called him their landlord; but a very respectable mortgage cleared off half the rents; and two-thirds of the remainder were swallowed up in quit-rents, tithes, and family charges, so that of a property nominally £3,000 a year, Fitz-James, on arriving at man's estate, really enjoyed only as many hundreds; but on this, however he contrived to keep hunters, and even an occasional good bottle was cracked for his convivial guests. He was, however, good-natured, agreeable, and decidedly clever. He had a fine manly figure, and an irresistible fund of humor, and like all strangers in a country neighborhood, had been the observed of all observers during his stay with his cousin Mrs. Verner, formerly Geraldine Fitz-Gerald, who had been considered a belle at many an Irish ball. The world thought she had done very well for herself, she having made a first rate match; Mr. Verner, an Englishman of fortune, being the victim on the occasion. Victim he was generally styled, for never was a man more completely under petticoat government than was Mr. Verner; he, perhaps, being less aware of the subjection in which he was kept, than were his neighbors, who looked on the unfortunate man with the commiseration not unmixt with contempt usually lavished on those individuals who, undecided themselves in everything, are generally ruled by some strong-minded character.

We shall now return to our first acquaintances at Warrenstown on the morning alluded to.—Aunt Sarah's appearance caused no change in the conversation or pursuits of her nices.—Kate was much bantered on account of Fitz-James; and she laughed and blushed as most young ladies have always done from time immemorial when undergoing such persecutions.—Fanny sat near the window, painting. She was copying a beautiful Cenci, with whose soft melancholy eyes and sad sweet smile we are all well acquainted. She loved her art with enthusiasm; and as, day after day, she sat at her easel, the hours appeared to fly, so absorbed was she in the delightful pursuit. Fanny seemed in many respects older than her years—she was only eighteen; but her manner and countenance were so composed and calm, and she had such a look of deep thought in her face, that a careless observer would have added at least four or five years to her age. She was the idol of the house; all looked to her in difficulties for advice and assistance. Now and then a look of sadness crossed her face, as if pained by melancholy recollections.

Aunt Sarah came to discuss some matters relating to a book-club which had for some time been established in the neighborhood. She was very literary, and would have much preferred giving herself up to such pursuits to join in gay doings; but with her, self was always a secondary object, and she sympathized with her nices in any amusement they might enjoy. The conversation by degrees became very animated, and

three girls told their aunt all about their gardening and archery and riding-excursions. The good creature entered into their plans and amusements, and seemed almost to grow young again while listening to them. Before she took her leave of them she proposed a day's frolic in the shape of a picnic, which was gladly acceded to.

There had once existed a magnificent abbey in the neighborhood, celebrated in days long gone by for the piety and charity of its inmates, and the ruins were frequently the resort of the lovers of the picturesque. They were beautifully situated on the side of a slope. Nobody heeds them at this present moment, for a railway company has bought the land, and the train rushes through the beautiful old refectory. The cloisters have been turned into sheds; and patent-grease pots occupy the place of holy water in consecrated stone vessels. The chapel where now resounds the shrill voice of the railway-whistle, in days gone by echoed to the sound of psalms and litanies. Guards and porters have taken the place of veiled nuns. Oh, if their ghosts could arise and see the desecration! Such, however, is the utilitarian spirit of this our story, when Aunt Sarah proposed the picnic, these changes had not been made, and this beautiful spot was to be their rendezvous.

Next morning, as the girls were at their ordinary occupations, Mrs. Verner entered the drawing-room accompanied by some friends, amongst them Fitz-James, who immediately congratulated himself on his good fortune in finding Kate at home. After remaining for a while in the drawing-room, the whole party proceeded to the dining-room. Fitz-James ingeniously contrived never to leave Kate's side during the whole visit. At lunch he—accidentally, of course—managed to secure the seat next hers. A walk in the garden was proposed. Kate discovered, while there, that the key of the boathouse had been forgotten, and proposed returning to the house to get it; and Mr. O'Brien could not, gallant gentleman as he was, do otherwise than offer to accompany Kate on her mission in search of the missing article. Mrs. Ashwood meanwhile continued talking to her visitors. Fitz-James commenced detailing to Kate all the beauties of Ireland, and the many attractions it presented to the visitor; asked her earnestly to induce some of her family to accompany her on a trip thither; and promised, should she do so, to spare no pains to render the visit agreeable.

Many other subjects for small-talk were exhausted, and yet renewed again. Meanwhile the following conversation was taking place between Mrs. Ashwood and Mrs. Verner.

'Can you tell me,' asked the first-named lady, 'something of young Staunton, who married Miss Wells? I am told she might have made a far better match. Mr. Scouring, of Swedenstown, was said to be paying her attentions. Would it not have been a much more suitable marriage?'

