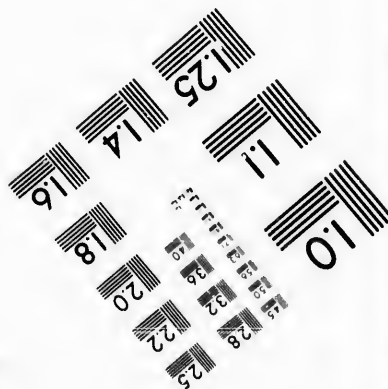
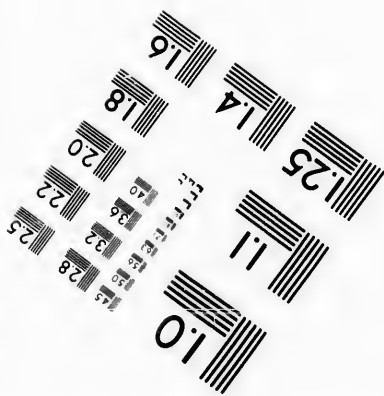
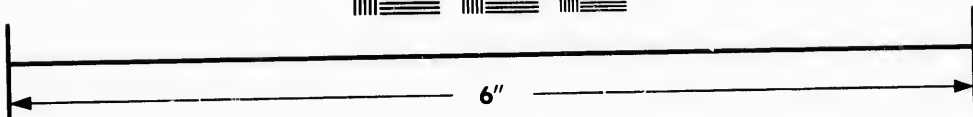
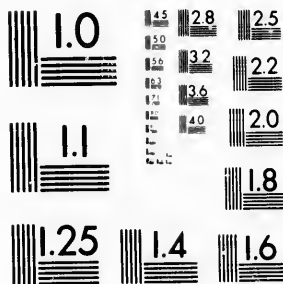


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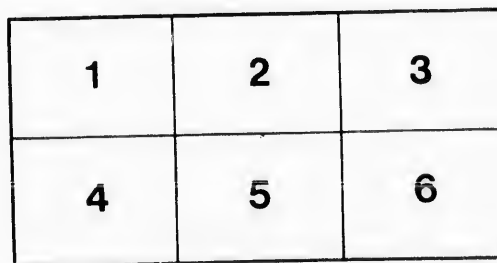
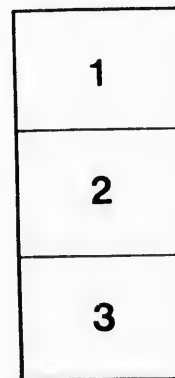
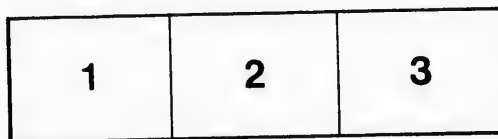
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MAUREEN DHU:

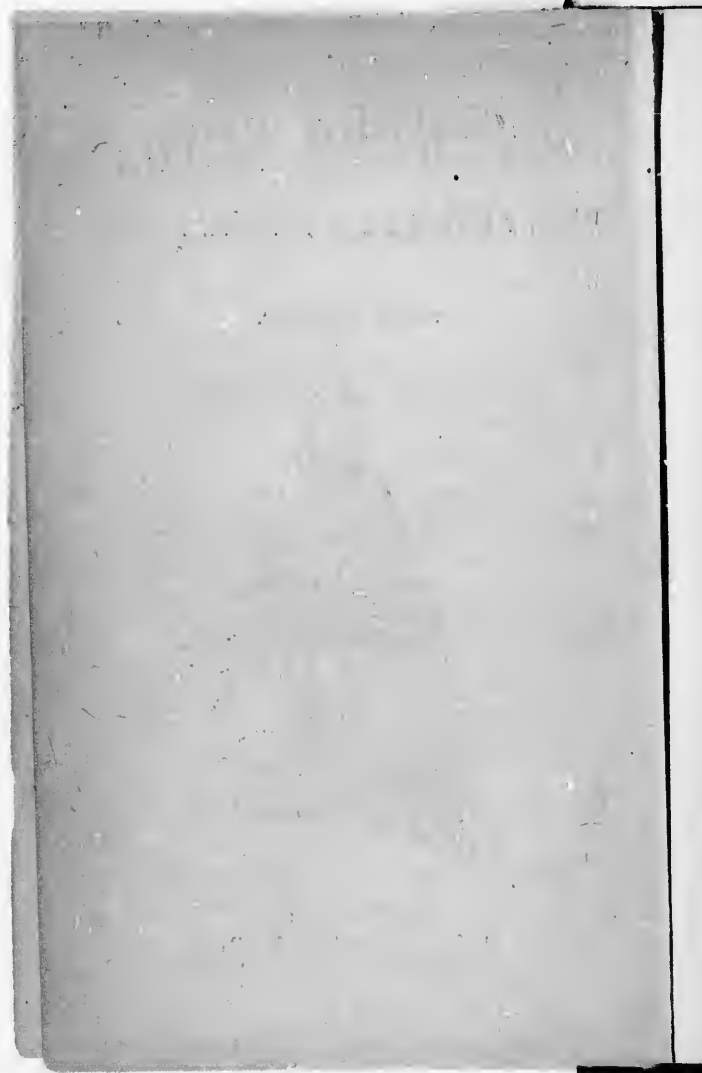
A TALE OF THE CLADDAGH.

By MRS. J. SADLIER.



NEW YORK:
D. & J. SADLIER & CO.

IN THE CLADDAGH. AT GALWAY.



MAUREEN DHU,
THE ADMIRAL'S DAUGHTER.

A TALE OF THE

CLADDAGH OF GALWAY.

✓
By Mrs. J. SADLIER,

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AUTHRESS OF "HEIRESS OF KILORGAN;" "BLAKES AND FLANAGANS;"
"WILLIE BURKE;" "NEW LIGHTS;" "THE CONFEDERATE CHIEF-
TAINS;" "ELINOR FRESTON;" "BESSIE CONWAY;" "THE CON-
FESSIONS OF AN APOSTATE;" "CON O'REGAN;" "OLD
AND NEW;" "THE HERMIT OF THE ROCK;" "THE
OLD HOUSE BY THE BOYNE;" "AUNT
HONOR'S KEEPSAKE;" &c., &c.

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PREFACE.

THE primitive and singular people who form the subject of this story have long been an object of curiosity to the ethnologist, and of special interest to the traveler who chanced upon them in their remote sea-washed home. Age after age have they dwelt by the side of Galway Bay, asserting and maintaining supreme control over its fishing—a right which is theirs by a prescription older than the oldest tradition. For ages long they have been the near neighbors of the people of Galway, yet are even now as distinct from them, as jealous of their intrusion amongst them, and as strongly marked in their peculiarities as they ever were. Time, and the resistless force of modern "progress," may be silently softening down some of the prejudices to which they were so obstinately wedded, and effacing some of the broadest lines of separation between them and their neighbors, but, intrenched in the stronghold of their harsh *patois*, and entirely devoted to their hereditary avocations, the main features of their character remain the same as in ages past.

My object in laying the scene of the present story amongst this fishing community is, I think, sufficiently manifest. Many years have passed away since a good Dominican father, who had spent years of his life in the old convent near the Claddagh,

gave me an account of the singular people who dwell there, with whose ways he was so thoroughly conversant that his description was a truly graphic one. I was much interested at the time, and, at the suggestion of an esteemed reverend friend who was present, I promised to throw together, some day, in the form of a story, the scattered and fragmentary details thus afforded me of an isolated people whose origin is lost in the night of Time. From Hall's "Ireland," and other works treating of that country, I obtained yet other particulars of the Claddagh and its inhabitants, from all of which I have endeavored to make up as faithful a picture thereof as a stranger could be expected to produce. That I have to some extent succeeded, I have reason to hope, from the testimony of those who, unlike myself, have had the opportunity of studying the manners and customs of the Claddagh people in their daily life. I have brought prominently out the religious element which underlies the groundwork of their remarkable character, and the moral and social virtues so common amongst them, all the more noteworthy for the wild calling which generally makes men lawless and licentious. I have shown these Claddagh men brave and bold, yet kindly, generous, and humane—their women chaste as the snow, and proof against all temptation, notwithstanding the uncommon personal attractions for which many of them are remarkable, at least in youth. Hoping that "Maureen Dhu," and the men and women of the Claddagh, will make friends for themselves as they ought to do, I leave them and my book to the reader's calm judgment.

M. A. S.

NEW YORK, October, 1869.

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M. A. S.

MAUREEN DHU, THE ADMIRAL'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER I.

READER, were you ever in Galway, the queer, quaint, foreign-looking old capital of the Western province of Ireland,—the half-Norman, half-Spanish "City of the Tribes?" If you were not, you can hardly conceive any idea of its singularity. An old, old Irish city, with few or no Irish features—more Spanish than Irish in its general character, at least in the style of its antique architecture, yet elaborately adorned with the heraldic devices of the first Norman settlers, whose stronghold it was. From end to end of the narrow, irregular streets may be seen old mansions, many of them in tolerably good preservation, presenting the arched doors and gateways, the double entrances, and flagged courtyards, the balconies and other exterior characteristics of old Spain during the Moorish period. It is a city in

which the old and the new are strangely, oddly mingled—a city abounding in striking contrasts, and full of romantic associations. What a mine of the richest romance lies hidden away in its storied lanes and purlieus, amongst the mouldering mansions of departed Blakes and Luyches, Brownes and Frenches, and all the others of the fourteen Norman tribes who for centuries lived like princes within the strong walls of Galway, defended by their fourteen towers, corresponding to the number of the tribes! Some future Scott may work this mine for the entertainment of another generation—less than a master-hand would but spoil the glorious work. For us, we have but to glance at the noble old city as we pass through its crowded marts, its quiet, old-fashioned courts, and the rows of half-fortified houses which form many of its streets. Without the ancient walls, but still within the borough limits, about a quarter of a mile from the city, on the banks of the Galway river, a little above the point where it merges in the noble bay, there is a portion of the West suburbs to which we would conduct the reader, albeit that the place is none of the most attractive. On the side of a long, low hill running parallel with the river may be seen a dense and confused mass of thatched cottages, apparently huddled together without any idea of order or regularity, yet stretching so far along the river and up the hill that you cannot help calling the place a town. It has, indeed, two good piers running out into the stream so as to form a safe harbor, and river

craft of every size are moored here and there along the shore, while scores of smaller ones are drawn up upon the strand. At first sight neither streets nor lanes are visible, but a closer inspection shows that the town contains both in any number. Narrow and irregular they are to be sure, and sorely puzzling, no doubt, to the luckless stranger who finds himself threading their maze, yet there they are, crossing and recrossing, running hither and thither in every direction, and in every possible shape, in utter defiance of geometry and mathematics. The houses are all pretty nearly of the same class, mud walls, many of them neatly whitewashed, moreover, and straw-thatched roofs. In some instances, and they are not few, there is a grotesque imitation of the Spanish houses of the neighboring city, and it is a curious sight to see the arched doorway and double entrance with its little paved court under such a roof. It is, indeed, the quaintest and queerest of suburban villages, and has little, except its singularity, to attract attention. The atmosphere is, however, so strongly impregnate with odors from the finny tribes that few strangers will, from choice, remain any time in the village, yet if the natural repugnance to fishy smells be so far overcome as to visit the interior of the cottages, they will be found neat and comfortable to an uncommon degree. The fishing tackle, too, which, amongst the less tidy housewives, might encumber the small dwelling, is here carefully ranged on the outer walls, giving universal token of the trade and calling of the vil-

lagers. The low ground between the village and the river presents the appearance of a miniature dockyard, where boats of all sizes are either in process of building or undergoing repairs. The little quays are clean and handsome, and there is nothing squalid in the appearance of the hardy, active men so busily employed about the boats. The attire of fishermen is pretty much the same, all the civilized world over, and those of whom we speak have little to distinguish them from others of their calling. A little more brawny and of more muscular proportions they may be, and they are certainly a good-looking race of men take them as you will—fine, bold athletic fellows as you would meet in a summer-day's travel. But go up amongst their cottages, dear reader,—make your way, if you can, through the labyrinthine maze of the narrow streets and lanes, and look at the wives and daughters of these stalwart fishermen in their coarse stuff bodices and skirts of blue or red, their dark features shaded by the colored cotton kerchief, which, on working days, forms the head-dress of young and old, and you will say that they are the finest women you have seen, take them for all in all. A striking uniformity of costume prevails amongst them, and the same physical traits are more or less common to all. They speak a language which neither you nor I can understand. Even the Irish-speaking people of the surrounding country have enough to do to hold *parlance* with them, notwithstanding that their language is a *patois* of the old Gaelic. Every-

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thing marks them out as a peculiar people, a community within themselves, and such they really are; and as we see them now so have they been for ages. That village, reader,—which at the time of our story contained some five thousand souls,—is THE CLADDAGH, from time immemorial the abode of the Galway fishermen, the self-constituted lords of Galway Bay, (at least of its piscatorial treasures,) the sturdy upholders of primitive customs, and the determined opponents of all innovation. It is their proud boast that they are descended from some ancient colony, probably of Spaniards, very early settled in that most advantageous position, and they will permit no stranger to take up his abode within their borders. Their manners and customs are wholly different, as may well be supposed, from those of the surrounding population, and as for laws and government, they have all within themselves. The municipal authorities of the adjoining city have as little control over the sturdy Claddagh men within their limits as though they were thousands of miles away. They make laws for themselves, and annually elect an executive, consisting of two functionaries of an amphibious nature, to wit, Admiral and Vice-Admiral on the aquatic element, Mayor, and Deputy-Mayor on land. The sole power is, however, vested in the former both on sea and land during the term of his office, his subordinate being only to act in case of any emergency, such as sickness, death, or absence. Never was ruler endowed with higher powers than the admiral of the

Claddagh fleet, and beyond his decision, in the frequent disputes of the villagers, no one ever thinks of going. In fact, there is no temporal authority to whom they *could* appeal, there being, as we have said, no other tribunal recognized by the community. It does not follow, however, that the mayor-admiral has absolute and unlimited control over his subjects. On the contrary, he himself, as well as the entire population of the village, are subject to another authority located in the Dominican convent on the top of the hill overlooking the village. The good monks of St. Mary's of the Hill are, and have been for ages back, the spiritual directors of this wild community, and the kind, fatherly Abbot is the lord-paramount of the Claddagh. Numberless are the ties that bind the simple fishermen and their families to their spiritual fathers on the hill, and, to do them justice, they never miss an opportunity of showing their grateful affection. Nor have the good Dominicans any reason to be ashamed of their humble flock, for in no part of Ireland are the Christian and social virtues more faithfully or more generally practised than in the fishing village of the Claddagh. Politics and science, literature and art, war and rumors of war, none of them give any trouble to the stout miners who draw forth the finny treasures of Galway Bay. Wrapped up in the impenetrable folds of their own harsh, dissonant patois, and wholly engrossed during the six working days by the care of their boats and nets, and the various movements of the finny tribes,

they neither know nor care what is passing in the world around and beyond them.

About thirteen or fourteen years ago, just before the awful period of the famine, the mayor of the Claddagh was a hale old man named Randal O'Hara, than whom a bolder heart or keener eye never steered a boat round Kilcorgan Point. To these qualifications were added the strictest probity, and the most generous nature, rough and rugged at times, yet ever honest and sincere. It was commonly said of Randal O'Hara—better known to his neighbors as Randal More*—that "his bark was worse than his bite"—and so it was indeed, for Randal seldom spoke a civil word, and just as seldom *did* an uncivil act. He possessed a large share of sound common sense, a ready wit, and a clear head, and would altogether have been a very able man had he lived in a more artificial state of society with the additional advantage of education. As it was he was the ruling spirit of the Claddagh, and had for many successive years been re-elected to the chief command,—a situation, indeed, of much toil and trouble, with little or no gain. Good part of his days, when on shore, were occupied in the exercise of his judicial functions, which, however, was no great loss to him or his family, inasmuch as he had two grown-up sons to mend his nets and keep his jolly hooker in good condition. Barney and Yeman were fine fellows—youthful *fac similes* of their worthy sire—handsome,

* Big Randal.

brave, gay and witty—in high favor amongst the Claddagh lasses, and the pride of their father's heart. Mother they had none, for the good woman who once held that relation to them had for many years been a tenant of the neighboring graveyard. Still her loss was comparatively unfeared in the little household she had ruled so well, for her mother, old Vara Halliday, stepped into her vacant shoes, immediately after her death, and although her government was now and then somewhat arbitrary, yet affairs went on so well under her administration that no one felt disposed to complain. Least of all Maureen Dhu, the Admiral's only daughter, the spoiled pet of the family, and her grandmother's sole *confidante* in the important business of the *ménage* and the still more important affairs of the market, for it was Vara who disposed of all the fish reserved by Randal for the Galway market. When a larger "take" than usual fell to the lot of the family, the greater part was conveyed by the men to some of the Clare sea-ports, or even up the Shannon to "Timerick of the Ships."

In the fishing season (chiefly the fall and winter) old Vara was every day to be found at her accustomed stand in the ancient fish market, just outside one of the gates of Galway. There she was nearly as influential a person as in her own, or rather her son-in-law's cottage, under St. Mary's Hill. Every one knew Vara Halliday, both purchasers and sellers, and, to say the truth, the respect due to her exalted

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station as mother-in-law to the Admiral and Comptroller of his household, was considerably increased by her own marvellous power of speech. Vara's tongue was, indeed, proverbial not only in the Claddagh, but even in the city, and I am free to say, it was as sharp an instrument as ever laid edge to mortal body. In her quiescent state, Vara Halliday was rather taciturn than otherwise, but her vocal organs once let loose, under the influence of some strong emotion,—such, for instance, as some Galway shopkeeper undervaluing her hake or haddock,—and, oh! ye powers! they were a perfect avalanche crushing all before them, and driving the unlucky offender to hide his diminished head in some neighboring domicile beyond the gate. In physical prowess, Vara was a match for most men, and there was not a coal-heaver in Galway city that would not have shrunk from the application of her fists to his dusky countenance.

Of the Admiral's family it remains only to speak of Maureen. Who that ever saw that flower of Galway maidens would undertake to describe her in words? As well might one think to describe the face of Galway Bay when it mirrors the drifting clouds of heaven. The dark Spanish beauty of Maureen's face had early obtained for her the sobriquet of *Dhu* or *d'ark*, and this, with her tall slender form, lithe and graceful as the young willow, and agile as a fawn, gave the idea of a gypsy girl—arch, coquetish, and somewhat haughty. Such as nature made

her was Maureen Dhu, for art had never done aught to curb her wayward temper, direct her strong, clear mind, or drill her symmetrical form into what is called *grace*. Yet graceful she was in all her motions, and despite the coarse, common garb which from week to week she wore. On Sundays, indeed, when Maureen went up the hill with her grandmother to hear Mass in the convent chapel no one would think of calling her costume unpicturesque. The dress, it is true, was but a gaudy printed calico, or bright-colored stuff, and the head-dress a rich silk handkerchief tied loosely under her chin, yet the general effect was that which a painter would have loved, and admirably suited Maureen's wild beauty. It may well be believed that the Admiral's daughter, such as we have described her, exercised fully as much control over the fishermen, at least the young ones, as the Admiral himself. Her smile or her frown—and the latter was dark as the former was bright—had wondrous power over the hearts of men. Even those who were beyond the age of *passional attraction* could seldom resist the "dark witchery" of Maureen's glance. But truth to tell, the girl's influence was generally, we might almost say *always*, of a salutary nature. With all her outward appearance of levity and girlish pride, she was at heart a very different person, and this was well understood by her simple honest neighbors who valued her accordingly. The women of the Claddagh, both maids and matrons, are famous for their modesty and

virtue, notwithstanding the free-and-easy manner peculiar to their wild life, and the light-hearted merriment for which they are distinguished never degenerates into coarseness or obscenity. Their *interior* is as pure as their *exterior* is rough and unpolished, and the vices which so often tarnish the lustre of fashionable dames in courtly and other circles are amongst them unknown, undreamed of.* It is little to say, then, that Maureen Dhu was modest—say rather that the snow-white foam of her own dear waters was not purer in heart and mind. Wayward and wilful she was at times,—and little wonder when the whole village helped her own

*The common testimony of all writers on the subject, Protestant as well as Catholic, goes to prove the high moral character of this primitive Catholic community. Hardiman, Mrs. Hall, Sir Francis Bond Head, and other Protestant writers mention it with respect. The latter, in particular, states on the authority of the local police that such a thing as the birth of an illegitimate child was wholly unknown in the Claddagh. A short extract from his "Fortnight in Ireland" may not be uninteresting to the reader, as it serves to prove our position:

"The sergeant in charge of the Claddagh station now arrived," says Sir Francis, "and gave his opinion as follows:

Q. "How long have you been in charge of the Claddagh village?"

A. "I have been nine years here, for five years of which I have been in charge of Claddagh."

Q. "During that time has there been an illegitimate child born there?"

A. "No, I have never heard of it, and if it had happened I should have been sure to have heard of it, as they wouldn't have allowed the woman to remain in the village."

Q. "Have you ever heard of any that occurred before your arrival?"

A. No, Sir."

Sir Francis thereupon expressed his great surprise, and no wonder, for where would he find such a high state of morals in any part of Protestant England, much less in a rude fishing village, where the women, as in the Claddagh, are singularly handsome for their state in life?

family to spoil her,—but bold or unwomanly never, never.

The only thing that Maureen had been ever taught from books was her catechism, and if she didn't know that well, why no one in Galway or its suburbs knew it. Many a pretty premium had Maureen got up in the convent chapel for her knowledge of the Christian Doctrine, ay! long before she had made her first communion, and these prizes were still carefully treasured in the family, with a few others gained by the boys, and proudly exhibited by old Vara at every fitting (or unfitting) opportunity.

At the time when Maureen is brought before the reader she had barely completed her eighteenth year. It is pretty certain that, like the buxom widow of Irish song,

“Of lovers she had a full score,
Or more.”

but if so, they *loved* at a respectful distance, and, moreover, “never told their love,” never dared to tell it, for Maureen Dhu was queen of the Claddagh and looked down from a queenly height on the jolly young fishermen of the village, ay! even those who were in highest favor with her father and brothers, and were their chosen comrades on sea and shore. It is true she had given a pair of beads to young Brien Kinely when, in a brisk gale, off Black Head, he had helped to save her father's boat, and perchance the lives of those most dear to her. The tears were in her eyes when she thanked the gallant fellow, and

his heart beat high and his brown cheek glowed at the thought that Maureen might then, if ever, smile on his suit. But when next they met, Maureen was as gay, as proud, and as indifferent as ever, and poor Brien's heart sank within him. Though bold and brave to his fellow-men or when danger threatened, in Maureen's presence he was timid and subdued, because he loved her with fear and trembling. And the froward girl seemed to delight in exhibiting that power which could thus change the lion into the lamb. Another of the slaves of this potent Nsiad was Shan Driscoll, who had also a claim on Maureen's gratitude, inasmuch as he had once brought her little favorite Nanno Kenny from the very bottom of the river when the child had sunk to rise no more. The king of those waters was Shan Driscoll, and so much of Maureen's own spirit had he that the neighbors thought she could not choose but love him—so tall and handsome, so proud, and bold, and reckless, yet full of fun and frolic. Surely if Maureen D'hu could be mated about the Claddagh, Shan Driscoll was just the man—he and none other. He was well to do in the world, too, for his father had lately quitted this mortal life, leaving him the owner of a good-sized boat, or at least joint proprietor with his mother, for he was an only child. It chanced, moreover, that Shan was very often Maureen's partner in the frequent merry-makings where all were assembled. During the last May eve festivities she had seldom danced with any other, and when Midsummer came round it

was still the same, although Brien Kineely and at least half a dozen others put in their claim early in the day. Poor Brien! he had not the courage to persevere after Maureen's cool denial—wounded pride and slighted love fixed their fangs within his heart, and if he could have hated any human being it would have been Shan Driscoll, when jig after jig and reel after reel he saw him lead Maureen out, both of them looking so proud and so happy. There was many a fine young fellow there who shared more or less in Brien's feelings with regard to Shan on that particular evening, but none felt the grief and the mortification so deeply as he, for none had ventured to hope for so much.

Never had Brien taken more pains to set off his comely face and figure than on that St. John's Day, and he really looked quite attractive when, in his gala dress—white dimity overvest, blue rug jacket, plush knee breeches of the same color, a rich crimson silk handkerchief tied loosely on his neck, and a new caroline of the approved Claddagh fashion—broad-brimmed and low-crowned, shading his fresh, open countenance, he presented himself before his lady-love, blushing and timid as a young damsel.

Maureen was giving the last touch to her toilet at the little mirror in the kitchen-parlor of the household. A tight crimson boddice showed off to perfection the admirable symmetry of her form, and a long, full skirt of dark blue stuff fell in graceful folds to her feet—not so as to cover them, though, for

Maureen knew it would be a pity to conceal such tiny little shoes, with the whitest of cotton hose. Over her long dark tresses, neatly twisted around her head, she now placed a very pretty cap of wrought muslin trimmed with broad rich lace, rounded off at the ears and fastened with pins to the roll of her hair. Vara, already dressed in a somewhat similar costume, excepting only the cap, was superintending her grand-daughter's toilet, and had just been expressing her entire satisfaction when Brien's shadow darkened the doorway and reflected in the glass made Maureen turn quickly.

"Who's for the Cross?" said Brien; "Are *you* Maureen?—I saw your father and the boys pass half an hour ago."

"To be sure, avick! we're both going," said the grand-dame cheerily; "we'll be with you in a minute. Just look at Maureen, Brien!—isn't she a beauty?"

"Grandmother!" cried Maureen sharply, "what makes you talk so?—never mind her, Brien, but you go your ways—you'll see us there by-and-bye. We know the road ourselves."

The young man answered only by a reproachful look and a heavy sigh. His fond, admiring glance on entering had brought the blood to Maureen's cheek, and a bright smile to her coral lip, yet she met his sorrowful look with a cold, motionless stare, and his half-suppressed sigh with a low light laugh.

"Child!" said old Vara, in her commanding way,

"what do you mean?—why don't you speak to the young man civilly?"

"So I did, granny!"—and the haughty beauty smiled again, "if my words don't please him I can't help it—go your ways, I tell you, Brien!"

"I will, Maureen, I will!—don't say it again!" He was gone in an instant, and the girl stood a moment looking after him, so lost in deep thought that she heard nothing of her grandmother's sharp rebuke. Mechanically, as it were, she assisted the old woman to tie the "grinder*" on her head, and then threw the blue cloak around her shoulders.

"You're all ready now, granny!" she said in a dreamy voice.

"I am then," said the gentle matron, mimicking her tone; "I'm thinking it's not me that's in your head!—what airs you put on you, Maureen, in regard to that decent boy—you treat him as if he wasn't fit to wipe your shoes—all because of them black eyes and that bit of a face of yours—now, mark my words! Maureen—beauty doesn't last, and I'd advise you to make sure of some decent partner for life while you have the good chance. Tell me one thing, astore!—what fault have you to Brien Kineely?"

"Ne'er a fault at all, gran! but why don't you have him yourself, since you think so much of him?" and Maureen laughed as she took the old woman's arm,

*A sort of silk handkerchief of mixed red and yellow, much in use amongst the Irish peasantry.

and hurried her away in the direction of the pipes and fiddles which were already regaling the ears of a dense crowd assembled at the Cross, and making the toes of the young to tingle. The scene was so gay and the bustle of preparation so great that Vara quite forgot the cutting retort that was on her lips. The weather was fine as balmy air and midsummer sun could make it. The river and the broad bay were glowing with the hues of sunset, and the quaint old city with its grotesque gables and turrets looked strangely picturesque, and far off beyond the quays and docks on the opposite side of the river the blue mountains of Clare were reflecting on their summits, "the golden glory of the light." But what was the beauty of earth, and sea, and sky to the joyous bustle, the stirring music, the gay and flaunting colors, the flowery garlands hoisted on long poles above the heads of the eager, restless, laughing, talking, shouting crowd? At least so thought Vara and her granddaughter—or rather the beauty aforesaid entered not at all into comparison, in their minds, with that of the noisy, confused, yet very picturesque *melée* of human beings on fun and frolic all intent.

Just as Maureen and her grandmother gained the outskirts of the crowd, a deafening shout rent the air, and Randal was seen mounting a cart, as it were to open the proceedings. During the prolonged cheering which followed his appearance, the old man stood motionless on the cart, smiling gravely down on the upturned faces of his liege men and women. When

the cheering had at length subsided, Randal cleared his throat and spoke in the deep guttural voice peculiar to his people."

"Well, boys, here we are again, every mother's son of us! Thanks be to God I see you all around me this good midsummer-day after all the dangers of the year. Not a soul is missing from among us except poor Tom O'Daly and Larry Shanahan, that died of the fever last summer, and Molly Toohy, that died of old age, the creature!" Here a voice cried out, "There's another, Randal honey!" It was old Vara, and her son-in-law quickly resumed in a still deeper voice: "So there is, gran! I was forgetting *him!* Boys! you'll not forget Paul Kehoe when the Galway coalmen come across you!"

A loud groan burst from the assembly, and a thousand voices answered "No!" with the fierce energy of determination.

"No, Randal!" cried Shan Driscoll, "we don't or we won't forget poor Paul; sooner might Arran of the Saints* move up to Mutton Island†, than we forget our brother."

"That's right, boys!" said Randal again; "now you've elected me again to be Mayor and Admiral. I'm thankful to you for that same, and with God's help I'll do my duty this year too, without fear or

*Arranmore, the largest of the Arran Islands, thus named in the common discourse of the neighboring peasantry. It is about thirty miles from the city.

†A small island at the very head of the Bay and close alongside of Galway city.

favor. I'll keep the Bay clear of trespassers, never fear—that is with your good help—and I wish I may catch a trawling villain on Galway waters—if I do, I'll trawl him—I will, or my name is not Randal O'Hara." Another enthusiastic cheer followed, and then Randal, raising his voice still louder than before, cried out: "That's enough said for this time—it's getting late, and we must be moving—boys, fall into ranks; musicians, on to the front—be alive now; girls, fall back till we get in marching order!—then come as near as you like! Here you, Barney and Yeman, take these two poles. Shan Driscoll, you'll keep near me—and, Brien!—hillo!—where's Brien Kineely?" "Here I am, Randal!" came faintly from a distance, and the young man was seen elbowing his way through the laughing crowd of friends and neighbors, who cracked many a joke at his expense as he passed along. He was flushed and heated, and evidently in no very good humor, and he darted a sullen glance at Shan, who stood by Yeman O'Hara's side, with a mask in his hand, which he was to wear in the procession. Shan met the look; and probably understood it, for he smiled and threw back his head with a careless air and a mocking gesture.

These commands of the Mayor's were promptly executed, and the dense crowd was very soon formed into a regular procession. The order of march was arranged by Randal himself, who pointed out to each one his place in the ranks, according to his age and standing in the village. The young men were all

arrayed in white jackets with colored knee-breeches and silken sashes, their hats encircled with wreaths of flowers. A large number of them carried poles, some topped with long streamers, bearing inscriptions and rude devices chiefly relating to their common calling, others with wreaths or bunches of summer flowers, whose perfume was not altogether lost in the prevailing odors of the place.

When all was arranged according to immemorial custom, a pair of stout fellows in strangely-uncouth garb and laughter-moving masks sprang to the front, armed with long poles surmounted by bladders. After making obeisance to the civic functionary, these worthies, of whom, as we have already intimated, Shan Driscoll was one, immediately commenced the functions of their office by a terrific charge on the crowd of women, who scampered off in all directions, screaming with laughter. Two only stood their ground—namely, Vara Halliday and her pretty granddaughter, the former in right of her tongue, the latter in right of her beauty—neither on account of their connection with the Mayor, whose dignity, all supreme as it was, extended no farther than his own person. They stood together on a large flat stone at the corner of the street, and it was strange to see the momentary hush that took place in the noisy procession as it wheeled past them. First came along the two masks, who lowered their unsightly standards before the strangely contrasted dignitaries, and then with a hop and a jump, passed

on to clear the road for the advancing column. After them, a few yards behind, came the band, consisting of two pipers, two fiddlers, a key-bugle and a drum. It must be admitted the music was none of the best; neither Julien nor Strauss would have assumed its paternity for the Queen's crown, yet it stirred the blood in the veins of the Claddagh men—ay and the Claddagh women, too, and neither of the eminent composers mentioned could do more, let them do their best. Even Maureen, cold and proud, smiled graciously on the musicians, as in passing her they suddenly changed "The Sprig of Shillelah" for the softer and more touching "Brown Maid." A hearty cheer from the ranks announced that the change was understood, and again Maureen Dhu bent her head and smiled to the compliment.

Just behind the band marched Randal More, with Yeman on one side and Barney on the other, the old man in his blue rug jacket, the sons in their gay white. A pair of handsome, rollicking lads they were, and their father was certainly prouder of them than of his high trust in the community. The sister and brothers only exchanged smiles, and the father honored his "womankind" with a patronizing nod, but old Vara could not keep silence when her heart was so full. Sundry comments, censures, and compliments escaped her as friends and acquaintances met her eye.

"And it's fresh and well you look, Randal mavourneen, you and the boys. Hold your head a little higher. Yeman astore!—that's it, now! Dan Daly,

what's on you, at all, that you're looking so mournful? Cheer up, man! cheer up!—there's good yawls to be had for the winning—don't be thinking of the one you lost. Long life to you, Shamus! but it's you that has the roguish eyes of your own. It's no wonder the girls would be all setting their caps at you! Good luck to you all, and it's sure I am you'll put the best foot foremost before the townspeople within."

"A cheer for Vara Halliday!" cried he of the roguish eye, "may she live long to keep the quality to their trumps in town!"

The cheer was freely, heartily given, for Vara, with all her professional volubility, was much beloved in the village. As the rear of the procession passed, Maureen caught Brien Kineely's eye fixed on her with a sad expression, and her heart smote her, she could hardly tell why. Brien was the bearer of one of the Claddagh banners, and his fine manly form showed to much advantage as he held it aloft with both hands. Before Maureen could express her thoughts even by a look, Brien had passed and with him the gay show, and the women began to crowd around Maureen and her grand-dame expressing their delight in a full chorus of joyous acclamation. Whole troops of boys were already in motion, gambolling and frisking on either side the procession; the women, old and young, quickly followed on the road to the city, a few of the very oldest remaining behind to gather materials for the evening bonfires, and to care the infants of the several families.

CHAPTER II.

The march of the Claddagh men through the city was, as usual, a continued triumph. St. John's Day, of all the year, brought them collectively before the citizens, and in their annual visit to every part of the old town they generally met with a cordial welcome. It was just the hour when tradesmen and laborers were returning from their daily toil, and crowds of them assembled in every open space to exchange a friendly greeting with "the Claddagh boys." At every corner, and in every window, men, women, and children were seen waiting their coming, all eager to have a share in their joyous enthusiasm, all prepared to laugh at and with the grotesquely-clad maskers whose appearance as the heralds and van of the procession was anxiously looked for. Their approach was announced, long before they came in sight, by their humorous objurgations to the crowds of boys and girls who *would* bar their progress do as they might. In fact people seemed to get in the way with malice *prepense* for the pure sake of being driven out of it in such comical fashion by such comical wights. Ever as the procession moved on, many a hearty "God speed ye, boys!" and many a "Hurrah for the Claddagh!" followed it on its way, and even in the more aristocratic parts of the city, windows and balconies were crowded with ladies and gentle-

men who not only honored the hardy fishermen with smiles, but threw handsome donations into the box provided for the purpose, and carried by a quaintly-dressed youth profusely ornamented with shells and flowers. These *largesses* were annually given by the wealthy inhabitants to the sturdy fellows who provided their tables all the year with piscatorial luxuries.

"There, boys, there's a sovereign to drink my health," said a fine-looking man of nearly middle age, who stood with some ladies in a balcony in Spanish Place. He spoke in the regular Claddagh patois, and the fishermen gave him a hearty cheer.

"Long life to your honor, maybe we won't drink it!"

"It's you that was always a friend to the Claddagh!"

"Glory and honor to you, Mr. Fitzstephen!"

"Another cheer for Mr. Fitzstephen!—hurrah!"

"And not forgetting the ladies, long life to them!"

The ladies smiled, Fitzstephen bowed, and made a sign that he wanted to speak. There was instant silence.

"Boys," said he, after surveying his auditory for a moment, "you know I am your friend—don't you?"

"Hard fortune to them that would deny it, your honor!"

"Well, listen to me, now!" Dead silence. "When are you going to try the trawling?"*

**Trawling* is a peculiar mode of fishing, by having nets attached to vessels and thus *trailed*, or dragged through the water. The Claddagh fishermen were for many years obstinately opposed to this mode of fishing. They have within the last few years, however, adopted it to a considerable extent.

This question was evidently unexpected, and just as evidently unwelcome. The Claddagh men looked at each other, and their faces darkened. A low rumbling sound ran through their ranks, like the angry murmur of their own bay which announces the coming storm. All seemed anxious to speak but restrained themselves through respect for their Admiral, who might alone answer on such a subject. All eyes were turned on him, including those of Fitzstephen, his mother, and sisters. The shades of evening were already darkening, but the old man's eyes were clearly visible flashing with angry light. Yet when he spoke his voice was calm, preternaturally calm.

"We'll never try it, Mr. Fitzstephen—*never!* How often must we say it over and over!—we'll have none of your new-fangled tricks or notions and they're no friend that would ask us?"

"But, Randal! my good friend, hear me——"

"Not a word, your honor! not one word—if it's about the trawling—if it's not—say what you like—only don't keep us long!"

"Well! I only just wanted, now that I see you all together, to give you my honest advice. Many of you might be rich men to-day had you been persuaded years ago to try our plan."

"Mr. Fitz!" said Randal with stern determination, "I tell you now, once for all, that we'd sooner sink our hookers, every man of us, than see them turned into trawlers. Get along there, will you? the night is coming on!"

"Well! well!" said Fitzstephen, "I would befriend you, boys, but you won't let me—pass on, and I wish you a pleasant evening."

Another parting cheer for the Fitzstephen family, then the maskers soused their bladders in the mud, and shook them dripping over the heads of the gaping crowd. A general laugh followed, and a general scamper, the poles, and the banners were again in motion and on went the long procession, winding its way through narrow, angular streets, and under quaint old arches; stopping here and there before the mansions of the wealthy townsmen to receive, unmasked, the expected *douceur* and regale their benefactors with the harmonious strains which gladdened the heart of old King Cole, that "merry old soul" renowned in convivial song. The head of the procession was at length approaching the gate which leads to the Claddagh when a party of coal-porters, apparently lounging around without any particular purpose, raised a derisive cheer.

"I say, Bill!" said one of these sturdy, coal-begrimed fellows in a voice loud enough to be heard by those for whom it was meant, "say, Bill, don't you hate this fishy smell?—faugh! it's enough to make one sick!"

"Ho! ho!" laughed the person addressed, a tall, strapping fellow whose sinewy frame was almost gigantic in its proportions, "suppose we burn a tar-barrel after they pass to purify the air!" The words were hardly out of his head when a shower of mud

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from the bladder on Shan Driscoll's pole bespattered him from head to foot. Before Bill had recovered the effect of the shock, a similar compliment was paid his comrade by Tom Halligan, the other masker, whereupon the Claddagh men laughed and shouted:

"More power there, boys!" cried Randal himself, from behind, "paint their white mugs for them,—since they don't like the smell of fish, give them something else to smell!"

By this time a number of other coal-heavers had darted out of lanes and alleys, where they had evidently been lying in wait, so that the party was considerably strengthened. Before Bill and his friend had got the dirt rubbed from their eyes, some others of their company jostled the musicians, and some again placed themselves right in front of the maskers.

"Get out of the way there, will you?" cried Shan Driscoll, and he aimed a blow with his long pole at the heads of those in front of him; "get out of the way, or we'll walk over you."

"Ah! maybe you wouldn't now!" said the gigantic Bill, now thoroughly recovered and primed for mischief; "you wouldn't think of such a thing!" and with one hand he wrenched the pole from Shan's grasp while with the other he struck him such a blow on the chest that he staggered and would have fallen had not one from behind caught him by the arm.

In an instant all was confusion—the poles and the banners went down as if by magic, the music sud-

denly came to a stop, and that for the best of reasons, viz. : the arms of the several performers were pinioned to their sides, though, to say the truth, they escaped the blows which fell profusely on all around them. Pipers and fiddlers, and all such *dilettanti* are still a sort of privileged order in Ireland, and habitually respected by the people. Cries the most discordant and the most vociferous rent the air, and the biting taunts flung to and fro amongst the combatants showed that the quarrel was no new one. Still there was nothing murderous, nothing blood-thirsty, manifested on either side—plenty of dragging and hauling, boxing and cuffing there was, followed, to be sure, with black eyes and bloody noses, but there were no firearms, no bludgeons, no edged weapons of any kind. It was a regular Irish set-to, on a grand scale—hot and wrathful, and very wordy, but neither dogged nor deadly. There might have been in it somewhat more of malice than is usual in such street-brawls amongst Irish Catholics, owing to the unfortunate occurrence already alluded to. The stoutest champion of the Claddagh had died only a few months before from the effects of a beating given him by these very men, or, at least, some of their fraternity, and the Claddagh men are wont to boast that whoever injures one of them, injures all. There is no doubt, then, that they were glad of the opportunity to have a bout with the black brotherhood, who had now gathered from far and near on hearing of the scuffle. Still the coal-porters were in the

minority, and would, in all probability, have got the worst of it had it not been for that chivalrous spirit still latent in the hearts of an Irish mob, which impels them to side with the weaker party. The sympathies of the idle spectators were at first with the Claddagh men, the others being undeniably in fault, and the fishermen being, moreover, the lions of the hour. After a little, however, when the coal-porters began to fall beneath the vigorous blows of their opponents, and were likely to be overpowered by numbers, the case was entirely different,—right or wrong they must be supported.

"Come, boys," cried a thick-set man with a blue blouse thrown over his upper garments, "come, boys, this will never do—there's Phil Hannigan down. We can't stand by and see the Claddagh men beating all before them this way!"