'Why, yet,' replied Mrs. Verner. 'Captain Staunton has nothing in the world but his pay; not a very agreeable prospect for futurity; and Mr. Scouring has a fine house, capital horses, and some say £5000 a-year. She was a goose, poor thing. I hear she said of him that he had no more brains than one of his stall-feds; that the only book she ever saw in his hands was a treatise on turnips; and that the only flower she knew him admire was rape-blossom.'

'And I understand,' said Mrs. Ashwood, 'that she told all her friends she never could love him; but, believe me, if she had married him, they would have got on very well together. According to Mrs. Malaprop, 'It is well to begin with a little aversion; and we all know, 'When poverty comes in at the door, love flies out at the window.' I am always trying to make my girls understand that, the man, of course, must be given some consideration in the affair, the accessories are, after all, the most important point. Don't you agree with me, Mrs. Verner?'

'Undoubtedly; a woman that has any judgment will soon get the upper hand. Poor Miss Wells was a nice creature, but showed such a want of sense. Happily such romantic cases are now very rare; they don't answer in these enlightened times. Whenever I see a woman tyrannised over, I always conclude that it is her own fault; some wives are so devoid of spirit. If a woman only asserts herself properly, she will soon have her own way.'

'I am quite of your opinion,' answered Mrs. Ashwood, 'and I have ever put it into practice in my own case. Do you remember Mr. Hernan, who was quartered with his regiment at Shepstone? He used to come here day after day; and I soon perceived he was much struck with Fanny. He, however, would not have answered at all; a younger son, with a younger son's usual portion of good looks, and nothing more. I accordingly assumed the utmost frigidity towards him, and my changed manner had the desired effect; for after a few more efforts on his part his visits ceased altogether.'

'But,' quickly rejoined Mrs. Verner, 'have you not heard of his good fortune? An aunt of his died lately, and left him sole legatee; he has now a very nice estate. He is on the point of being married to Lord Comally's only daughter; they have been engaged for several months. It is a curious story. She had lost her only brother about a year ago, and was greatly upset by it. She went to pay a visit to some friends in the neighborhood of her father's residence, and during her stay Mr. Hernan happened one day to make a morning-call. When she saw him she burst into tears—the likeness was so striking to her lost brother. This coincidence led to an acquaintance; he proposed shortly after, and was accepted, although her father had no expectation that he would inherit his aunt's property; and furthermore, the aunt was in perfect health at the time. The marriage was arranged to take place when one year should have elapsed after her brother's death; meanwhile this good fortune fell to his share.'

Poor Mrs. Ashwood! her countenance fell, and by degrees assumed an air of utter blankness as she listened to this romantic anecdote.—Was all her clever diplomacy to end thus?—How often she had congratulated herself on her good fortune in having succeeded in preventing this alliance, which now, when too late, she found would have turned out so well. Fanny had been sent to a friend's house in London, till Mr. Hernan's regiment quitted Shepstone. The poor girl had fretted much; she was deeply attached to him, and this occurrence had thrown a gloom over her young life.

Mrs. Verner mentioned in the course of conversation that she had a visit from Miss Primrose that morning, who had invited her and her party to the picnic at the abbey ruins.

'I am so glad,' she continued, 'that my cousin, Mr. O'Brien, paid me a visit this summer. He has had so much gaiety. He will have a good deal to talk of on his return to Ireland.'

'In what part of the country does he live?' asked Mrs. Ashwood.

'The south,' continued Mrs. Verner. 'He is the only surviving son of my uncle, and has a large property—Shanganahah Castle. In my uncle's time I well remember the merry hours I spent there. There are stables for forty horses; the hounds used to meet frequently before the hall-door, and half the county would be in to lunch. Then if the fox had the good luck, or rather I should say misfortune, to be killed in the place, the gentlemen all stayed for dinner, and as many as chose to do so slept there. We were often thirty at breakfast.'

Not a word of this was lost on Mrs. Ashwood, who had duly remarked Mr. O'Brien's attentions to Kate and she naturally thought the heir to such an establishment must be a very important personage, and her respect for him increased in proportion as these details were related.

Mrs. Verner and her friends soon after left. Mrs. Ashwood, who, although she had been made very miserable by hearing of Mr. Hernan's good fortune, was somewhat indemnified by contemplating the great happiness which she promised herself was in store for Kate.

The next day, and the next, Mr. O'Brien made his appearance, and he enjoyed the gratification of again and again sitting beside Kate, walking with her, talking to her, basking in the sunshine of her smile. Hours passed on unheeded. On the last of these days, which was the eve of the picnic, Fitz-James had ridden over to Warrenstown as early as the convenience of life admitted, and the day was far advanced ere it occurred to him that he should return to his hostess, who might possibly have been wondering at his absence. Those hours had passed pleasantly for both Kate and Fitz-James; and when he looked at his watch and exclaimed, 'Why, by Jove it is just six o'clock!' she started and unguardedly said, 'The day has passed so quickly!'—a flattering announcement, rather, for a young gentleman in the peculiar position in which Fitz-James then was. For, reader, you who have doubtless experienced similar sensations, will easily perceive that our hero was in love, and your sympathy, I hope, is enlisted on his behalf, while he listens to this flattering admission on the part of the lady of his choice. As he rode down the avenue he turned his head, and thought he saw (but it might have been fancy) a slight figure on the hall doorsteps, with brown hair and dark eyes, which seemed to follow him on his way.