"That's my notion too, Ned!—our own's our own after all! By gemini! there's Thady Burke in a bad way—no less than three of them on him!—that's you Thady, my boy!—stand your ground like a man for the honor of Galway—I'm with you!" and the speaker, a butcher of no small renown as a pugilist, went into Thady's quarrel with heart and fist, to the great encouragement of Thady and the serious detriment of the enemy's noses which he pummelled in good style.

Now Ned, the first champion, was a knight of the anvil, and stood in as high repute amongst his craft as the butcher, whose name was Jim Shannon, did in

his. Their joint accession, then, was of the last importance to the cause they espoused, and their example was so speedily followed by butchers and smiths that the scale of victory turned and the Claddagh men began to retreat towards the gate. The battle now raged with fury—the angry passions of the multitude were all enlisted—most of them on behalf of the coal-porters—sticks and stones were at length resorted to, and the cry of “The Claddagh for ever!” was drowned in the louder and more tumultuous shouts of “Down with the fishermen!”—“Put them out!”—“Hurrah for Galway and the sky over it!”

Still the Claddagh men kept their ground bravely, notwithstanding the increasing superiority of the enemy's forces. In the thickest of the fight was old Randal seen, wielding a broken pole with the vigor of early manhood. His brave boys, close to his side, shielded him from many a crushing blow, and, however it happened, there was Shan Driscoll too, his tall form conspicuous amongst friends and foes, and his dark face showing fierce and vengeful in the light of the rising moon.

“Down with the black-hearted lubbers!” cried Shan; “give it to them, boys, once for all!” His voice was suddenly stopped by a blow in the mouth from Ned Dwyer's sledge-like fist. Ned's triumph, however, was but for an instant, for Randal's pole descended on his crown with stunning effect—he tottered and fell back insensible amongst his comrades.

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The Claddagh men seeing his fall cheered vociferously. The townsmen collected their energies for a still fiercer attack, when a strange and unexpected sight arrested all eyes. Through the deep arch of the neighboring gateway rushed a whole troop of the Claddagh women headed by Vara and Maureen O'Hara. Breathless and excited they threw themselves into the midst of the fray, each one, as if by instinct, finding out her own, and clinging to him—father, brother, or husband as he might be—with frantic gestures and cries of terror. Maureen alone was calm and collected—no word escaped her lip, though every feature of her pale face was quivering with emotion. With one hand she embraced her father round the neck, with the other she caught Shan's up-lifted arm, and with her commanding voice she silenced old Vara's shrill piercing scream.

"Not a word now, granny—not a word, for your life and soul!—father dear! don't!—don't strike!—don't for God's sake. Yeman astore, let that man alone—don't you see it's only his left arm he's using?—that's my own good Barney!" To her younger brother, "it's you that's always biddable. Ah then, Shan! would you—would you have the heart now? Oh? for my sake—for *Maureen's sake*—let him go!"

Even in the wild excitement of the moment, amid all the crashing storm of passion, Maureen's last words reached Driscoll's heart, and the upraised arm fell by his side. Not so his opponent who aimed a heavy blow at his chest. But Maureen's quick eye

saw the danger, and grasping the pole which her father still held she warded off the blow. "Shame befall you, Galway man! don't you see he fights, no more!"

These words, spoken aloud, aided perhaps by Maureen's singular beauty, had the effect of pacifying not only the young smith to whom they were addressed but as many of the combatants as they reached. Maureen saw her advantage, and raising her voice she cried out:

"Men of the Claddagh! is this the sport for St. John's Day? In the name of God and holy St. Nicholas! strike not another blow!"

"We'll do your bidding, Maureen! come what may!" And so they did, and the spell of Maureen's presence extended even to the coal-porters and their party, and not another blow did any of them strike. The enthusiastic cheer that burst from the Claddagh men was caught up by a Galway mob, and the name of "Maureen Dhu" re-echoed along the quay till it reached the old crones left to guard the village, and they said to each other: "I knew she'd do it, the darling!—God's blessing on her!"

Meantime the city police had gathered in full force, and the shrill sound of the bugle announced the approach of a party of soldiers. The police as usual made a great show of activity when their services were no longer required. Dashing into the thick of the throng, they collared one here, gave another a shove there, and asked in a very authoritative tone,

what it was all about. Nobody seemed inclined to answer, and the chief constable, anxious to say or do something, casting his eyes round with official scrutiny, saw Maureen in the attitude which we have described, and on her he at once pounced.

"I say, young woman; what are you about?"

He spoke in English, and Maureen not understanding him, looked puzzled.

"She is doing what you should have done, Captain?" said a deep voice at his elbow, in the purest of English, and the police officer, turning quickly, met the cold, stern gaze of Mr. Fitzstephen. Both gentlemen bowed, and the officer asked—

"What is that, pray?"

"Making peace, sir!—she has done this night what all the police in Galway County could not have done. I think you had better draw off your men, Captain!"

"Impossible, Mr. Fitzstephen—I must do my duty, sir!"

"And what may it be?—you came just in time to be too late."

"We must make some arrests!"

"Nonsense, Captain Morton!—don't make a fool of yourself! I tell you the whole affair amounted only to a scuffle—a wholesale round of boxing—neither life nor limb has been injured, I am pretty certain, owing to the timely interference of this pretty girl!—take my advice and draw off—here are the soldiers—go forward and meet the commanding

officer, and tell him the storm has blown over—he will give you the credit of restoring order!"

"Well, Mr. Fitzstephen, you are a magistrate, and if you are willing to take the responsibility on yourself, I have nothing to say!"

He then advanced to meet the military, and after a short consultation between him and the officer in command, they agreed to draw up their respective forces and remain stationary till the ground was cleared, provided it was done without loss of time.

While this move was going forward, Fitzstephen had been urging on the Claddagh men the propriety of quitting the town immediately, justly fearing a renewal of hostilities, so long as the belligerents remained within sight of each other. Several other merchants of high standing in the city,—employers, too, of the coal-porters, had by this time reached the scene of action, and used all their influence to disperse the mob. But that was, after all, no easy matter, for neither party would be the first to go, and there they stood exchanging looks and gestures of defiance. Sundry individuals of both parties were openly instigating their friends to a renewal of the fight, and amongst these Vara Halliday made herself most conspicuous. With her arms a-kimbo she stood fiercely eyeing the rival faction,—now once more banded together in a solid phalanx—and many a scathing taunt did she hurl at them regardless of the presence of soldiers and police. In vain did Maureen and even Randal seek to pacify her.

It was no use, she wanted to see the rascals getting their due—they had been long working for it, and the blood of poor Paul Kehoe cried out for vengeance on them.

"But, granny dear," whispered Maureen, "don't you see the soldiers and the police there ready to shoot down the first man that would raise a hand?"

"To the d——! I pitch themselves and their guns. I tell you, child, if there's a drop of the old blood in the Claddagh boys this night, they'll pay them that old debt they owe them! Randal—Randal O'Hara! what's come on you, at all, that you sing dumb that way in presence of the scruff of Galway quays? Shan Driscoll!—oh! you shake your head, to be sure, you're afraid of offending Maureen Dhu—ah! it isn't your father that's in it, or a girl's coaxing voice would go short way in keeping him quiet with *them* before him," pointing contemptuously to the enemy's forces. "But I say, boys, where's Brien Kineely? For all he seems so quiet, I'll go bail he's a man, every inch of him, not all as one as some that have more to say."

"Sure enough," cried Maureen, with sudden energy, "I don't see Kineely. Father have you seen him?"

"Not since a little after the fight began—the last I saw of him, he was running after a big black-faced fellow that gave Barney that broken nose."

Maureen waited to hear no more. Off she flew with the speed of an antelope, and after her hastened

Shan and her brothers, fearful of some harm befalling her. They found her standing over the insensible form of Brien, who had been knocked down, it appeared, by the big coal-porter of whom Randal spoke, and his comrades feared that he was done for, as they had been trying in vain to restore him to consciousness.

"Here, boys," said Maureen, in a voice that she vainly tried to keep steady, "lift poor Brien, and carry him home. Shan! won't you lend a hand? It's likely he'll never cross you again!"

There was a touching sadness in her voice that Shan did not like, and the blood rushed to his cheek, then back again to his heart, and left him pale as a ghost. Still he willingly assisted Barney and Yeman to raise his unconscious rival from the ground, and aided by another of their friends, they carried him to the front, Maureen walking by his side and holding his hand within her own, while her eyes were rivetted on his death-like face. Just as they reached the head of the procession, which Randal had again formed, Fitzstephen bent down and whispered some words in Maureen's ear, which made her start and blush. She raised her eyes for a moment to his face, then bent them quickly on the still lifeless form before her.

"Never fear for *him*, Maureen," said Fitzstephen, his eyes following hers, "I see the color is returning to his face; he will soon be all right again, with God's help. Remember what I told you," he

added, in a low voice. Maureen smiled and nodded assent.

The coal-porters, seeing that the Claddagh men were about to resume their march, seemed half inclined to attack them again, but Fitzstephen, observing their intention, called out that he was going at once to read the Riot Act, at the same time making a sign to Randal to march on.

Before the mob could make any attempt to prevent the procession from moving on, the military, by a sudden manœuvre, got between them, and they found themselves between the bristling bayonets of the soldiers on one side, and the police on the other. Great was their anger and their mortification when they saw the fishermen moving off in good order towards the gate and gradually disappearing beneath its gloomy arch.

"Never mind, Randal! we'll meet you again for this!" cried one of the ringleaders, and all the others raised a cheer of defiance.

"When and where you like," returned the brave old man, looking back over his shoulder as he passed from the clear moonlight into the momentary darkness of the gateway.

Long before they reached the village, Brien Kineely was able to stand on his feet though still requiring the support of Yeman and Barney. As for Shan he dropped him "like a hot potato," as old Vara said, as soon as he found him beginning to breathe again. Maureen, too, had removed herself out of sight before Brien opened his eyes.

CHAPTER III.

HALF an hour after and the Claddagh was a blaze of light. At every crossing bonfires smoked and crackled. The mud walls of the adjacent cottages, even those undisguised by whitewash, wore a warm, ruddy hue, and the small windows glowed in the red firelight like sheets of burnished metal. And there in their glory were the men and women of the Claddagh the former looking as blithe and cheerful as though nothing had occurred to throw a damp on their festivities. The materials for the bonfires being all pre-arranged in burning order by the granddames of the community, with the efficient aid of younger grandsons and granddaughters, the men, on their return from the city, had nothing to do but readjust their gala costume, which, to say the truth—was in “most admirable disorder”—and efface from their visages the sanguinary marks of the recent conflict. In some cases this was easily done, in others not so easy, owing to the unlucky appendage of one, or perhaps two black eyes, a broken nose, or a villainous contusion which was certainly anything but advantageous to the wearer's appearance. Happily for these doughty champions their bruises were esteemed honorable on the occasion, and gave them indisputable claims to the favor and good-will of the pretty blushing damsels who stood eyeing them

askance from behind the capacious bulk of a father or mother.

Conspicuous amongst all the maidens of the Claddagh on that memorable Midsummer evening was Maureen Dhu—her tall and most graceful form wrapped in a thin shawl, she stood leaning on the arm of her younger brother watching the quick combustion of the large pile—much larger than the others—placed in front of the Admiral's house. Maureen was the queen of the sports that evening, as much on account of her successful interference as from special rights long conceded. And maybe Randal More was not a proud man as he looked on his beautiful daughter and heard the blessings coupled with her name on every side. He was standing in the old archway of his own dwelling, eyeing Maureen with a proud and happy smile as he saw her led out to open the dance by his favorite Shan Driscoll. Suddenly a deep musical voice spoke near him, and the old man turned with a start for he knew it was none of the Claddagh men who spoke. A dark and noble countenance was smiling within the shaded doorway.

"It were hard to say, Randal More," said the gentleman, addressing him in his own dialect: "whether you are a prouder man at this moment than when you marched at the head of the Claddagh boys through Galway, clearing the way for the head Sassenach from Dublin."

"It's a different thing altogether, sir," the old

man returned with a calm, self-satisfied smile; "I was proud of the Claddagh then, but it's of my daughter I'm a-thinking now. And sure it's no wonder, your honor, that my old heart swells up when I look at her—where would you see her equals?"

"She has few equals, I must own," was the stranger's reply, yet he smiled at the simple fervor with which the old man spoke, while his own eyes involuntarily rested on the queen-like form of Maureen, as it flitted around in the merry dance.

"But I was speaking of the day, Randal, when you and your brave fellows formed a guard of honor to the Lord Lieutenant."

"We did it twice, your honor, sir," interrupted Randal, with a kindling eye—"the first time you couldn't remember, for you were but a child—that was when the other chief Sassenach came to pay the old city a visit; he was a brave old man, too, but he wanted a leg—a *boccaigh*, poor man! he was, and more the pity, for he spoke us all kind and fair, and gave the Claddagh boys ten gold guineas to drink his health."

"But you were not Mayor of the Claddagh, then, Randal, for that is more than twenty years ago."

"No, no, sir, Shan Driscoll's father was our head then—may his soul rest in peace!—I was younger then than I am now, your honor, and I tell you there wasn't a man in Galway town would like to stand before me when my blood was up. Sure

enough we were all well-pleased with them two Sassenach lords—and a hearty welcome we did give them.* But isn't it the great honor you're paying us, yourself, Mr. Fitzstephen?"

"Not at all, Randal, not at all; I just came to have a peep at the dancing—I was curious, in fact, to see how the boys would foot it after all the hard knocks they gave and took a while ago."

"Maybe your honor wouldn't be above trying your hand at a jig or something of that kind?"

Fitzstephen laughed. "My feet you mean, Randal."

"Oh! to be sure, sir, to be sure, but you know what I mean—we poor fishermen can't put our words together like you quality. But *will* you take a step, sir?—just to have it said that you danced round a bonfire in the Claddagh."

"Excuse me, Randal! I merely came to look on as I said," and Fitzstephen drew farther back into the shade; "I would out but a sorry figure, I fear, amongst such dancers as that!" pointing as he spoke to Shan Driscoll, who was cutting all sorts of comical capers and showing off his well-formed legs to the great admiration of those friends and neighbors who were not figuring in the dance. Shan was evidently one of the happiest of mortals. His eyes glowed with the pleasurable excitement of the

*Lord Anglesea, and, at a later period, Lord Normanby, made a tour of the principal cities for purposes of conciliation, and on both occasions, the Viceroy was escorted through Galway city by the Claddagh fishermen, who marched before them as a guard of honor.

moment, and the triumph of having Maureen for a partner. As for Maureen herself, no one could judge what her feelings were. Calm and self-possessed as usual, there was neither joy nor any other strong feeling visible on her features, and she moved through the dance, lightly and gracefully, but rather too quietly to please her partner, who, as he led her out through the opening circle of lookers-on, could not refrain from saying in a tone of vexation:

"I'm afraid, Maureen, there's some meaning in your always asking for the 'The Bouchaleen Bui.' I wish some of us could turn our hair yellow, and put the red and white on our faces like some we know. More's the pity they can't stand their ground like men, for all they are 'the Bouchaleen Bui.' Hasn't them raps of coal-heavers the hard hearts all out to go spoil such handsome faces with their big fists, and make the girls so down-hearted!"

"For shame, Shan Driscoll!" Maureen quickly answered, and the flashing glance which accompanied the words was a far more cutting rebuke.

"Well, Maureen, don't be angry with me," said Shan, in a deprecating tone, and he blushed so deeply that even through the bronzed hue of his cheek the warm blood was visible—"don't be angry, and I'll say nothing to offend you."

"I'm not angry—not a bit angry, Shan! for I know what you say isn't from your heart—but don't make little of Brien Kineely even in words, for you

only make little of yourself when you do it. *You* know him, and *I* know him, Shan! and it doesn't become you to run him down, especially when his back is turned."

"Who is this Kineely?" inquired Fitzstephen of Randal who insisted on remaining by his side.

"Why then, indeed, your honor, he's one of the finest fellows about the Claddagh, for all he got the worst of it in the town within."

"Oh!" said Fitzstephen slowly, "it was he that bit the dust before the huge Vulcan——" he stopped and cast his eyes moodily on the ground.

"What did you say, sir?"

"Nothing of any consequence, Randal. But indeed I cannot allow you to remain here longer. See old Vara beckons you to go yonder—she seems to have some business on hands."

"I'll warrant she has, sir, for she couldn't live without it. Well, I suppose I must go and see what she wants, but I'll be back in no time, your honor."

Off he went at a swinging pace, the crowd making way for him as he passed. He was about to ask his mother-in-law, in no very gentle terms what she wanted him for, but the words were never spoken, for Vara was bending down over an aged crone—more aged than herself, and feeble too—whom Brien Kineely was endeavoring to seat on a large stone. It was Brien's grandmother whom he had carried down to see the sport. Randal, thinking his assist-

ance was required, owing to Brien's recent mishap, took hold of the old woman as tenderly as one would an infant, and turned her so as to face the bonfire, but Vara whispered in his ear: "It wasn't for that I wanted you—send Yeman or Barney to the house for a chair, and we'll make More as comfortable as heart can wish—but listen here, Randal!—there's some Sassenach red-coats coming up there after our Maureen—keep an eye on them, Randal!—that's my bidding!"

Randal waited to hear no more. Hurrying back to where he had seen Maureen, great was his surprise to find her dancing with no less a person than Mr. Fitzstephen, whom he had left so quietly standing in the porch but a few minutes before. Foremost in the group of lookers-on he also observed some three or four officers, their handsome undress uniform and soldierly bearing clearly revealed by the red glare from the crackling blaze. At the first glance Randal did not perceive the strong emotion depicted on the face of Fitzstephen, or the angry frown on the haughty brow of a tall, distinguished-looking officer who stood with folded arms watching the dance. Near this gentleman, but rather behind him, was Shan Driscoll, his face as red as the bonfire blaze, and his dark eye flashing from under his closely-knitted brows with a look of sullen displeasure.

"What's this—what's this?" whispered Randal at his side.

"Ay! what is it?" the young man returned with bitter emphasis, and raising his voice so high that Randal nudged him with his elbow; "I suppose there will be no standing Maureen now!"

"But what is it all about, I ask you again?"

"Why, don't you see these Sassenachs here that came out on Maureen's account, to be sure? This tall fellow here," pointing with his thumb over his shoulder to the person indicated, "made up to Maureen there a minute ago and asked her to dance with him—she was just stepping out, when who should dart from your own porch but Mr. Fitzstephen, and right between them he went and took Maureen's hand from the officer and led her out in spite of his teeth. They'll set her mad before all's over," he muttered through his teeth, "and she was had enough before!"

Whatever Randal's thoughts might have been, he kept them to himself, but he took good care to remain near his daughter as long as the strangers were present. It might be that his paternal pride was gratified by the admiration which Maureen attracted, and that, too, from persons so far above her in station, but if so there was not a trace of either triumph or satisfaction visible on his swarthy face. On the contrary he looked darker and sterner than usual, and drew back behind the crowd as if anxious to shun observation.

It was hard to say what was passing in Maureen's mind as she flitted through the merry reel with her

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stately partner. At all times calm and collected, with a mien as high and noble as though she had "dwelt" all her life "in marble halls," she showed no more emotion or excitement on that occasion than if Brien Kineely or Shan Driscoll had been her partner. Fitzstephen, on the contrary, was much more animated than usual, and the glance, half-humorous, half-exulting, which he cast on the discomfited soldier from time to time, clearly showed that he considered his position an enviable one.

When the dance was ended, Fitzstephen, with a courtly bow, led his partner to a seat on a neighboring bench, and took his station by her side. Immediately the officer advanced with a doubtful smile on his mustached lip, and glancing at Fitzstephen with a mocking air, said to Maureen:

"Will the Admiral's daughter *now* favor *me*?—or rather will this gentleman allow her?" Maureen looked at him and smiled, but made no answer for a very good reason. He had spoken in English of which language she hardly understood a word.

"What does he say?" she asked of Fitzstephen, and looking up she was surprised to see his face glowing and his kindling eye fixed on the officer.

"He wants you to dance with him," he said, "and, of course, you may if you wish, but I would rather you did not."

"And why not, sir?" said the girl rising and giving her hand to the other with rather a pleased expression of countenance. It was very natural that

Maureen's girlish vanity should be gratified by the visible admiration of the brilliant strangers who had come to the Claddagh solely on her account. It was also very natural, and by no ways surprising, that Shan Driscoll should look on the officers with a jealous eye, and watch their motions with distrust; it was not more strange that he should, in desperation, make up to pretty Nora Shanahan and take her out to dance, to her evident satisfaction, but it *was* strange, and passing strange that he should hasten to where Brien Kineely sat by the side of his aged parent, and whisper in his ear that something must be done to get rid of the Sassenachs.

"Why so, Shan?" asked Brien, in some surprise, "what harm are they doing us?—we have often had gentlemen out at the bonfires before now, and if they come to see the sport, why there let them!"

"Fool!" muttered Shan, between his teeth, "I tell you, Brien! it's after Maureen O'Hara they came now. Her name is gone far and near through the city for what happened to-night, and they came to have a look at her, *and more than that, too*, Brien, if we let them!—there's Fitzstephen, too—up, up, man! up, I tell you, and let us see if we can't make the place too hot for them!—my soul to glory! but there's the two Sassenachs out now with Nell Burke and Brid O'Connor!"

"Granny!" said Brien, in a flurried, tremulous voice, speaking loud enough to make the deaf old woman hear, "Granny! I'll leave you for a little

start, but you'll not be lonesome—there's plenty of the neighbors round you."

"To be sure, *astore!* to be sure there is—go and have a dance, *achorra*, and if you'd just clear them out of the way till I get a sight of you and Maureen!"

"Ha! ha!" said Shan with a bitter laugh—"Maureen has other fish in the pan at the present time—look, now, Brien! can your blood bear that, cool as it is?"

A movement in the crowd round the fire had just disclosed Maureen and her late partner standing side by side; the officer had just bent his head to whisper some words of admiration, and as he did so he gently encircled the taper waist of Maureen with his arm. This was too much for even Brien to bear, and his anger once roused he thought of nothing but chastising what he considered the presumption of these haughty strangers. So with clenched fist he was about to rush on the officer without even looking at Shan, when the upraised arm of each was arrested by a sudden movement on the part of Maureen. Drawing herself quickly from the officer's encircling arm, she darted to the opposite side of the fire where her father stood by the side of Fitzstephen, and pointing to her late partner, she said aloud with startling energy:

"Take that man away!" At the same moment Brid O'Connor saluted *her* military cavalier with a back slap so well aimed that his nose spouted blood,

and Nell Burke was seen to give the third officer such a vigorous box in the ear that it made him reel. A loud laugh arose from the bystanders, who well understood that the strangers had been making more free than was welcome, and, before the laugh was over, Shan Driscoll and Brien Kineely, seizing the tall officer on either side, walked him off the ground, half-a-dozen other young men doing as much for his comrades.

"That's right boys!" Randal shouted after them, "See them safe out of the village—cool and quiet, lads!—show them your manners now!"

At first the gentlemen struggled a little, and seemed disposed to resist, but they soon gave up the attempt, finding their arms as closely pinioned to their sides as though they were trussed and skewered in poultry fashion. The iron grasp of the Claddagh boys was not to be shaken off, and their stern looks were anything but encouraging for conversation, so off they all three marched in silence, propelled rather faster than they could have wished by their very uncourteous escort, and greeted by the derisive shouts of men, women and children. Many a gratuitous admonition met their ears as they passed, spoken in such English as the Claddagh women had acquired in the sale of their fish. High over all, at the very top of the gamut, were the shrill tones of Vara Halliday, and her voice was the last distinguishable sound that reached their ears. Her words, as may be imagined, were anything but complimentary.

"Good for you, you vagabonds!" said the gentle matron, who had followed them to the very end of the village; "and may'be you'll know better from this out how to take a dance with a dacent girl. The Claddagh's the place to teach manners to the likes of you. There isn't a boy in it, you *bosthoons*, but can show you the way to conduct yourselves dacently. Mind and never show your hairy faces here again or the women of us will give you a dip, depend upon it, let alone the men!"

A scornful smile was the only answer to this and many other such delicate hints, and the military gentlemen thought proper to maintain a dignified silence till, having reached the outside of the gate leading into town, they were released and severally thrust into the archway. Their common impulse was to call loudly for the police, but with a mocking laugh and a contemptuous snap of the fingers, the Claddagh boys took at once to their heels, and were already far on their homeward road before the guardians of the night reached the spot. Panting and breathless they rushed from all directions to the number of some six or eight, and such rattling was never heard before or since in Galway city. In their haste they ran against each other, and were much surprised—I will not say disappointed—to find that the noise was all of their own making. The officers, feeling their position rather an awkward one, and having no mind to provoke investigation into the adventures of the evening, had prudently

betaken themselves to the shelter of a deep archway near the scene of action, so that the constables were left in undisturbed possession of the field. After exchanging a hearty laugh they quietly returned to their respective "beats," well pleased to find (if truth must be told), that the Claddagh men were *not* within reach of their *batons*.

Taking advantage of the slight commotion which followed the expulsion of the officers, Fitzstephen drew Maureen into the porch at her father's door, and then, looking steadfastly in her face, he said, still holding her hand in both his:

"Maureen, you should not have danced with that stranger."

"Perhaps not, Mr. Fitzstephen—nor with you neither!"

"And why not with me?"

"For the same reason, sir, that you're *both* strangers to us—I'd belong on the floor with the wildest boy in the Claddagh before he'd make so free as that Sassenach did. It serves me right anyhow! Did you want to speak to me, sir, that you brought me in here?"

"Maureen! Maureen!" said Fitzstephen, in a reproachful tone, "why will you say so to me? I thought there was no one in the Claddagh that would speak of me as a stranger—much less *you!*"

A scornful laugh was Maureen's answer. Fitzstephen was nettled at her disdainful bearing, and he said in a dry, caustic way; "Perhaps I had

better say nothing of the business that brought me here!"

"Oh! then you came on business,—did you, sir?"

"Certainly,—what else would have brought me?—but I see you are impatient to leave me and my business can wait!"

The girl suddenly raised her eyes to Fitzstephen's face, and sought, as well as the dim light would permit, to read its expression. Apparently but half satisfied, she shook her head and muttered: "It can't be helped"—"go on, sir," she quietly added, "what can *you* have to say to Maureen O'Hara?"

"Maureen," said the gentleman, again taking her hand, "I know you have the Claddagh at command."

A smile and a blush betrayed Maureen's consciousness, and she again looked up with an inquiring glance but said nothing.

"Randal More is Admiral of the Claddagh," went on Fitzstephen, "but Maureen Dhu is queen—and more too!" He paused, hesitated, looked out at the bonfires and the dancers, and at last preferred his request, in a low but distinct whisper.

Maureen instantly withdrew her hand which he had taken, and at the same moment a discordant laugh broke from the open doorway, and old Vara stepped out into the porch. She evidently enjoyed the surprise of the pair, and peered into the face of each from under her kerchief with a keen and somewhat humorous glance.

"I wish I'd catch her at it—that's all!" said she, with a significant nod; "queen and all as she is, she'd find herself in shallow water, I can tell you."

Maureen betrayed no confusion, and Fitzstephen, though at first somewhat embarrassed, quickly regained his composure. He affected to treat the whole as a jest, alleging that Vara had mistaken his words. This stirred up her ire, already at boiling heat, and she fixed her piercing eye on the merchant with an expression that boded him no good, at the same time pushing Maureen out into the light and telling her to go about her business. To disobey Vara was a thing not to be thought of, and the girl mechanically did her bidding, though her mind was evidently intent on what Fitzstephen had been saying. As she left the door, she said to him, in a voice loud enough for her grandmother to hear:

"It may be as well that she overheard what you said, sir! she'll give you an answer, just the same as I would myself."

"Now, master," said the old woman, looking after her granddaughter with evident satisfaction, "you see yourself that Maureen O'Hara is a true chip of the old block—if you thought to come round *her* in *any way*, sir," and she raised her voice and darted a searching glance at him from under her heavy brows, "you'll find yourself out in your reckoning. Go home now, my master, and remember Vara Halliday has her eye on you. Strangers are never welcome in the Claddagh—especially when they

blink on our girls. Off with you, I say again, before any of the boys gets wind of your underhand work with Maureen—be sure you couldn't hoodwink *them!*"

Fitzstephen tried to expostulate. He begged of Vara to hear what he had intended only for Maureen's ear, but the old woman was deaf to all he could say, and, notwithstanding his vexation, he was amused by her obduracy and could not help smiling.

"Well, really!" he said to himself, "it is rather funny to see me placed before such a tribunal as *this*—if it was Maureen now, even denial from her would be half a pleasure, but old Vara—faugh!" and thereupon he stepped out on the street with the intention of returning home. Before Vara followed him she went into the house, and, groping around in the dark, managed to light a fire on the hearth, which soon gave her light enough—over it she hung an iron pot filled with potatoes, muttering to herself as she did so: "Let the sun run ever so high, I suppose they'll want their supper. Well, now! I don't know what to make of that Fitzstephen—I think he wouldn't tell a lie—and besides didn't I hear him myself when he didn't think I heard him?—still it's strange that he'd talk to Maureen about such things—instead of her father or me, or anybody else. She's the queer child, anyhow, and has ways like nobody else. It *may* be *that* that brought Fitzstephen because we know he's in the line, but

the Sassenach red-coats—ha! ha! sure *there're* not in the herring trade, anyhow!—ah! weary on you, Maureen Dhu! I'm afeared it all comes of them thieving eyes of yours!—Well! the supper's on the way now, and I'll just take a run out again and see what's going on—I'll be back before the potatoes are boiled. Randal and the boys will be as hungry as sharks." Giving a glance around then to see that all was right—the well-scoured noggins ranged on the table, full of milk, and the wicker basket in readiness over a tub to receive the potatoes when "teemed," Vara closed the door and went out to have another look at the sport which was still going on with unabated briskness. The bonfires through the village had all been renewed; round each one the young men and maidens were merrily dancing with light hearts and lighter heels. The sound of pipes and fiddles made young and old rejoice. Even More Kineely and two other ancient dames of her own age who had joined company with her, were cheerily chatting away of the days when *they* were young, and of Midsummer Days long, long past. Vara was not slow in discovering this venerable *trio*, and amongst them she quickly took her place.

"Vara!" said one of the old women, "what do you think of the gentle-folk that were here awhile ago? They say it was after your Maureen they came!"

"No matter who they came after, Polly! they have no business here!" and Vara shook her head

with much solemnity; "the shadow of the stranger never brought luck with it to the Claddagh!"

"That's just what I say myself;" said Aileen Rhua, a lively little old woman with keen, restless grey eyes, "strange birds bring storm with them. Do you mind the night poor Catto Sheehan was taken away by the good people*—fair may they come, and fair may they go, and their heels to us?—wasn't there a great stir in the place, on account of the foreign vessel that was wrecked in the Bay, and our boys ventured out and saved six or eight of the sailors?"

All the old women remembered the fatal occurrence but too well, for the young mother who died on that night had been, in her day, the beauty of the village, and her sudden death cast a gloom over the whole community, by whom it was ascribed to fairy agency, as such deaths often were in those good old simple days.

"That was a dismal night!" sighed Polly, "such a storm was never seen since in Galway Bay. The poor fellows that went out to save the strangers were more dead than alive when they got back to shore, and lost their boat—besides it was my own father's, and the best about the Claddagh—but sure we didn't grudge it, when *they* got back with their lives, and saved so many others. Ochone! it was

* The usual name given to the fairies in many parts of Ireland. In remote districts any mention of these (supposed) powerful beings was habitually accompanied by some such deprecatory ejaculation as that given above.

God's good deed, for all turned out to be good Catholics from old Spain; one of them was very rich, too, the others said!"

"But that's true, Vara dear!" said Polly eagerly, "what became of the beautiful little cross the strange gentleman gave you at his off-going, when your father wouldn't take any payment from him?"

"I have it still—at least Maureen has it—there's relics in it, you know; so as young people are more open to danger and temptation, I just gave it to the little girl—but what's in the wind now?—My soul to happiness! but there's Shan and Brien at it hard and fast—oh! that girl again! *wirra strua!* but it's hot water we're in with her!" And away she ran in the direction of the noise, with the lightness and speed of five-and-twenty.

"What did she say about Brien?" cried old More Kineely, rising from her seat with the help of Aileen's arm—"I thought she named him?"

"Oh! it's nothing, More, nothing," said her friend soothingly, "only a little difference between him and Shan Driscoll."

A trembling seized on the attenuated frame of the aged parent, and she vainly tried for some moments to get out a word. Grasping the frail arm that supported her, she extended her hand towards the crowd which had now collected around the combatants, and tried to move in that direction. In vain did the two old women seek to pacify her by assurances that there was no danger, and that all

was over now. The more they tried to replace her on her seat, the more violently did she struggle against them, and, at last, with a strength borrowed from desperation, she broke from their grasp, and was tottering off alone, when they, seeing her resolved on going, hastened after her, and taking her on either side, made the best of their way towards where the scuffle was going on. The dense crowd opened directly at the first sight of old More, and there sure enough were Brien and Shan with their jackets off, the former struggling to shake off the sinewy grasp of Vara, while Yeman and another young man endeavored to hold back the other. The brow of each was black as midnight, but neither uttered a word; the very intensity of their passion choked their utterance. Brien having the weaker force to contend with succeeded at length in extricating himself, and with a cry of exultation sprang on Shan, but at the instant his grandmother's voice uttered his name in tones of piteous entreaty, and her feeble arms were thrown around his neck, while her palsy-shaken head sank helplessly on his shoulder. Unluckily, it was just at that moment that Shan, doubly enraged by being so long kept back, and putting forth all his great strength, managed to fling back Yeman's arm, and in his blind fury overlooking the presence of More, aimed a heavy blow at Brien with his clenched fist. A loud cry burst from the lookers-on; a shriek from Brien Kineely, a low, deep groan from the old woman, her

head all at once ceased to shake, and she lay motionless in her grandson's arms.

"Mother of God! he has killed her!" cried Brien in a tone of piercing anguish; "Ah! you villain, I knew it was in you!"

"Bring her to the air!" cried some of the women, and a passage was instantly opened. Shan, now trembling like an aspen, and pale as death, rushed forward to assist Brien, but the latter pushed him roughly away, telling him all he could do now was to keep out of his sight—and ask God's pardon for his sin—"and och! och!" he added, "amn't I as much to blame as he is!—oh! Maureen! Maureen! look at poor granny!"

Maureen had just then made her way into the crowd, and the sight of her brought a torrent of tears from the young man's eyes. Without waiting to ask a question, the girl bent down over the prostrate body of the old woman, and laid her hand on her heart, then threw back her cap, and placed her ear close to her mouth, Brien watching her with agonizing interest. With a heavy sigh Maureen arose and motioned to those around that there was no breath in the body. Aileen and Polly followed her example with the same success, and Brien, seeing from the expression of their faces that there was no hope, said to Yeman and Barney O'Hara in a thrilling whisper: "Help me, boys, to carry her home—oh! Shan! Shan! what have you done?"

"Brien Kineely," said Shan, who was now on his

knees beside the body, "as I have God to face, I didn't mean that blow for *her*."

"I know you didn't, Shan! but what's the difference to me? Can you give me back *my mother*—for more than a mother she was to me?"

"Brien, Brien! you'll set me mad," and Shan jumped wildly from the ground; "I tell you I'd give my own life over and over to give her back to you, but where's the use—the deed is done and can't be helped—oh! God forgive me!"

Just as the body was raised by the young men, Maureen and Vara holding a hand on either side, Randal bustled in, accompanied by Mr. Fitzstephen, who had returned some distance on hearing the tumult. Various altercations were by this time going on amongst the men, some taking sides with Brien, some with Shan, and Mr. Fitzstephen had tried in vain the exercise of his magisterial power. The Claddaghmen only laughed at his assumption of authority, and matters were every moment getting worse, especially when More's death became known. Just when Fitzstephen was beginning to think that his own personal safety required a hasty retreat, he met Randal running at full speed to the fatal spot.

"As a magistrate I will accompany you, Randal!" Fitzstephen said.

"Magistrate!—nonsense—begging your honor's pardon—I'm the only magistrate here. Boys," raising his stentorian voice to its highest pitch,

"boys! no more of this—let no one strike a blow. Brien Kineely and Shan Driscoll! you will meet at my house to-morrow at the hour of noon. Till then—keep the peace in God's name!" Silence immediately prevailed. "Go two or three of you, boys," said Randal again, "and leave Mr. Fitzstephen at the city-gates. Leave us, sir—you can do no good here—it will take myself to manage this!"

"Weren't my words true, astore?" demanded Aileen of her ancient friend as they followed the mournful procession that was moving towards Kineely's house. "See what the strangers brought to us this time!"

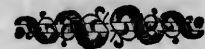
"Oh! Blessed Mother! but you spoke the black and sorrowful truth, Aileen!—I suppose it's what we'll be washing poor More and laying her out before the night's much older."

But whatever strange notion had got into Vara's head, she would not suffer a living soul to remain in the house with the corpse but herself, Maureen and Brien. "Go home every mother's soul of you," said she, speaking from the door to the anxiously expecting multitude, "Maureen and me can do all that's to be done the night, and you'll have time enough after to wake her decently. Leave the poor boy this one night to cry her as he'd wish. Randal, my man! be off home and teem the potatoes as fast as you can—I'm sure they're not *worth* teeming by this. Get the boys in *at once*—do you hear?—the sooner every body's in their bed it will be all the

better, for the night is wearing late. And Randal!—see to that unfortunate boy Shan Driscoll—but I see his mother has got round him—there she's taking him home. God help him this night, for he's more of a pity than even this poor fellow here!" laying her hand tenderly on the young man's arm.

There was much grumbling and dissatisfaction on the part of the crowd, but Vara's tone was so authoritative, and the fear of her tongue was so deeply impressed on the minds of all, that no one dared openly protest against her monopoly of the last duties to the dead. Even Randal, arbitrary as his own power usually was, did not, at least on this occasion, show any inclination to dispute the supremacy with his sturdy mother-in-law, but, on the contrary, was himself the first to do her bidding.

So the crowd at last dispersed, the bonfires died neglected through the so lately joyous streets, and two houses, at least, were left to loneliness and sorrow. Shame and remorse were gnawing the heart of Shan Driscoll, and only that one or two of the neighbors insisted on remaining with him and his mother, their night would have been still more dreary than that of the three lonely watchers who spent the long night-hours by the bed of death.



CHAPTER IV.

NEXT morning about nine o'clock the Mayor of the Claddagh was seated on a three-legged stool in the porch of his own dwelling. Behind him stood his two sons, leaning against the respective posts of the inner door. The space in front of the house was filled with a dense crowd of the men and women of the Claddagh, while on the steep roofs and pointed gables of the adjoining houses were perched the gaping urchins of the village, looking down from their giddy height with as much coolness and self-possession as though they were born monkeys.

At first all was noise and clamor, every one chattering to his or her next neighbor about the tragical occurrence of the previous night, and the unreasonable selfish conduct of old Vara Halliday who had kept the wake to her son and Maureen. Still there was no anger in the strictures passed on Vara, for her whims and oddities were nothing new, and this was only set down as another of her queer notions. Some there were, however, who began to hint, in language decidedly seditious, "that if Vara thought to bury old More like a heathen, without e'er a wake, she'd find herself under a mistake—that would be going rather far with her vagaries. If Brian lets her make so little of his granny, other people will not!"

Suddenly there was a "Hush—sh—sh" running through the crowd, and then a whisper of "It's Shan—poor boy!" Then a dead silence—a passage was opened as if by magic, through the thickly-wedged multitude, and Shan Driscoll walked up with a firm step to where Randal sat, unaccompanied except by his mother who clung to his arm as though she would never let it go. "God look on you, Nance!" was the murmured prayer that reached the mother's ear from every side as she passed, and once she raised her voice and said "Amen this day!" It was the echo of a breaking heart. It was pitiful to see the change that one sad night had wrought in Shan Driscoll. His tall form was bowed as with the weight of years; his bold, flashing eye had lost its light, and his dark cheek its rich color. The haggard lines of sorrow and remorse were distinctly visible on every feature, in mournful contrast to the gay, buoyant, reckless bearing, so natural to Shan Driscoll. There was no policeman, no guard of any kind, conducting the criminal. Not such was the custom of the Claddagh, where, indeed, murder or any other very serious crime was of rare occurrence. So rare was it, indeed, that in a period of twenty years, during which he had ruled the community, Randal O'Hara had never been called upon to administer judgment in a case of murder. On the present occasion the old man seemed fearfully alive to the dread and novel responsibility of his position; as might be gathered from

the nervous twitching of his whole frame, and the restless eagerness with which his eye glanced around from one familiar face to the other. It was easy to see that Randal More shrank from giving judgment in such a case, and yet he had that very morning sent back to Galway town the officers of justice deputed to arrest Shan Driscoll, and sent them back, as the applauding fisherwoman said, "with a flea in their ear, too," telling them that no Claddagh man should be given up to the Sassenach laws, even for murder, until the matter was first investigated by himself. "If I find him guilty of wilful murder," said Randal, "then I'll send him in myself, but till that time comes, keep out of our way, I tell you! You townspeople have nothing to do with the matter,—unless, as I said before, the boy is found guilty by us." Strange to say, the city authorities were obliged to acquiesce in this decision, well knowing that any direct interference with the established laws of the Claddagh would have raised a tumult not easily quelled.

Shan Driscoll, at length, stood face to face with Randal More, the patriarch, the leader, now the dreaded judge, but in the sudden flush and the as sudden paleness which overspread his face there was a deeper feeling manifested than any which concerned Randal. Shan had caught a glimpse of the motionless figures of Barney and Yeman in the background, and he feared that Maureen was within hearing, though happily for him invisible. This

thought weighed him down with an additional load of shame and confusion, but after all, it was light in comparison with the horror and remorse that froze his very blood. Pray he could not, think he could not,—heart, and mind, and soul, were all, as it were, under a fearful spell,—every faculty of his being had resolved itself into horror, and the awful word "*Murder*" echoed and re-echoed through the deepest recesses of his soul, dulling his outward sense of hearing to every other sound.