(To be Continued.)

THE CURE OF ARS.—At Macoon every one is full of the miracles constantly occurring at Ars. A little boy, the son of a baker, whose limbs were very distorted, was carried there, and completely cured. Some months ago, when the stone on which pilgrims so love to kneel was raised, several persons stooped down and picked up the earth; some of them, putting it into water, swallowed it, and were miraculously cured of their diseases. It has been announced that the Postulator of the cause of the holy Cure is to be the Abbe Boscordon, the secretary of Cardinal Villacourt.

"CHURCH AND STATE."

(Concluded.)

Did I mean by the Church, the manifestation in another shape of the State or of the individual; did I mean a Bishop of Ely, trembling before Queen Elizabeth as she shrieks at him,—'Proud Prelate, I made you, and by G—, if you resist me, I will unmake you still; did I mean an Erastian establishment like that of England; a sect like that congregation of Baptist preachers who decreed some days since in upper Missouri that absolute obedience is due to every mandate of the civil power, that this is the meaning of the saying of St. Paul: Let every soul be subject to the higher powers; who said there, as the voice of their Synod, the thing they had to proclaim: that the civil power is supreme, and that from its commands there is no appeal, (which, if it be true, it is wonderful what use they could conceive to be in any Church synods at all, and why they did not then and there dissolve themselves, and give place;) did I mean individual preachers who have long since ceased trying to control their flocks that pay them their salaries, and now merely echo the watch-words of the day;—did I mean Henry Ward Beecher's denying the Sermon on the Mount to the wealthy merchant-traders loling in their cushioned pews, proclaiming the blessedness of the rich, who study the tastes and habits of their congregations, not to check their vices, but to find some ingenious palliation for follies that call aloud for some new Jernal to scourge them from the earth; did I mean any mere human organization, the mere reflex, the mere creature of the people or the State, I should indeed deserve to be set down for a madman for claiming supremacy for the Spiritual Order in their name. But when I claim supremacy for the Spiritual Order, that supremacy which no man can deny it who believes in Religion, who believes in a God, who believes that the soul is above the body, that the body was made for the soul, not the soul for the body, I point to my representative of the Spiritual Order, and having shown that the Spiritual Order must necessarily be supreme, I say, show me that the Church has once overstepped the limits of her authority, that she has once oppressed the State, oppressed humanity, mistaken her rights, stepped, in any department, beyond her sphere.

As far as politics go, I am willing to allow this question to be answered even by those who have studied her history only from the pages of her bitterest foes. The student of Gibbon cannot but be struck at the immense benefits she conferred upon Europe when the old landmarks were swept away, and a new civilization had to be constructed on the ruins of the old; the student of Guizot will be told that during ten centuries of her sway in Europe, when she was the nursery of nations, she was truly the instrument of God.

But in nothing has she betrayed her trust, or given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. She has always known her sphere, and in defining it and setting the limits to her empire, it is for those who claim that she is fallible to show that she has ever erred.

I say that she has not done so once; no, not even in staking out the narrow line that separates the domain of theology from that of science; not, I maintain, when her Congregations refused to allow the Copernican theory of the Universe to be taught, nor when Pope Zachary wrote to St. Benedict and condemned the doctrine of the existence of the antipodes as heretical and false.

These two instances I select because they are the strongest that can be adduced by those that deny the supremacy of the Church, deny that she is competent to say what is her legitimate domain, and where the rights of the politician, of the man of science, of the individual begin.

In regard to Pope Zachary, it is true, I believe, that, in a letter to St. Benedict, he condemns, not the doctrine of the anti-podes, but a doctrine of the anti-podes. It appears that some priest had been preaching in Germany that there exists to the earth another side, where live another race of men, with another sun and moon. Now, this doctrine taught then, was heretical. Of course, science had nothing to do with it; it was mere hypothesis. In the then state of scientific knowledge, more than ten centuries ago, such talk about the anti-podes was the merest guess-work, the merest trash and rubbish, and as to the other sun and moon, it was nonsense, of course. But the reason that Pope Zachary condemned the doctrine is this: 'The universal belief of the Ancients was that, whatever might be the shape of the earth, it was surrounded by a belt of fire. As to its shape, as to its size, all sorts of speculative opinions were entertained, but all that entertained the supposition of the existence of anti-podes maintained that between them and the dwellers of our hemisphere all communication was, and ever had been, a simply impossible thing. The doctrine, therefore, as then taught—and it was the wildest speculation, mind, with-