"Shan Driscoil!" said at length the deep voice of Randal, "I'm sorry to see you there in such a state. God knows I am! It's a bad business, my poor boy! and it's the heavy load you have on you this day. Still and all, Shan! it's like you didn't do it on purpose—and, in course, if you didn't, there's neither the shame nor the blame of murder on your head."

"God bless you for the kind word, anyhow, Randal!" said the young man's mother, drying her eyes with her blue apron at the same time, then turning to her son, "look up, avick machree! look up to the good God and Randal More that's a merciful judge like Him—don't you hear what he says to you?"

"I do, mother, I do," her son faintly murmured, "but it's little comfort for me—*I did it*, mother, I killed poor More, and her blood is on my hand—all the water in the bay couldn't wash it out—to my dying day I'll never get the load off my heart!"

However the sympathies of the people might pre-

viously have run, they were, by this time, all in favor of Shan, and many a rough fisherman was seen dashing away the tear that he could not repress.

"Where's Brian Kineely?" said Randal More. "Why is he not here?"

"Sure it's helping Vara to wake the old woman he is," cried one from the crowd; "sorrow one they'd let in but themselves and Maureen Dhu!"

Even at that moment a thrill of anguish shot through Shan's heart, as he saw in fancy Maureen Dhu bending with Brian over the corpse, and perhaps breathing execrations on the murderer's head.

"Go bring him here!" said Randal in an authoritative tone.

The messengers came back presently with blank faces. They had knocked and knocked again at the door and could get no answer,

"This is very strange," said Randal, rising from his seat and looking around with a troubled aspect; "boys," to his sons, "go and see what this means—bring Maureen here, at any rate!"

"I'm here, father," said a soft voice from the rear of the crowd, and Maureen made her way as quickly as possible to her father's side.

Shan Driscoll felt that Maureen's eyes were on him in an instant, but he dared not meet her glance. If he had it would have dispelled at least a portion of the darkness that enveloped his soul, for there was a pitying tenderness in her eye, as it rested on

him that somehow affected even his mother, and she breathed an inward blessing on the beautiful face that looked so kindly on her son.

"Is that boy coming, Maureen, or is he not?" demanded Randal, in no very gentle tone.

"Well! I don't know for certain, father;" and the girl still kept her eye on Shan as though anxious to exchange glances with him, "when I left there, himself and my granny were getting ready to come."

"Lord bless us!" cried one and another, "who'll stay with the corpse—some of you must go!"

"Nonsense!" said Randal, in allusion to what Maureen had said, "run, boys, and bring him here at once. I'll not wait another minute!"

Here a rush was made to the rear—a shout of doubtful meaning—a cheer wild and long—cries of "What is it, avick?" from those who could not move backwards with the crowd. "Make way there in front!" in trembling accents from behind, and up through the opening mass of human beings came a group which rivetted every eye, and, for the moment, stilled every pulse. It was Vara Halliday and Brian Kineely, supporting between them the tottering and ghastly, yet living and breathing, form of old More. Randal started again to his feet, his sons rushed forward with a wild "Hurrah!" and Maureen seizing hold of Shan's arm turned him full round till she brought him face to face with the resuscitated corpse. At first the strong man yielded like a

child to the guiding hand of Maureen, little dreaming, little hoping what sight awaited him. No sooner, however, had his eye lit on the withered face of More Kincey than his whole countenance changed and new life was infused into his sinking frame. *Her* he only saw in all that vast multitude. Even Maureen was forgotten for the moment—his mother—his judge—all—all, but that spectral-looking figure. At the first glance of her hollow eye he staggered and seemed ready to fall, but a second glance reassured him, and with a half-suppressed cry of joy he sprang forward, and catching the old woman in his arms, hugged her so unmercifully that she struggled in his arms, as though for life or death, and puffed and panted at a fearful rate. Brian at length thought fit to interpose, and extricated his grandmother as well as he could from Shan's but half-conscious grasp, laughing heartily at the same time.

"There, now, Shan, let her go, or you'll finish her now in earnest!"

Shan was no way abashed by the laughter which rang in his ears. Slowly he stepped back,—back,—back, gazing still with a sort of dreamy intensity on the shrivelled emaciated being who stood there supported by her grandson's arm. No one spoke—all hearts were too full for speech, till Shan himself broke the spell.

"So you're not dead, More?"

"Don't you see she's not, you great *ghomeril!*" This polite answer was from Vara.

"And I'm not a murderer?"

"Why no, honey! the Lord be praised for it; you're no such thing, and for that same I'm bound to offer up a *pater and ave* every day I have to live!" This was from the doating mother now trembling like an aspen, and weeping like a child, and she, too, ran and hugged old Moll in a way that the latter didn't at all relish—for she lifted her clean off her feet. "The Lord bless me!" muttered More Kineely as soon as she found herself again free, "they'll squeeze the life out of me—what little of it's in me—this very day!"

"May the great God of heaven be praised this day and for evermore!" was Shan's fervent ejaculation, and down he fell on his knees, with his hands clasped and his eyes upturned, the tears streaming down his pale cheeks, his broad chest heaving, and his whole frame quivering with emotion. "I'm not a murderer after all, and the stain is not on my soul!" Jumping up on a sudden impulse he ran to Brian and caught him by both hands.

There was no one within seeing or hearing that did not share more or less in Shan's joy and gratitude, and while Brian and he "made up the quarrel," a cheer arose from the assembled multitude that ran along the shores of Galway river and made the citizens look at each other, wondering what on earth was going on in the Claddagh. Most probably they

concluded that justice was being executed on the murderer.

While yet the young men stood together clasping each other's hand, Maureen pushed before her father, who was about to speak, and taking the clasped hands within her own, she looked by turns into the faces of the two who had so long been foes, and on her account.

"Shan!" she said, in a low voice, "sure you'll never, never forget this day!—nor you, Brian, friend of my heart!—no matter what may turn up, be friends—be brothers—for Maureen's sake!"

"Before God we will, Maureen!" replied Shan Driscoll, with characteristic warmth.

"Anything for you, machree!" was Brian's softly whispered answer, and then Maureen disappeared within the porch, and closed the door behind her.

"In the name of goodness," said Randal at length "now that I *can* get in a word, how did all this happen? was More not dead after all?"

"Faugh!" cried Vara from behind, "aren't you a nice lad for a Mayor?—if she was dead, sure it isn't on her feet she'd be, you great fluke of a fellow!—not but what she looked as *like* a corpse when we brought her home last night as any I ever laid a hand on—it wasn't till Maureen and me began to strip her that I conceited there was breath in her, and when I made sure of it, I sent Maureen to call in Brian, for you know we shut him out the back door till we'd get her washed—and then the poor

boy wanted right or wrong to run and tell Shan, so as to take the load off his heart, but I wouldn't let him, till we'd be sure of bringing her to—and that was no easy job, I can tell you, Randal, for the life was only fluttering in her all as one as the snuff of a candle that was a'most out. The cocks were crowing for midnight when we got her to open her eyes—I declare to you I cried for joy, and it's not easy *making* me cry." To this latter remark all present assented—in their hearts, of course.

"So there's the cat out of the bag!" said Vara, raising her voice with a most exulting air. "What'll you do now, boys and girls, when you'll have ne'er a wake at all?"

Many were loud in their assurances that the joy of finding old Moll alive was worth ever so many wakes, but from the house-tops came a widely different opinion.

"It's just like you, Vara! always spoiling sport on us!"

"Wait till we get *you* under-board, Vara! see if we don't have a wake of it!"

"I'll tell you what," cried one astute urchin, from his perch on Randal's chimney, "as she spoiled the wake let her give us a wedding!—hurrah!"

"Hurrah!" was re-echoed from roof to roof, some of the youngsters in their new excitement actually forgetting their position so far as to jump on their feet to the great terror and alarm of their respective owners, from whom arose a discordant chorus of

threats and warnings. All unheeded for the moment the warning of screaming mothers and menacing fathers. The spirit of mischief once aroused, the little fellows rather enjoyed the fright of their worthy parents, and soon they were all dancing in mid-air with the wild gestures and shrill cries of a troop of bacchantes in some ancient drama. Clear above all rang the names of "Shan and Maureen!" "No, no, Brian and Maureen!" the young elves being apparently in full possession of the claims of the rival suitors, each of whom seemed to have his own party amongst them. Even Randal tried his authority on the seditious juveniles, but all in vain; and their respective fathers were preparing to clamber up after them with no pacific intentions, truly, when all at once the obstreperous merriment ceased; down squatted every squaller on his perch, gathering himself into the smallest possible dimensions, while their seniors below looked round for the cause of the transformation. It was soon found, in the person of an old man clad in a suit of rusty black, the pockets far below his haunches, "with spectacles on nose," and stick in hand, a stick of knotted oak with a huge top on which rested two white, attenuated hands. It was Father Dominick, the prior of the neighboring convent, who had reached the centre of the crowd unnoticed, thanks to the dangerous position of the children which had naturally attracted every eye upwards.

"Fie, fie, children! what's this?" said the aged

priest, in those tremulous tones which mark the failing voice, "get down from the roofs every one of you?" In the twinkling of an eye almost, the urchins were safely landed on *terra firma*, and each mother made a rush to secure her own. A look from the priest and a motion of his uplifted finger brought them wholly in subjection to the maternal sway, and dead silence instantly prevailed.

"Why, Randal, man! what's this I hear?" said Father Dominick, "They say there was murder done amongst you last night!—*that* can't be true, at any rate!"

"Well! thank God, your reverence, it is *not* true, though I can't deny but it went very near it. Shan and Brian weren't satisfied with the scrimmage we had in town, but must go at it between themselves after we got home. The women, of course, made in to part them, and poor old More got an unlucky blow that Shan meant for Brian. She was carried home *dead*, your reverence, as dead as a herring, but Vara got her brought to some time in the night. More!—Vara!"—looking round and raising his voice, "bad wind to them for old women—begging your reverence's pardon!—what's come of them?"

"They're gone into the house, Randal," said one from the crowd, "along with Brian and the Driscolls and your boys—you'd best go in, after them, for maybe it's making a match they are—"

"Ah, then, if that's what thy're at, Rory!" made

answer another, "I'd like to have a peep at them, for there'll be another ruction before anything's done!"

"Well! I'm sure," said a fair-haired, blue-eyed girl who was considered a beauty, in her own way and by her own admirers, "I'm sure, it's a burning shame for Maureen O'Hara to have so many after her. I wouldn't have my name cried up like hers, or such bloody wars about me for all the money in Galway town!"

"Arrah wouldn't you then, Nell, my pigeon?" said a tall, young fellow who had made his way close to her, "I've a notion to try you some of these days,"—then lowering his voice, "there's Dan Shaughnessy hanging around somebody you know more than's pleasing to others—d'ye hear that now, Nelly *bawn*?"

Nelly's answer was lost even on her lover, for the door of Randal's cottage opened to admit its owner and the priest, and all eyes and ears were instantly on the stretch. Great hopes were at first entertained that the public curiosity was likely to be gratified, for the door was left open. Half a dozen heads were already protruded through the aperture, effectually shutting out the light, and nearly as many urchins had made their way into the cottage. This arrangement, though highly satisfactory to the fortunate occupiers of the doorway, was by no means acceptable to those in the rear, who loudly protested against such a monopoly.

The priest was by this time seated in a high-backed wicker chair, usually occupied by the burly Mayor; beside him stood that exalted individual, hat in hand, and before him, in a scattered group, were Shan and Brian, Barney and Yeman, while Vara had her two ancient friends on as many low stools. For herself, she went on with her household work as though nothing unusual was going forward. Ever and anon, however, she might be seen to glance at the various individuals present, especially when they came to speak, her keen eye gleaming with sudden intelligence, suited to the words uttered by each. Maureen, by a strange freak, squatted herself down between the two old women in an attitude that would have been ungraceful in any but her; as it was, she looked all the more beautiful from the contrast with the wrinkled crone on either hand. Probably she knew that, and placed herself there in her pretty girlish vanity. However that might be, the rival lovers found it hard to keep their eyes off her, which they both thought it necessary to do in the presence of the priest. It was infinitely amusing to see the intensity with which both of them fixed their eyes on other objects around, sometimes on the soot-blackened wall of the open chimney, sometimes on the uneven surface of the earthen floor, never by any chance on the faces before them, for they were awful in the dignity of Priest and Mayor. This restraint was especially hard on Shan, whose bold, reckless spirit could ill brook control. It is

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true, the sufferings of the night, and the dread press-
ure from which his mind was barely free, had some-
what subdued his natural hardihood, but still the
restraint sat awkwardly on him; and he stood for all
the world like a high-mettled steed, kept in by a
powerful hand, but ready at any moment to kick up
his heels and dash off in recovered liberty, regard-
less of bit or bridle. Perhaps the restraint which
he did evidently place upon his natural impatience
proceeded chiefly from the consciousness that his
hopes of winning Maureen were about to be either
confirmed or destroyed. This it was, as much as
the presence of the priest, that kept his eyes from
wandering to the face he so loved to look upon—
this it was that blanched his dark cheek and made
his whole frame tremulous. As for Brian, it was
hard to say what was passing in his mind, for the
placid gentleness of his demeanor was just the same
as usual; and his full blue eye sought the ground
partly in reflection, partly in embarrassment. If he
was agitated by any passion, as perchance he was,
the emotion was kept so far below the surface as to
be imperceptible to all eyes. Barney and Yeman
smiled significantly at each other, and nodded arch-
ly at their sister, who answered the gesture by a
careless toss of her head, and then turned her at-
tention on the priest, who, with his hand on his
mouth, elicited sundry little coughs from his own
throat, as though clearing that useful medium for a
speech of unusual importance.

Every one present, indeed, seemed impressed with the conviction that a crisis was at hand. Even the old tabby cat raised herself from her recumbent posture in the sunny little window, and sat staring around with eyes very much distended, as though wondering what on earth it all meant. This did not escape Maureen's quick glance, and she smiled meaningly to herself as she noted pussy's inquiring stare.

"Children," said Father Dominick, addressing the young people, "I want to know what all this means. How did murder find its way into the Claddagh?"

The young men looked at each other in mutual embarrassment; neither was willing to accuse the other, yet each very naturally wished to excuse himself. They also shrank from any close investigation of their secret motives.

Old More caught up the word murder. "Ah! then, don't say it, Father Dominick dear!—don't now and God love you!—sure the poor boy didn't mean it at all, and it's thankful I am on his account that I'm alive to say it. For all he's so hot, your reverence, there isn't a better-natured boy in the Claddagh."

"God bless you, More!" said Shan, in a tremulous voice, without looking at her, "I don't deserve it from you—indeed I don't!"

"I say you do," returned the old woman with a warmth all unusual at her age; "didn't your blow

cure my poor old head—don't you see Father Dominick? I never had a shake or ache in it, your reverence, since I came to, and it's what I'm in hopes that it'll keep quiet for the rest of my days!"

This surprising statement drew all eyes on More, and it was then for the first time observed that the palsy had completely left her. Shan's blow had indeed acted with the force and effect of a galvanic shock, and old More's head was as steady on her shoulders as any other in the place. Various exclamations of surprise escaped from each one present, and the crowd outside "taking up the wondrous tale" sent it like wildfire all over the village. Vara planted herself right in front of More, and squatting down on a level with her gazed silently and steadily into her face for several minutes, then rising turned to the priest and said in a most oracular voice:

"It's a fact, Father Dominick!—well, if that doesn't beat me out, any how!—if I hadn't my eyes on her the whole blessed night over, I'd swear it wasn't her was in it! Maureen Dhu! do you see that?"

"To be sure I do, granny!"

"Well! I tell you the hand of God is in it, and it's my notion that you ought to take Shan for the same reason!"

"Shut the door there!" said the priest, and Randal went to obey the order, but a cry of entreaty rose from the deeply interested spectators.

"Ah! then, Randal, won't you let us see what's going on?"

"Sure, your reverence, it's no harm for us to see or hear what passes—we'd know it all before long!—ah! don't—don't now, Randal!"

"I can't help it—it's the priest's bidding I'm doing!" That settled the question, the heads were withdrawn from the aperture, and the door was closed. A low murmur of discontent was heard outside, but it gradually subsided in the deep hush of intense anxiety. It was a momentous crisis, involving nothing less than the fate of Maureen Dhu, the pride and boast of the Claddagh. Conflicting were the hopes and fears of the multitude; parties were pretty equally divided between the rival candidates, but still it was remarked that most of the seniors were in favor of Brian, while the juniors were principally on the side of Shan. As time passed on, every minute seemed an hour, and yet no one dreamed of leaving the spot.

Within, there was much talk going forward. Randal, taking up his mother-in-law's last words to Maureen, declared that he didn't want to force his child, it was all the same to him whether she chose Shan or Brian, or for that matter, any other decent boy in the village but he wished her to say the word at once, and then his mind would be easy. On hearing this, the rivals stood eagerly forward, Shan a step or two in advance of Brian. The Widow Driscoll who had hitherto been concealed by

the standing figures of the young men, now glided behind Maureen, and stooping down laid her hand on her shoulder, and whispered in her ear: "I know you have a liking for Shan—haven't you now, Maureen? Every one says you were made for one another? just look at him, avourneen! as he stands there—sure if *you're* not his wife, there's ne'er a wife for him in the Claddagh!"

"Maureen!" said old More, laying hold of the hand which still rested on her knee, her shrill, piping voice and ghastly look of piteous entreaty giving a singular solemnity to her words, "Maureen! don't say again Brian!—*don't or i'll break his heart*, and I couldn't live after him! Shan Driscoll is a good boy, but still and all he's not Brian Kineely!" and the old woman seconded her words by an admonitory and significant squeeze of the hand she held, together with a corresponding shake of the head.

"Well! this is something singular!" remarked the priest, with a benevolent smile, though he looked somewhat puzzled, too; "I came here to investigate a fatal quarrel, and it's what I find myself presiding in a court of love. Maureen, my child! come over here—I see the counsel on both sides are coming hard on you there!"

The girl stood up, and with an arch smile on her face, took her station at her father's side, a little behind the priest. "That's right!" said Father Dominick.

"Now, child! tell me this—are you willing to take either of these young men for a husband?"

This was coming to the point; the smile faded from Maureen's lips; for the first-time Shan and Brian turned their eyes upon her, but it was now her turn to avoid their gaze. Her lips moved as though she were speaking to herself, but no sound escaped them.

"Take either of them!" repeated her father angrily, "why wouldn't she, Father Dominick? Blow me overboard, but she *must* make a choice. I'll have no more of her nonsense."

"Father dear! don't speak so harsh," said his son Barney; "take her gently, and you'll do more with her!"

His sister thanked him by a smile for which either of the rival suitors would have braved the wildest storm that ever swept the bay. Her lustrous eyes were dim with tears, and the color came and went on her cheek like the fitting clouds of sunset. Still there was a strange expression of something like derision visible about the mouth, just as though the girl were half inclined to laugh at the whole affair. This was quickly noticed by her lynx-eyed grand-dame, and that venerable matron, rushing forward, shook her fist close to her face.

"None of your tricks now, my dainty doll! you're in for it at last, and do your best—why don't you answer the priest, I say?"

"I'll answer his reverence, but not any one else,"

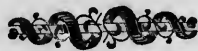
said the girl sharply; "you'd best take it easy, gran, and maybe you'll fare better! Father Dominick! I don't want to marry at all—that is, not now! amn't I time enough, please your reverence?"

A fierce ejaculation escaped her father; Brian literally gasped for breath, and Shan made an impatient gesture.

"But at another time, Maureen," urged the priest, "you see your father wishes you to decide now that we are all together—only make your choice, my child, and take your own time."

Maureen now seemed really perplexed; she looked full at Brian, and Yeman darting behind her, whispered, "Remember the storm off Black Head!" Maureen's heart throbbed. She glanced at Shan, and thought how he had risked his own life at her request to save Nanno Kenny. Her bosom heaved, and her brain burned with the fierce struggle going on within. "I will—I must!" she murmured half audibly, and her right hand was slowly, very slowly extended—to which of the two was never known, for at the moment rose a wild shout in the street without, and the door was flung open by the aid of a stout shoulder.

"Randal More!" cried many voices, "there's Galway boats abroad on the bay fishing!"



CHAPTER V.

Strange to say it was a positive relief to both Shan and Brian when the crisis of their fate was thus postponed—each had still room to hope, and Maureen's love still burned as a beacon on the mount of time, whereas it might at that instant have been quenched forever in utter hopelessness. It was yet possible to win her, each thought, and if *he* was not as yet declared the winner, why neither was he the loser—the race was still equal, and its thrilling excitement gave a charm to every passing hour.

The crowd was already in headlong flight towards the wharf, all anxious and all curious. Randal and his sons dashed on to the front, closely followed by Shan and Brian. No words passed between them as they ran—there was little time for words—but instinctively they tried to outrun each other, as though their fate depended on it, and by the time they reached the water-side, Shan being ahead of his rival, turned to him with an air half exulting, half threatening: "You may as well give it up, Brian Kineely!—you couldn't do it, man! and do your best!"

"Couldn't I now?—well! we'll see! But I'd advise you not to crow so loud, at any rate!" Brian's habitual coolness was at all times in striking contrast with his rival's fiery ardor, and never more

so than at that moment. The calm confidence of his tone was somehow very annoying to Shan, and the heightened color on his cheek denoted the rising passion, but happily Randal's voice came to still the tempest, and his words and gestures turned all eyes on the bay.

"See there now, boys! wasn't it well worth our while to run? What do you think of that for a chase?"

A murmur of disappointment was the first sound heard, but a roar of contemptuous laughter quickly followed. There was just one fishing-boat in sight, and that contained but four or five men, two of whom were rowers."

"Barney and Yeman! get out a row-boat there! —let me see who'll go—it'll be only fun, so we'll let the youngsters have it."

The boat being ready there was a clamorous outcry from "the youngsters," scores of whom rushed eagerly forward.

"Stand back there, all of you," Randal said again, "five or six is all we want—Shan Driscoll!" Shan was on board in an instant. Brian Kineely's cheek flushed and he made a step forward, then paused and looked anxiously at the Admiral. The old man smiled, and pointed to the boat, and Brian sprang to a seat by Yeman's side and seized an oar with nervous trepidation as though he feared still to lose the chance of going. Two other young men being successively named by Randal, took their places in

the boat with joyous alacrity, and the little craft was already some yards from the shore, when the searching glance of the rivals discovered Maureen making her way through the crowd, and involuntarily rested on their oars.

"What makes you stop?" said Shan snappishly, looking over his shoulder at Brian.

"What makes *you* stop?" retorted the other.

Maureen reached her father's side, panting and breathless. First she cast her eyes on the boat beneath her, and nodded with a pleased smile at the kindly upturned faces, then she glanced at the strange boat, carelessly and lightly. All at once she changed color, and looked more earnestly, then a cry of surprise escaped her:

"Why, father, them are the Sassenach gentlemen that were here last night!"

"Why, no, Maureen! it can't be—but stay! let me look again! Blow me overboard, Shan, but the child's right! They came out on a taunt this morning because we sent them home with a flea in their ear. Well, as the weather's brave and hot, maybe they'll be the better of a dip—but mind your eyes, lads! for them Sassenachs are treacherous."

"A fig for their treachery, and far less!" cried Shan; "they can't harm *us* on the water, do their worst! God be with you all!" his words were of general application, but his eyes rested on Maureen. "Tell my mother there's no danger, for I see she hasn't got down yet!"

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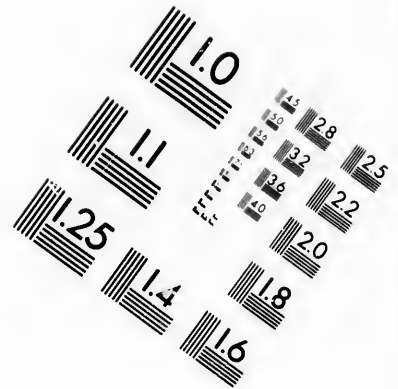
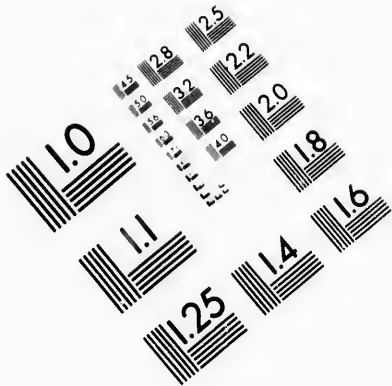
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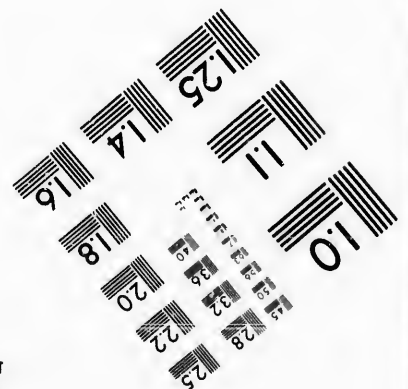
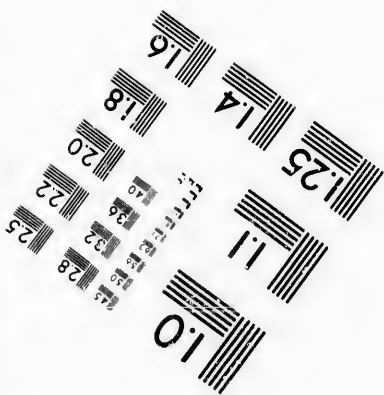
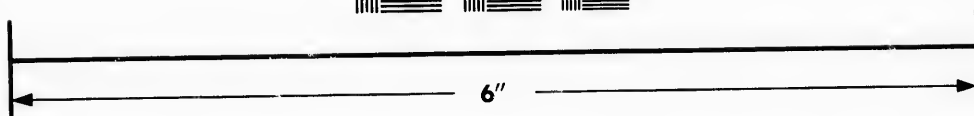
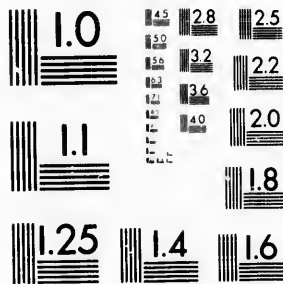
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"And *my* granny, Maureen, you know what to say to her!"

"I do, Brian! God and the Virgin keep you all, and bring you safe back to us! Shan Driscoll! you've a sharp eye—keep a good look-out, mind I tell you, for them gentlefolk arn't like yourselves—they're as deep as draw-wells!"

"Never fear, Maureen! never fear," said Tom Flaherty, one of their companions; "we'll bring them all safe back to you, please God! and if we don't have the wedding then I'll give it up!"

"Get along, boys, will you? there's no time for foolery—they chaps have no mind to run, I see!" This was enough. Away flew the boat over the gleaming, glancing waters, and a hearty cheer followed it from friends and kinsfolk on the shore, giving strength to the rowers' arms, and the buoyancy of hope to their hearts.

"Now, I'll tell you what it is," said Randal, "if the women were at home they'd find plenty to do—and they're only losing their time here,—for all that's to be seen. Them chaps won't make fight, depend upon it—they'd be afeard of spoiling their fine clothes. Maureen, honey! get along home like a good girl—there's one of the nets badly in want of some repairs, and your granny has got to go to town to-day!"

"Father!" said Maureen, in a low voice, and with a reproachful glance which the old man well understood, "father, would you *bid* me go?"

"Well, no, child, no!—there *may* be more in it than we think—but I'd be glad if some of them would go home and mind their business—still and all they want to see what's going on—to be sure they do, the creatures!—we'll let them be!—My soul to happiness! but here's the old women—was there nobody to keep them above? and Vara driving the others before her like a flock of geese—cackle! cackle! cackle! they're at it already, I vow to God!—our ears will be dinned now, anyhow, about 'my boy Shan,' and 'little Brian'—and, stay, there's Tom Flaherty's aunt that has a tongue like the clapper of a mill—and our Vara—well! well! Lord grant me patience!" and turning once more to the water, he resolutely kept a deaf ear to the incessant clatter of the ancient dames, who provokingly planted themselves in his immediate vicinity under the command of Vara Halliday. As for Maureen she heeded not their approach, nor was she at all disturbed by their exclamations. Her attention was fixed on the little boat so merrily bounding over the glassy wave, and her heart beat almost audibly as she saw it nearing the other. By a simultaneous movement Shan and Brian turned their heads, and clearly distinguishing Maureen's figure, they both waved a cheerful salute—then gave their individual attention to the affair in hand.

"You here again!" said Shan Driscoll in English, of which language he knew but little, yet more than any of the others, "You seem to like our company—

but we don't want you here for all that—you just haul up your anchor!"

A contemptuous laugh was the only answer, and a still more contemptuous stare. The fishing lines hung motionless in the pellucid water, as though held by hands of stone.

"You won't—won't you!—well! you'll never see it again!" and drawing a jack-knife, prepared for the purpose, with one stroke he cut the rope which secured the anchor, while Barney O'Hara grasped the painter and dexterously lashed the boats together.

During the moment that the boat was adrift, two of the officers seized the oars, calling on the rowers to pull out; the tall officer, on the contrary, drew a revolver and aimed it at Shan's head: "You that can cut so well, cut those lashings instantly, or by —," and he swore a tremendous oath, "I'll blow your brains out!"

"Now for the Claddagh, boys!" cried Shan, with a disdainful smile. That smile and those words would have been his last, had not Brian Kineely, seeing his danger, dashed up the officer's arm with a sudden stroke of his oar, then snatching the knife which lay on the bench between him and Shan, he severed the rope at a blow, and leaping on the side of the enemy's boat, turned it right over, and left the whole party, himself included, sputtering and sprawling in the water. A hearty laugh from the Claddagh men told their appreciation of Brian's

dexterity, and himself laughed as loud as any of them, for to him a dip in the bay was rather pleasant than otherwise that hot summer's day. But his quick ear had detected a cry of pain amid the chorus of curses and imprecations that followed the capsizing of the boat, and he paused with one hand on the taffrail, and the other reached up to Yeman and Tom Flaherty who leant over the boat's side to help him up.

"What keeps you there?" cried Yeman; "aren't you cool enough yet?"

No answer from Brian, but a piteous supplication from two of the officers to be taken on board. They had succeeded in gaining the boat's side, and clung there with the desperate grasp of despair. "Mercy!" they groaned, "mercy!"

"Bad right we have, then," said Shan, in answer to an inquiring look from Barney, "but still and all I suppose we must—let us haul them in!"

It was done accordingly, and one of them immediately cried:

"Where's Hamilton?"

"And where's Brian?" echoed the Claddagh men in a breath. "Mother of God! where is he?"

"He was just gitting in," said Yeman with a pale face and quivering lip, "Tom and me had as good as a hold of him, but when we took our eyes off him for a moment, he was gone!"

"By the good daylight!" cried Shan Driscoll, pulling off his jacket, "the Sassenach has dragged

him down! Oh! Brian! my poor fellow! is that the way with you after you saving *my* life a minute ago?"

Scarcely knowing what he did, Shan could with difficulty be kept from jumping overboard to search for Brian, living or dead, when a shout from Barney electrified all on board. Following the direction of his finger, they beheld Brian just rising above the water several yards down the stream. With one hand he was gallantly stemming the current while the other supported the sinking form of Captain Hamilton, whose head hung heavily against his shoulder.

A deafening cheer from the boat, heartily joined in by the two officers, was faintly answered by Brian, whose strength was fast failing.

"The oars! the oars!" cried Shan Driscoll wildly, and rushing himself to seize one of them, he came full against one of the officers who was leaning anxiously over the side forgetful for the moment of his half-drowned condition. The shock would have borne down even a stronger man, and there he lay kicking and struggling amongst the benches unnoticed by the fishermen—who were all too intent on saving Brian to give any attention to him—till his friend, after many fruitless attempts, at length got him raised to a sitting posture. Fortunately for Brian and his now helpless burden, it took but a few vigorous strokes of the friendly oars to bring the boat to them, and in less time than it takes to tell it they were safely lifted on board. Brian was

merely out of breath, and after a few minutes' puffing and panting, recovered the use of his tongue, but the officer gave no signs of life, and poor Brian hung over him with tears in his eyes.

"Wouldn't it be a poor case now if he'd never come to, and we had such a hard tussel to save him?—get out of the way there, and don't keep the air from him!" This last exclamation was addressed to the Captain's friends, Brian being oblivious of the fact that they did not understand him. Seeing them deaf to his admonitions, he gave them a shove to one side, declaring them a couple of thick-sculled *bosthoons*.

"Where in the world did you light on him, Brian," inquired Barney.

"Why, where but at the bottom below," retorted Brian; "he was almost gone, you see, when he went down the second time—I think myself he got a ball in him somewhere when his pistol went off. Do you think there's e'er a breath at all in him, Shan?"

"I'm afraid not, Brian—but still God's good—he *may* come to, after all!"

"Lord grant it!" was Brian's fervent ejaculation, as he bent down and applied his ear to the officer's mouth; "somehow or another I feel as if I'd have his death on me."

"Is he breathing?" demanded one of the other officers anxiously.

"Sure the boy can't tell whether or no," responded Shan, "with that thievin' hair that's about his

mouth—troth! it isn't on a Christian face the likes of it ought to be!"

"Hur—r—ah!" shouted Brian, jumping up in an ecstasy, and clapping Shan on the shoulder; "there's life in him yet, Shan, my boy! he's just like my granny when she was coming to last night!"

"I say boys! what's all this about—what's to do here?" cried the rough voice of Randal More, and the fishermen looking round with a start, saw the Admiral close alongside in another boat. "Here you left these two poor devils to sink or swim, until God sent *us* to pick them up," and he pointed to the two oarsmen. "Right or wrong, boys! you should save the life—a life's a life—always! Is there any one dead or dying there?"

"It's only one of the Sassenachs, Randal, that Brian fished up from among the weeds below—he's coming to finely, though!"

"I'm proud to hear it, the villain!—let me have a look at him, the aggravating blackguard!" and laying hold of the oar held out to him by Tom, the Admiral swung himself out of one boat into the other with the ease and almost the lightness of early youth.

The officer was by this time fast recovering his consciousness, and opening his eyes, fixed them on Randal with a vacant stare, then moaned heavily and raised his hand to his right shoulder. "There's something wrong there,—I thought so!" observed Brian.

"How do you feel now?" said the Admiral, bending down over him.

A faint murmur proceeded from the pale lips, but no one caught the words. "Raise him up, boys! above his breath!" cried Randal, "Virgin Mother! he'll bleed to death!—see there!" and he pointed to the dark red stain now clearly visible on the blue regatta jacket.

Without a moment's delay the jacket was torn off and a handkerchief bound on the gaping wound—so as to staunch the blood.

"I say, old fellow! where are you taking us to?" demanded one of the other officers, as soon as their fears for Hamilton were somewhat relieved.

"Old fellow in your teeth!" said Shan Driscoll, fiercely, "do you know who you're speakin' to?"

"Why yes, I rather think so!—a precious rough specimen of an old fisherman!"

"Have a care what you say, my good lad! if you don't want to get your head in your fist—that's the Admiral of the Claddagh, the chief ruler of Galway Bay!"

"Do you hear that, Melville?" cried the officer to his unwounded comrade, and both laughed heartily. "If that isn't a good joke. Why, you great sea-bear, are not these waters subject to Queen Victoria?"

"Not a drop of them belongs to her—not as much as would fall from your finger—she has no more authority over us Claddagh men on Galway Bay than you have—we rule here, my boy! and Randal

More rules *us*—so mind you speak him fair, or you'll not be thankful to yourself."

By this time Hamilton had recovered the use of his speech, and asked who it was that saved him, "for," said he, "I remember perfectly being unable to swim with the stiffness of this wounded arm and the weakness arising from the loss of blood. I went down a second time, I know well!"

Brian was pointed out to him, and the officer shook him warmly by the hand. "You're a brave fellow," said he, "and for your sake I'll always honor the Claddagh men. It was a noble act."

This being explained by Shan, Brian replied, with a smile, that he couldn't do less, seeing that it was by his means the pistol went off, "and I didn't mean that," he added, "but only to save Shan's life. I wanted to upset the boat, it's true enough, but I don't know much about pistols, so I didn't think it would go off of itself that way. It'll be a warning to the Sassenachs for the time to come!"

"Well, young man! all I can say is, that I owe you my life—those from whom I had a right to expect assistance would have left me, it seems, to my fate!"

"Upon my honor, Hamilton! you're very unreasonable! I assure you, we had hard work to save ourselves!—*we're* not water-dogs, you must remember!"

"Oh! of course not—you belong, rather, to the poodles! But this wound,—deuce take it! I feel

quite faintish!—how are we to get into town? I suppose that unlucky boat can't be righted till it gets on shore!"

The fishermen had been conferring amongst themselves, but Randal hearing this, turned again to the Captain: "We have your boat in tow—for yourselves, by right you're our prisoners, as we caught you trespassing on the bay."

A humorous smile flitted across the pale features of the wounded man, but he said nothing.

"I say you're our prisoners," resumed Randal, "but on account of the state you're in, and the bad wound you've got, an' on account of the decent turn that we see in *you*—not all as one as these others—we'll let you go, for this time, hoping that you'll let *us* alone for the time to come, an' meddle no more *with us*!"

"Many thanks to you, my worthy fellow,—I beg pardon!—most noble Admiral!"

"Hold your tongue now, Sassenach! words are air, an' we want no blarney!—boys!" to his sons and Shan, in their own language, "get those lubbers of oarsmen in here and lash that boat of theirs to this—take them all into town, and hurry back, for we've lost more time with the jackdaws than what they're worth!"

His orders were quickly obeyed, Brian and he shook hands with the Captain who once more assured the latter of his undying gratitude, and the parties separated.

Leaving the one boat on its way back to the Claddagh, and the other up the river to Galway, let us see how things went in Randal's cottage after the sudden departure of the men. The priest had left his seat during the hurry, and stood with his stick in one hand and his hat in the other, while he glanced from Maureen to Vara, and from Vara back again to her grand-daughter's blushing face, where his gaze rested.

"Maureen!" said he, at length, "you're a good girl, but I don't know what to make of you. Do you ever mean to marry?"

"Ay! that's the question, Father Dominick," put in the grand-dame; "if she does, now's her time—let her say yes or no—and if she doesn't, the sooner it's known the better—there's the two decentest boys in the Claddagh breaking their hearts about her."

"And each other's heads, too, once in a while," observed the priest, with a smile; "that's the worst of it. I protest, Maureen! this won't do at all—we must tether the kid, my daughter!"

"But what would the kid do, then, your reverence?" said Maureen, with an arch-smile, and a half-serious shake of the head, "the *spanshil** spoils all sport, and if two of us were *spanshilled* together, Father Dominick, maybe it's what we'd be one pulling this way and the other that—I'm thinking we're better friends now than we'd be then!"

* The *spanshil* effectually impedes the motions of any unruly animal, by tying the forefoot and hindfoot together, on one side.

"Well, but Brian, my child!—surely you and Brian could agree—there's not a better tempered boy in the village.

"I know that, your reverence!—it's too good tempered he is—him and me wouldn't pull together, at all."

"Now, are you in earnest, Maureen? Perhaps you think more of Shan?"

"To be sure she does," cried Vara, from the dresser, where she was arranging her wooden ware.

"Don't press me too hard, now, Father Dominick!" said Maureen, with a sudden change of manner, "my granny and my father, and all of them are at me—don't *you* take part with them, or I can't stand it. Oh! your reverence, *make* them let me alone—do, and God bless you. If you only *knew* how little I'm thinking of marriage, and sure, sure, I'm time enough!"

There was no resisting the passionate supplication of Maureen's look, nor the wild energy with which her words were uttered. The priest could only gaze and wonder at the very unnecessary earnestness, as he thought, with which the girl preferred her petition. He felt himself moved to pity, although he could not tell why, and old Vara herself cooled down wonderfully.

"Well, after all, child, it's your own look-out, and we're fools to be burning our fingers at another's fire. I suppose, your reverence, her time isn't come, for, sure if it was, she couldn't keep it back."

Here the cheering from the wharf reached Maureen's ear, and she started off abruptly, muttering something about her father. When she was gone, Vara and the priest looked at each other, and for a moment neither spoke.

"Vara!" said the priest, at last breaking silence, "I'm an old man, and have seen many things in my time; books have I studied, and men, but of woman's heart I know little. Can you read me this riddle?"

"Father Dominick!" replied the old woman, and her dark features assumed a sort of sybilline character that startled her auditor, "Father Dominick!" she repeated, "mind I tell you there's something in that girl that's past the common. In dreams of the night I often see her in strange, wild places, among ghostly people"—and Vara's face grew darker and her look more solemn—"with the garments of the stranger on her back, and the speech of the stranger on her tongue. Oh, oh, your reverence! there's fear in my heart about that girl—pulse of my heart she is—and that's the reason why I'm pushing her on. I think if she was once settled for life, with a decent, honest partner, I'd feel myself twenty years younger."

The priest, seeing the old woman's perturbation, endeavored to make light of her fears. "Pooh! pooh! Vara, I thought you had more sense than to be heeding idle dreams!"

"Ah! Father Dominick, there's more truth in dreams, sometimes, than there is in our daily life—that's my notion, anyhow, and God grant it mayn't

be true in regard to Maureen! Why, your reverence, it's only about a week agone since I dreamed that I was trying my ring* on her, and it wouldn't stay on her finger—it fell off as fast as I put it on—think of that, Father Dominick, dear!—my marriage-ring, and her mother's, too! If there's anything in that dream, it's no wonder I'd be down-headed."

"God save you all!" said the priest, addressing a group of men and women who had just come down from the upper part of the village, arrayed in their Sunday clothes. "How is all *with* you? I thought every soul in the Claddagh was down at the wharf."

"Well, indeed, I suppose *we'd* be there, too, your reverence," returned one of the men, "only for what happened last night!"

"And what was that, Denny?"

"Why nothing at all, your reverence, only that our Jack and Peggy Sullivan went off with themselves last night from the bonfire,† and we were all up at Terry's this morning making the match."

* In Hall's *Ireland* we find an interesting account of a custom peculiar to the Claddagh—viz., the wedding-ring being handed down as an heir-loom in the family. The ring is always transferred by the mother to the daughter first married. Some of these Claddagh rings are very heavy and of curious workmanship, costing from two to three pounds.

† This is another of the peculiar customs of the Claddagh people. Hardly any of their public festivities passes off without one or more young couples "running away" together. The thing is so common that it excites neither surprise nor displeasure, and it is a fact creditable to these young Claddagh men that no advantage is ever taken of the girl who thus places herself in the power of her lover. They generally go to some friend's house.

"Very good, Denny! very good—I heard they were pulling a cord together this time past—were you up at the Convent?"

"To be sure, your reverence, we just came from there—the porter told us you were down somewhere here, he thought, so we made free to come after you. We're going to have the young couple spliced this evening——"

"Oh! of course—the sooner the better, as things have gone so far. Where *are* they?"

"Up at our house, your reverence!" said Terry Sullivan. "They went to her Aunt Polly's last night, and when we got word this morning of where they were—indeed, we partly guessed it—her mother and myself went up and brought her home."

"Well! I'll be at home any time you come. Good day, Vara. I'm sorry the match wasn't finished here this morning. Take my word for it, Maureen and the boy, whoever he is, are waiting to make a run of it some of these moonlight nights, when you're not looking for it."

When the priest was gone, the Sullivans, man and wife, invited Vara and all the family to the wedding. "Of course, we'll not have house-room for the tithe of all we'll have," observed Norry, "but the weather's brave and hot, thanks be to God, and we can eat and drink, and dance, and everything, in the open air. There'll be lashings and leavings of everything, please God; for my

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father—God rest him!—left ten pounds to Peggy, and we mean to spend it on her wedding, every penny.”

“And why wouldn't you, astore?” rejoined Vara. “Sure you'll never miss it when God gives you the way of doing it. You can plenish the house for them easy enough, and I know Denny here will be givin' Jack a share in the boat, so they'll do well, please God Almighty!”

“Troth an' I will, Vara! with the heart and a half,” put in Denny, a very easy-going man of rather a taciturn habit, who usually left the talking to his wife, when present. “I'm better pleased at this match than if I got a whole cargo of prime fish, just on account of the old quarrel between myself and Terry here. Give us your hand, Terry! It's ever and always a lucky match that heals an old wound; isn't it, Terry?” Terry and Terry's wife answered affirmatively and affectionately.

“Are you going to town?” demanded Vara, hastily, for she just then perceived the Widow Driscoll and More Kineely moving along in the direction of the wharf. “If you are, call for me. I'll only wait to see how things are going below, and then get a bit of dinner.”

“Well, I b'lieve our Cauth *has* to go in,” observed Norry, “for some nick-nack or another; but we were all in this morning and got our wants. Mind and tell the boys now, Vara—I mean them that's one, and Randal and Maureen, and all of them.”

But stay, Denny; I think you ought to go down to the wharf and ask Randal yourself—you and Terry."

"Sorra that they will," said Vara, snappishly. "Go home, all of you, and you'll find plenty to do. Never mind Randal. He'll be there in full feather, I'll go bail!"

So the bridal party went off well satisfied, and Vara hurried after her cronies, burning with curiosity to know what was passing on the water. Various rumors had echoed through the half-deserted streets of the village during the short interval, and the maternal fears of the old women had been roused to an intolerable degree by the willfully-exaggerated reports of the urchins, who kept running to and fro in the "great news by telegraph" style of more *civilized* communities. On their march to the wharf the aged matrons were met by at least half-a-dozen of these self-constituted scouts, one after another.

"Shan Driscoll's shot!" cried one.

"Brian Kineely's drowned!" shouted another.

"No, it's the Sassenachs," cried a third; "their boat's upset!"

"Hur-r-rah!" from the shore, in a chorus of manly voices, "they're all saved!"

Agitated beyond endurance by these conflicting accounts, the old women hurried onward as fast as their infirmities would permit; Vara dragging the others on with masculine vigor and energy. They had hardly reached the shore when Randal, urged

by Maureen, put off, as we have seen, for the place of action. The cheers and fond congratulations that hailed Shan, on his return with Randal, lost half their value, in his estimation, when he looked in vain for Maureen. The mother's blessing and embrace were welcome, but the light of Maureen's smile was wanting; and when Randal himself noticed her sudden disappearance, a pang of jealousy shot through Shan's heart, and he said within himself, "It's because Brian isn't with us!"



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CHAPTER VI.

A few days after the events recorded in our last chapter, Mr. Fitzstephen and his mother sat together at an open window of their drawing-room, looking out on the rather fashionable thoroughfare of Dominick street. It was evening, and the slanting beams of the setting sun illumined the opposite roofs and chimneys, and poured in a flood of mellow light through the thin summer drapery of the windows. The furniture of the spacious apartment was rich and elegant, yet by no means modern; on the contrary, there was what might be called an old-fashioned look about the crimson velvet couches, the card and centre tables of the very darkest mahogany, with those old feet of theirs terminating in claws, and the lofty, narrow pier-glasses in quaintly-adorned frames. There were also one or two ebony cabinets, inlaid with ivory in an antique fashion, and the painted figures that looked down from the green walls were nearly all clad in the costumes of departed generations. Of proud and stately bearing were those ancient ladies and gentlemen, and no wonder, for they were the Blakes, and Frenches, and Lynches, and Fitzstephens, who had ruled Galway in its palmy days—the merchants who were princes in their generation, and the high-bred matrons who were their wives and mothers. Mar-

rying amongst themselves for many generations, the Norman families of Galway were all more or less connected by kindred and affinity, so that the same individuals were to be seen in very many groups of family portraits throughout the city. They were a goodly company, those painted ancestors of Giles Fitzstephen, and it was not strange that his mother, herself a French woman, should take pleasure in contemplating those shadows from the past. Yet, strange to say, she presented in her own person a living contrast to the prevailing characteristics of her pictured progenitors. She was a little, round, and rather dumpy woman, with a cheerful, pleasant countenance, bright as the sunshine streaming in there through the window, and looking fresher and fairer than many women of thirty, notwithstanding the silvery hair so carefully folded under the widow's cap; for Mrs. Fitzstephen had never thrown off the weeds which, fifteen years before, she assumed with a heavy heart. It would be hard to recognize in her the daughter and heiress of that dark-browed Anthony French whose picture hangs just over yon ancient cabinet to the left of the fireplace; and yet she is and was the only child of that very man, and for twenty long years the wife of that stately Arnold Fitzstephen whose pictured likeness overhung the mantelpiece, as his living image leaned in thoughtful mood on the pier-table opposite his mother, while his well-proportioned form reclined in a high, narrow-backed chair of the same venerable aspect

as the tables and couches before mentioned. Some visitors of Mrs. Fitzstephen's had just retired, and of them the mother and son had been speaking.

"Well, I declare, Giles, I can't conceive what objection you can have to Emily. I think her by far the prettiest girl in Galway; and as for manners, why, there is a *finish* about her that is really quite captivating."

"You think so, mother," replied the son, with a smile; "but you are hardly an impartial judge. Your pretty god-daughter has been always a special favorite of yours. Do you know it is just what you call the *finish* that counteracts in my mind the charm of her very attractive face and form. I was far more inclined to love her before she left Galway than I am now. The *finish* which she has acquired at an English boarding-school sits awkwardly, I think, on an Irish girl. She was as merry as a lark and graceful as a fawn, when she left us five years ago; what she is now, you may admire, my dear mother, but I cannot. Give me back, if you can, the light-hearted, playful, unsophisticated Emily Waldron, and I will try to win her for a wife, but not the starched-up English lady who swam from the door, just now, with an arrogant assumption of dignity that never sits well on a youthful maiden."

He arose in visible agitation, and walked to another window, while his mother gazed after him with a look in which maternal pride was singularly mixed with disappointment and displeasure.

"Then I suppose you mean to go no farther with that affair?" she at last said.

"What affair?" demanded her son, quickly.

"What affair! why, you know as well as I do!"

"Mother!" said Fitzstephen, placing himself full in front of her, with his hands crossed behind his back, and his tall figure leaning slightly forward, "mother! it was you who commenced these negotiations with the Waldron family. I warned you, more than once, to leave it to myself, and to wait till Emily should return, so that I might judge for myself. I am no party, therefore, to anything that has passed between you and her father on matrimonial subjects."

"Well, but Giles! listen to me! you don't know Emily yet!"

"Pardon me, my dear madam, I find I know her but too well. She is no longer the Emily I once dreamed of as a wife. It requires no great discernment to see that. I am a man of mature years now, and thirty-five sees things and persons just as they are, not as they *seem* to be. My days of romance are over; and to say the truth, I think Cupid has no quiver in his bow to wound me *now*."

"But think of Emily's feelings, Giles; suppose her affections are engaged."

"Never you fear that, mother! I'll answer for it, her heart is open to impressions." And Fitzstephen's lip curled with a smile of bitter irony.

"But, seriously speaking, my dear mother, I have

no present thoughts of marriage. As long as I have you to love me and eat for my comfort I desire no other. Do not urge me, then, to form new ties which might be fatal to your now paramount influence." Fitzstephen's smile, when he did smile, was irresistibly sweet, and it beamed at that moment so full on his mother that she could not say him nay. So the subject dropped for that time, and Fitzstephen took to measuring the apartment, pacing its length up and down with a perseverance that would be truly laudable had it any rational object in view. Mrs. Fitzstephen put on her spectacles—one could hardly believe that such sunny eyes could be failing—and took up the book which she had laid down on the entrance of Miss Waldron and her aunt.

"Mother!" said Fitzstephen, "although I do not often trouble you with any of the dry details of business, yet I am strongly tempted to do so just now."

His mother looked up in surprise. "And why not always, my son? Who can be so interested in your affairs as your own mother? What is it that troubles you now?"

"That herring-fishery, mother! I cannot get it out of my head."

"So it is always with your new plans, Giles," said his mother, with a smile.

"Well, but mother, think of it seriously! Is it not a burning shame to have English and Scotch merchants making handsome fortunes out of our

fisheries, while we of Galway leave them in the undisturbed possession of a trade that by right is ours? Here they send their vessels year after year taking away to foreign markets the wealth of our waters. Why not turn this golden stream into our own coffers?"

"It would be very desirable, indeed, Giles; but how are you to do it? There's Richard Hammond tried it, and you know how it fared with him. He never got over it since, as I've often heard yourself say."

"Yes, but mother! if those obstinate Claddagh men could be only got to try the trawling it would increase the trade considerably. Then I might have a contract with some of the principal boat-owners amongst them to take all their fish, and, by having experienced packers brought over from Scotland, I could make a capital thing out of it every year of my life. Others here would follow my example, and we might, after a few years, drive the foreign merchants home to their own fisheries."

"Well, but how are you to manage the Claddagh men? You know they'll never take to trawling. Didn't you see how Randal took your allusion to it on St. John's Day? They have such a rooted aversion to new-fangled plans!"

"Still I am not without hopes of bringing them to reason," replied the son. "You know I have many friends amongst them—Randal More himself, for instance."

The mother laughed. Her laugh was peculiarly infectious, for it came from her very heart. "Why now, Giles, have you lived so near the Claddagh all your life, and yet suppose for one moment that *you* could exercise any control over the community or its head, in a matter which they consider of vital importance—could you *dream* of inducing them to give up a custom which is little short of *sacred* in their eyes, from its venerable antiquity? Giles! Giles! it would be enough for a schoolboy of nineteen to indulge in such fantastic notions!"

But Fitzstephen was not to be laughed out of his cherished plan, although he joined, without knowing why, in his mother's merry laugh. "Never mind, mother, never mind; if all fails me, I will *force* a lesson on them."

"Why, Giles, what *do* you mean?"

"Don't ask me now, my dear mother. It will be an extreme measure, and there is no use in talking of it, even to you, unless I am really driven to it. Come what may, trawling *must* have a fair trial on the Bay. That is my first step in the formation of a Galway fish-trade. Hush! here are the girls! Not a word of it to them, as you love me!"

The girls were only girls by courtesy. Graceful and attractive they both were, the elder particularly so, but the age of girlhood was long past with both, and Margaret, the elder sister, had been a widow for the last three years, though still under thirty. Charlotte, the younger, was the exact coun-

terpart of her brother—if anything, darker in facial expression, and more reserved in manner. Taller than the average run of women, there was a stiffness about her that spoiled the effect of her really handsome countenance and symmetrical form, so that her little, plump sister, with a much plainer set of features, was much more admired by the generality of their male acquaintances. Margaret was an incessant talker. Charlotte seldom spoke, especially before strangers, and the habitual reserve, which partly proceeded from shyness, was set down by the charitable world as the effect of pride. But those—and they were few in number—who could penetrate the outward surface of Charlotte Fitzstephen's peculiar manner, knew her to be possessed of many high and even noble traits of character, which raised her far above her volatile and good-natured, and somewhat coquettish sister, whose winning ways had obtained for her at nineteen a rich and dashing husband. Poor Dandy Behan! as he was familiarly called in his native city, he hardly lived long enough to discover the better qualities of Margaret's nature, but quite long enough to find out to his sorrow that a dashing beau ought never to marry a dashing belle. Margaret's tastes were but too similar to his own. Both had a feverish love for gay society, both were anxious to "cut a dash," and, alas! neither thought of looking after the means by which these expensive tastes were to be gratified. Money

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flew out of their hands, themselves could hardly tell
how, the Behan patrimony, bequeathed by a saving,
hard-working father, grew “small by degrees,” and
during the four years that Edmund Behan and Mar-
garet Fitzstephen were man and wife, they contrived
so to encumber it with mortgages that when the
young husband was killed by a fall from his favorite
hunter, the pretty widow found herself dependent
on her mother and brother, after spending, or help-
to spend, her own fortune of two thousand pounds,
as well as her husband's estate of six hundred a
year. To a woman of deeper feelings and more
elevated sentiments it would have been a hard ne-
cessity to seek a home once more under the roof of
her stern brother, whose continued remonstrances
she had so recklessly disregarded, but, as it was,
Margaret Behan was troubled with no such qualms,
and was only too happy to have a door open to re-
ceive her. Whatever might have been Fitzstephen's
sentiments regarding his sister's conduct, he was
too generous to reproach her when the hand of ad-
versity was heavy on her, and if his welcome was
not as cordial as her mother's, it was none the less
sincere.

“Why, manna, only think!” said Mrs. Behan,
throwing herself on the couch nearest to the door,
“they have had *such* work in the Claddagh ever
since St. John's Day, and we so near, and to hear
nothing of it.”

“Dear me! what have they been doing there?”

the mother eagerly inquired, for if truth must be told, good Mrs. Fitzstephen dearly loved a bit of gossip. "Giles! did you hear anything of it?"

"I did, mother! but let Margaret tell what she heard—it would be downright cruelty to prevent her." So saying, he walked over to the empty fireplace, and appeared to make a critical examination of his father's portrait.

"It's all been about that wild girl, the Admiral's daughter," went on fair Margaret; "I do believe half the young fellows in the Claddagh are after her. You remember her exploit here in town, in Midsummer, and the fuss that was made about it—well! what do you think but there went a number of soldiers out to the village that night to the bonfires—some say there were *gentlemen* there, too"—lowering her voice and glancing furtively at her brother—"however, they got fighting about Maureen, and that old More Kineely that we heard was killed—she wasn't, though—it was going in between her own grandson and Shan Driscoll that she got the blow. I wish they *would* get that girl married—she keeps them all in hot water!"

"Now, Margaret, why will you talk so?" said Charlotte, speaking for the first time; "the girl cannot keep people from admiring her, and I know many a fine lady who would be very, very glad to supply such 'hot water' for the gentlemen. Don't be too hard on the Admiral's pretty daughter!"

"Well! well! Margaret, go on," said her mother, "what more have you to tell?"

"Why, I haven't much more, mamma! You saw the account of what happened on the Bay—"

"And is that all?" said Fitzstephen, turning abruptly, and apparently much relieved; "why, I know more than that myself. What would you say, now, Margaret, my pretty paroquet! were I to tell you that the soldiers who went to the Claddagh bonfires were *officers*—you may stare, but it is a fact—and amongst them your favorite, Captain Hamilton!"

"La, Giles! it can't be possible—you want to tease me, you spiteful creature!—you just invented that, now, because of what happened on the Bay. I know you always sympathize with the Claddagh men—you do!"

"But, Giles!" said his mother, "do tell me how you came to know this?"

"Yes," said Margaret, "and tell us who the *gentlemen* were that got into the scrape."

Fitzstephen shrank for a moment from the piercing glance of the three pair of eyes, and his color rose considerably. His hesitation, however, was but for a moment, and he replied with tolerable composure:

"I believe *I* was the only civilian present, mother, who could lay claim to the rank of a *gentleman*—I walked out to see the fun, but as for the 'scrape' of which Margaret elegantly speaks, I got into no scrape."

Margaret laughed out. Charlotte opened her eyes very wide and fixed them earnestly on her brother. The mother's cheek flushed, and a cloud obscured the sunshine of her brow.

"Then my informant was right," observed Margaret.

"Giles!" said Mrs. Fitzstephen, "*can* this be possible?—what in the name of Heaven brought you to the Claddagh at such a time—you of all people with your aristocratic tastes and habits?"

"I went there on business, madam!" said the son, quietly and almost haughtily; "I told you a few moments since of certain negotiations which I have on hand in relation to a certain affair."

"Oh! of course!" laughed the incorrigible Margaret, drawing her little form up in ludicrous imitation of her stately brother, "of course, Don Giles Fitzstephen had business to transact in the Claddagh on Midsummer Night, and with Maureen Dhu—he was giving her an order, no doubt, for some barrels of herrings to be furnished in good condition—well saved and duly salted—aha! my grave brother—my sage mentor—so you *can* play pranks at times!—never speak to Margaret Behan or any one else after that!"

And holding up her finger in playful admonition, she drew the silent and astonished Charlotte after her from the room, as both were still in their street costume.

The mother and son, left once more alone together,

stood for a moment regarding each other in silence—the mother with a sternness that was foreign to her character, the son with more than his usual coolness and reserve.

"Giles!" said Mrs. Fitzstephen, at length, "what does this mean?"

"Simply this, my dear madam! that I am going about the business which I told you of, in the way which I deem most likely to be successful. I know these Claddagh people better, perhaps, than any one else, for since boyhood I have taken an interest in them—God knows," he added musingly, as if half to himself, half to his mother, "what I do and desire to do has their advantage in view as well as my own."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, indeed, madam! To those who can penetrate the outward roughness of their speech and manner, they are and must be interesting, for many of the virtues which adorn humanity flourish in the genial soil of their unsophisticated hearts. With the means at their disposal they might be much more comfortable and even wealthier than they are, and with God's help, I will overcome their prejudices, and force them to promote their own interest—and mine too! You will be good enough to leave me to myself in this matter, mother!—I mean in my necessary intercourse with the fishermen—it is purely a matter of business, I assure you!"

"Well, Giles! I never *could* understand your

peculiar notions, nor can I now, but I will certainly not interfere in this matter, relying on your prudence and good sense. If you can use the Claddagh men for your mutual benefit, why, do!"

"Many thanks, my own dear mother! You were ever kind and considerate towards me—may God give me grace to requite you as you deserve!"

Full of an emotion that his mother could by no means understand, Fitzstephen left the room. He had been all the years of his life an enigma to that mother who had been his guardian from early boyhood. She was, indeed, none of the most penetrating, and had little in common with her son, yet her motherly instinct often gave her the key to his feelings, shrouded as they were in a habitual reserve, but on the present occasion she was wholly at a loss to know what was passing in his mind. Subdued and controlled unconsciously to herself, by her son's mental superiority, she seldom dived farther into his motives of action than he was pleased to reveal. So long as he treated her with the respect due to a mother, and studied her wishes in every respect, she was quite content to leave him in the mystery of a reserve which appeared natural to him, and which he had, in fact, inherited, to a certain extent, from his father.

"After all, I cannot wonder at him," she would say within herself; "is he not his father's image, shape, make, and feature—the dark spirit comes to him by nature, and I suppose he can't help doing

things in an odd way. May the Lord be merciful to your soul, Arnold Fitzstephen!" she said on the present occasion, placing herself in front of her late husband's portrait, "you were a kind husband, there's no denying it, but there was always something about you, just like Giles, that I couldn't understand. There was but one heart that was ever, ever open to me—oh! Juan! Juan! what a fate it was that separated us—we who seemed formed for each other, and gave me—me—the gayest girl in Galway—Arnold Fitzstephen—him of all men—for a husband!"

It was strange to see the change that came over that placid countenance as the widowed matron turned to a small medallion picture which hung in a rather dark corner of the apartment beyond the range of the light from the windows. It was the half-length portrait of a young man in a sort of naval costume, his face radiant with the hopes and joys of early manhood, while

*"His hair was thick with many a curl
That clustered round his head."*

There was little or actual beauty in the dark, foreign-looking features, but there was a world of winning candor and sportive gayety in the full, clear eyes and the whole expression of the countenance. It was, in short, that of a sprightly, frank, manly youth, just bounding off in the buoyancy of hope along the path of life, diffusing his own onward brightness to all who met him on his way. The

tears stood in Mrs. Fitzstephen's eyes as she gazed on this smiling picture—its very radiance made her sad when she remembered that it was but a vision of her early years—a vision which had vanished, long, long years before, in the darkness and mystery of death. The story of this picture was a strange one, but its connection with Mrs. Fitzstephen's destiny was all in the remote past. It is probable that Arnold Fitzstephen would by no means have relished the sympathetic influence which that picture exercised over his wife's mind, but Arnold never saw it. He had known the original for a short space, during which they had both striven for the meed of Ellie's love, and when Juan Gonzales returned to Cadiz in a fit of causeless jealousy, Arnold assumed the airs of a victor, and proudly carried off his prize, believing that he had fairly won the richest and fairest of Galway maidens. The cause of Juan's sudden departure was erroneously set down to the score of defeat, and many a bright-eyed damsel felt herself moved to pity the attractive young Spaniard, and wished that he had turned to her for consolation. Years and years rolled by; Arnold Fitzstephen and his pretty wife were esteemed a model of connubial happiness, and they *were* happy, for Ellie was proud of her husband, and grateful for his confiding tenderness, and as a good wife should, she resolutely closed her heart against the idle remembrances which would only have made her unhappy, and perhaps been the cause of sin to

her pure and guileless soul. There was little similarity of taste or of character between herself and her cold, stately partner, but still each was honorable and conscientious, and governed entirely by a sense of duty, so that the routine of domestic affairs went on smoothly and prosperously, and so did the fortunes of the family under Arnold's prudent and skilful management. When death cut short his useful career at the early age of thirty-eight, his wife was a sincere mourner, and in her overwhelming sorrow for his loss, she well nigh forgot that her heart had ever known another love. Within the second year of her widowhood a gift was sent her from Spain by the favorite sister of Juan Gonzales—it was the portrait before which we have seen her lose the present in the past. With it came the announcement of *his* death, and the still more startling news that no other woman had ever replaced Ellie French in his affections. It was his dying request that this youthful picture should be sent to his first and only love. When the grave was about to close over his mortal part, he considered that even Arnold Fitzstephen would not object to his wife's receiving such a gift. He knew not that his once-envied rival was already a tenant of "the narrow house" appointed for all living. The sight of the picture was a beam of sunshine from the past to the world-chilled heart of Mrs. Fitzstephen, and at times when she felt sad and lonely she would steal unseen to the drawing-room, and gaze on the pic-

tured face of that bright lover of her youth till the thick-coming shadows of those early years, when *he* was such as she there saw him, filled her soul to the exclusion of the present. It had sometimes happened that one or other of her children found her there, and at such times they could hardly recognize their mother in the thoughtful, pensive dreamer, whose wrinkled brow and absent look told of troubled memories. They could, none of them, avoid seeing that the picture, whose arrival they could well remember, was in some way connected with the early associations of their mother; but they all respected her too much to make any inquiries on such a subject. It is probable that if she had ever given the slightest opening, Margaret might have tried to get at her secret, but as it was there was no chance—not the remotest allusion to this matter ever escaped Mrs. Fitzstephen, who on all other subjects was perhaps too communicative for the requirements of discretion.

When the family met around the tea-table an hour after, the clouds had all vanished. The mother was as cheerful and bright as ever, Margaret as gay and full of chat, and Giles and Charlotte as condescendingly amiable as usual.

"What an ingenious trap that was you set for me a while ago, Mrs. Margaret Behan!" said her brother good-humoredly as he gave her his cup to hand to his mother; "it is very well for me that *I* have no secrets—no concealed cankers, for indeed if I had,

the sharp edge of your sisterly curiosity would make me wince now and then."

"Hear him now how he crows over his escape," said the saucy young widow; "he talks just as if he were beyond the reach of human frailty—have a care, Master Giles! I may catch you napping some fine day, and depend upon it, I will show you no mercy!"

"Very well, my lady! one warned is half armed, and now I give you fair notice that for the future I will keep a sharp lookout for other people's secrets—not yours, my pretty brown girl!" addressing Charlotte, "I know *you* never have any, and if you had I would respect them as I do——" he stopped, colored slightly, and looked at his mother, who smiled faintly as she handed him his tea, as though she would have said: "do you suspect *your mother* of having secrets?"

"Well, really," said Margaret, affecting a very thoughtful air, "I am not yet quite satisfied about that Claddagh affair. It is still a mystery to me how any civilized being can take pleasure in the company of those amphibious creatures. What do you say, mamma?"

"Upon my word, Maggie! I am rather of your opinion. I have been living on Ballymana Island* these five-and-thirty years, just at the door with

* There are some portions of Galway city situated on islands connected by bridges. The nearest of these islands to the Claddagh is Ballymana, which is crossed by the fashionable private street called Dominick street.

them, one might say, yet I never have any more intercourse with them than I can possibly avoid. Not to speak of the torture inflicted on the olfactory nerves by their near approach, there is something so uncouth, so thoroughly uncivilized about them all, both men and women, that I cannot take to them, do as I will."

"That is because you do not know them, mother," said her son, eagerly; "not understanding their language, and having little intercourse with them, it is not surprising that you should set them down as a sort of half savages. Will you just do one thing for me?"

"I won't promise, Giles, till I hear what it is."

"Will you and the girls come to Mass next Sunday—this is Friday—at St. Mary's of the Hill?"

"What! amongst the Claddagh people?" cried Margaret with a gesture of disgust that made her brother redden to the very temples.

"Precisely, Mrs. Behan! but if you think it would be too great a trial to your delicate nerves, of course you are welcome to absent yourself from the party. My mother and Charlotte, will, I flatter myself, do so much to oblige *me*."

"Certainly, my dear! certainly," said Mrs. Fitzstephen. Charlotte only answered her brother's look by a smile, but that smile was enough; it said plainer than words: "Any where and every where for your sake, Giles!"

Margaret pouted and tossed her head, then played

with her spoon, and smiled rather disdainfully. "Perhaps I can arrange an excursion more pleasing to Margaret," said her brother, eyeing her with a peculiar expression, half bitter, half ironical; "what would you think of going down the Bay to Arranmore?"

The young widow started and changed color; first a deep blush suffused her fair face, then a ghastly paleness overspread every feature; she tried hard to master her emotion, but to no purpose, and after a few moments of painful agitation, during which she never once raised her eyes, she fairly burst into tears, and rising suddenly from her seat, left the room without a word.

The mother and daughter looked at each other with distended eyes, and then both turned inquiringly to Fitzstephen. There was a certain emotion visible on his face, but of what nature it was they could form no idea.

"Poor Margaret!" he said, musingly, "I didn't mean to wound you *so* deeply—Charlotte, my dear! had you not better follow Margaret? I fear she has taken suddenly ill—she is more susceptible than I thought—poor girl!" falling again into that dreamy tone, "who would suspect a canker in so bright a flower?"

By this time he was alone, Mrs. Fitzstephen and Charlotte had both hurried off to Margaret's room. "What's in a name?" murmured Giles to himself, "Ah! Bard of Avon! names are potent things—

the mystery of a life may be, and often is, hidden in a single word—'a name' may awaken all the slumbering echoes of the soul and fill it with shadows from the past—poor Margaret—*Arranmore* is your mystery!"



CHAPTER VII.

On the following Sunday morning, the Fitzstephen family, including Margaret Behan, drove out to the Claddagh to hear Mass in the chapel of the Dominican Convent. As their secondary object was to see the congregation, they took care to be early, that is to say, full twenty or thirty minutes before the hour of Mass. Early as it was they found some scores of men and women there before them, some going round the Stations, others collected near the altar-rails, saying the Rosary with great devotion, men and women all furnished alike with strings of beads suited to the dimensions of their weather and toil-browned hands. Mrs. Fitzstephen noticed amongst the various groups many a sturdy fish-woman whose tongue had often made her quail, though never directly exercised on herself, and she could not help wondering at the subdued demeanor which characterized one and all. After a while when the hour of Mass began to draw near, the fishermen and their families arrived in crowds. The most unfashionable of congregations, as regarded costume, it was still one of the most picturesque that could anywhere be seen; for in the uniformity of shape and material, there was every variety of color, the gayer tints being predominant. The jackets and knee-breeches of the men were of op-

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posite colors, while the flaunting silk neck-tie formed a third contrast, and the fresh, ruddy faces shaded by flat, broad-brimmed hats, harmonized well with the vivid coloring of the garments. The bodice and kirtle of the women, old and young, were generally the brightest of blue and red, and the rich silk kerchiefs, which covered the heads of the dark-featured matrons, were gracefully and prettily replaced by lace or worked muslin caps on the young and fair. Old women and old men were there in the very extreme of human life, some of them tottering on the arms of younger relatives, others still borne into the holy house on the backs of sons or grandsons.* This latter sight amazed our Galway ladies not a little—they had, indeed, heard it said that such things were to be seen in the Claddagh, but they could hardly believe it—town's people with their fastidious tastes and refined habits could not conceive such a stretch of filial devotedness, or enter into the robust and vigorous faith which would make a young man carry his aged parent to the church rather than that he or she should "lose Mass."

"There's Brian Kincely and his grandmother!" whispered Fitzstephen to his mother, and the lady looked with unfeigned admiration on the fine young fellow as he carried the frail and emaciated form of

* Should any of my readers be disposed to make merry at the expense of the Claddagh men for carrying their aged parents on their backs, let them remember how they were wont to admire the Trojan hero Æneas bearing his aged father on his shoulders from the sack of Troy. What was sublime virtue in the son of Anchises cannot be ridiculous in the young Irish fisherman.

old More in his arms, lightly and tenderly as he would a little child. The old woman's shrivelled hands were clasped round Brian's neck, and her white lips murmured a prayer for his weal that must have drawn down blessings on his head, as he placed her on the step outside the altar-railing. The sight was too common amongst the Claddagh people to attract any particular attention, but Mrs. Fitzstephen and her daughters felt the tears gather in their eyes as they looked, and it seemed to them, as they afterwards said to each other, that the grateful smile so full of proud affection with which More repaid her grandson was worth ten times as much trouble. It is, after all, amongst the simple and unsophisticated that the divine influence of religion is fully manifested in its effects—envy, ambition, vanity, and pride, which, in more *civilized* communities, too often impede the action of religion, have little if any control over the untutored children of nature; hence it is that amongst *them* we everywhere behold the purest Christianity—the most sublime, because the most perfect, moral virtues.

When at length from out the vestry-room came the good Dominican friar, robed and vested, every eye was turned on him and the altar, and from the beginning to the end of Mass all idle observation was suspended. The very lads and lasses counted their beads and recited their "*Pater* and *Aves*" with downcast eyes and collected mien, as though each one was alone in the house of prayer. The simple

yet grand old strains of the Gregorian chant came in full chorus from the choir, and the familiar Latin hymns with which the friars filled up the pauses in the Mass, evidently found responses in the hearts of the unlettered congregation who orally knew no other tongue than their own dissonant patois of the primitive Erse. The chapel had but few, very few ornaments, the altar even had only the barest necessities of altar-furniture, the officiant was a simple old man in very plain vestments, all befitting the lowly tastes and humble life of the worshippers, yet it seemed to our Galway friends that there was something in that convent chapel and congregation which carried the mind back to the earliest stages of the Christian Church—something grand and even sublime in its very simplicity, and before which the worldling was forced to bow down in respectful admiration. The Benediction of the good Dominica was like that of a loving father, and his hearers evidently felt the better and the happier for it, as they stood up to hear the last Gospel.

After lingering for some minutes outside the church door, the Fitzstephen family were at last seated in their barouche, and the coachman got orders to drive on slowly, the road being thronged with the dense congregation. It was easier said than done, however, for the surly Claddagh men seemed to take a perverse pleasure in impeding the way of the horses, while the youngsters thought it rare fun to crush and crowd around the carriage,

making their own comments on the dress and appearance of "the quality from town."

Fitzstephen leaned listlessly back in the carriage eyeing the crowd on either side with a curious but uninterested eye, when all at once a loud, harsh voice at the horses' head arrested his attention, and he started at once into sudden animation. The voice was that of Randal More addressing the coachman—

"What for do you make your horses go so fast?" said the civic functionary, "you mean to drive over us, do you?" and he wrathfully seized the reins next him and brought the horses to a sudden halt. "You wait here now till the people pass—if you stir a step, you'll not be thankful to yourself."

The driver having a wholesome fear of the Claddagh boys, made no answer but held in his horses as well as he could. The ladies, especially Margaret and her mother, were somewhat alarmed, and begged Giles to speak to the fierce old man. When they turned to look for him he was already out of the carriage and had his hand on Randal's shoulder.

"Come, come now, Admiral! don't be so impatient—you know we wouldn't harm a hair of your heads."

"Why, God bless my soul, Mr. Fitz, is it yourself that's in it?"

"It is indeed, Randal! I brought my mother and sisters out here to Mass this morning, little expecting to fall foul of your worship!"

"Clear the road there in front!" shouted the

mayor, "make way for Mr. Fitzstephen's carriage!" A quicker movement was instantly perceptible amongst the sluggish multitude, and in a surprisingly short space of time a free passage was left all along the road.

"I'll tell you what, Mr. Fitz!" said Vara Halliday, "there isn't many in Galway town, out from the priests, that we'd do that for! Your servant, ladies!" with an awkward attempt at a curtsy, and speaking in English, "It's welcome you are to the Claddagh this bright Sunday morn.' But I'm sure it's a cure for sore eyes to see you in it—God's blessin' on your purty faces."

"An' that's what they are, Vara!" observed her son-in-law, "sure it's new life to look at them!"

"Is the sight of beauty, then, so new in the Claddagh?" asked Fitzstephen in an under tone, as he met the radiant glance of Maureen, beaming full on him for a moment, then as suddenly veiled by her long silken lashes. A proud smile flashed across the girl's face, showing that she felt the application of Fitzstephen's question put in her own language. She had taken a hasty survey of the ladies, and her girlish timidity shrank before their awful grandeur, especially when she saw them point her out to each other.

After a cordial shake hands with Randal and Vara, and a whispered, "Good-bye, Maureen!" Fitzstephen was stepping into the carriage when Maureen's low voice met his ear:

"Wouldn't you wait for one minute, sir, the child wants to see the ladies," and she raised in her arms a little girl of some six or seven years old who had been plucking her by the skirt ever since the carriage stopped.

"The child, Maureen!—what child?" said Fitzstephen turning and fixing his eyes on the fairy-like, hunch-backed creature who was too intent on the ladies to look at him. "Good heavens, what a singular-looking child—and yet she is strangely pretty—who—what is she?"

"Why, this is little Nanno, sir, *my* Nanno—"

"Your Nanno, Maureen—yours, did you say?"

"To be sure I did, your honor—I always call her so—and she *is* my Nanno—arn't you, sweet one?"

The child, never deaf to that voice, answered by clasping Maureen's neck closer, but still without taking her eyes from the ladies in the carriage.

"Do, for gracious sake, get in, Giles!" cried Margaret, in a petulant, fretful tone; "are you going to keep us here all day—I'm sick of this place."

And she *was* sick, too, for when her brother got into the carriage he found her leaning back pale as a ghost, fanning herself with all her might. Her mother and sister had been so deeply interested in the O'Hara family that they paid no attention to Margaret. Now they were all anxiety; a brace of smelling-bottles were produced, but Mrs. Behan would have none of them; to get away from the village, she said, was all she required; yet when the

carriage was in motion, she began all at once to gaze intently on the group so quaintly picturesque, so oddly composed. What was it that arrested Margaret Behan's attention that she turned her head to look back after her brother had nodded a parting salute to each and the carriage rolled away? Was it the dark, weird features of old Vara, bearing the impress, in the depth of their lines and wrinkles, of strong passion and womanly energy? Was it rather the bold, self-confident, and self-relying spirit so plainly written on Randal's weather-worn visage? or, was it the youthful, willowy grace of Maureen's figure and the potent charm that dwelt in her large, soft Spanish eyes? Surely it could not be the queer little child that Maureen was just setting down from her arms? And yet, come to look at that little Nanno Kenny, with the preternatural intelligence of her dark hazel eyes, the delicate beauty of her small infantile features, and the fearful load of a hump which bowed her down almost to the ground, there *was* something to make one look and look again, and looking so you made the strange discovery that so far from being repulsive, that deformed little creature was quite as interesting as even Maureen Dhu herself.

"Well! to be sure, what a queer people they are!" was Mrs. Fitzstephen's remark as they cleared the village, and left the last of the gazing multitude behind. "I never was so struck with their peculiarities as I have been to-day!"

"What a lovely creature that Maureen Dhu is!" said Charlotte, in her calm, passionless way; "in fact she is more than lovely, she is positively splendid—don't you think so, Giles?"

But Giles was, or appeared to be, lost in thought, and Charlotte was forced to repeat her question:

"Don't you think her a perfect beauty, Giles?"

"Who?" with a start.

"Who! why Maureen Dhu, to be sure,—what do you think of her?"

"Think! well really I don't know—I don't profess to be much of a *connoisseur*—but it seems to me that there is something more than mere beauty in her. I have never examined the girl's features critically, but I quite agree with you, Charlotte, that there is an undefinable something about her that —" he was going on quite gravely and composedly when his mother and Charlotte burst out laughing:

"You quite agree with me!" said Charlotte, much amused, "why, I said no such thing—I fancy it is with yourself you agree on the subject—only for the cold, listless way in which you speak of her I would begin to fear that her beauty had cast its spell on you, my wise brother—but then you discuss her as if she were a statue."

"Upon my honor, mother! our grave Charlotte is coming out!" said Fitzstephen, laughingly, to his mother; "she is worse now than wild Maggie—but what is the matter, Margaret?" he asked with sud-

den earnestness, as he noticed the young widow's abstraction, so very unusual in her.

"Not much indeed, Giles," and she made a strong effort to shake off the secret uneasiness which weighed down her spirit. "I think one week in the Claddagh would finish *me*, anyhow. It will take me all day to get over the sickness that I feel now."

"Did any of you notice that poor little hunch-back?" said Mrs. Fitzstephen, almost interrupting her daughter, "I cannot get that child out of my head."

"Nor I either, mother," said her son, quickly; "it haunts the mind like a little spectre—did *you* see it, Maggie?"

"Why, dear me! no," she exclaimed, with the same petulance as before; "I assure you I was too anxious to get away to pay much attention to any one much less a child—but what can be the matter with those horses—for pity's sake, Giles, tell that stupid Ned to drive on—I shall be dead before we get home at this rate of going. Catch *me* in the Claddagh again, and then you may give me a dose of fish-scales! Such a visit may do for an *ethnologist* or *phrenologist*, or another class that shall now be nameless," and she looked maliciously at her brother; "but certainly it has no interest for me."

"Fie! fie! Margaret, how you do talk!" said her sister, reproachfully.

"I wonder will she ever learn to control her tongue!" said her mother, seriously.

Fitzstephen said nothing, but he gave Margaret a look that sank deeper than any mere words from another could possibly do, and for the remainder of the way she sat in pouting silence with the air of a person who considered herself much injured.

During the evening hours of that same Sunday Maureen Dhu was seated on a high bank at the end of the quay with Aileen Ikhu by her side, and Nanno at her feet. They had been talking of many things, that is Maureen and the old woman, for Maureen loved to hear the tales of old time and Aileen loved to tell them. Many a fearful story did Aileen tell of water-wraiths and sheeted ghosts, seen by the fishermen gliding over the midnight-waves, of Banshees wailing and shrieking around the doomed bark on stormy seas, and of faithful hearts mysteriously bound together and cruelly severed by the hand of fate.

"So you think there's a fate in marriage, Aileen?" asked her attentive auditor at the close of one of the latter kind.

"I'm as sure of it, Maureen, as I'm of death and judgment. Sure it's easy to see it, astore! for it's only fate that could bring some couples together. Oh! many and many's the strange match I heard of in the town within when I used to stand the market. There's the Fitzstephens now that were in the Chapel above at Mass this morning—

"Ay! them beautiful ladies," said little Nanno, who had till now been intent on watching the pass-

ing vessels, and the various row boats skimming the waters along shore. "I'm thinking, thinking of them ever since—one of them especially."

"Who, how is that, darling?" said Aileen, with surprise. "What makes you be thinkin' about such grand people as them?"

"I don't know," said the child in an absent, dreamy way. "I think I used to dream about a face like that lady's with bright fair curls, a long time ago when I was a little weeny thing."

"Ah, then, when was that, *alanna machree*?" asked Maureen, with a merry laugh; "weren't you ever and always the same little darling fairy you are now, no bigger or no smaller? I believe you're as old as your granny."

"May be I am, then—myself doesn't know, but I know I often dreamed of that fair lady, anyhow."

Aileen fixed her eyes abstractedly on her grandchild's face, and strange thoughts flitted through her mind, thoughts too visionary to be told. She was roused by the voice of Maureen.

"You were speaking of the Fitzstephens, Aileen—"

"Was I, dear?—and what was I saying?"

"You were talking of strange marriages among them, or something like that."

"Ay! so I was, but sure after all, I never got to the bottom of things as some did—it's Noddy Kinsella could tell you all about the Fitzstephens—if she'd only do it."

By this time the mists of evening were thicken-

ing all around, the last gleam of sunshine had long since faded from the far-off mountains, and the shades of night began to obscure the entire face of Nature. Nanno crept up on Maureen's knee and hid her head in her bosom, murmuring, "I'm afraid."

"Afraid, achorra! what are you afraid of?"

"Oh! the water—it looks so black and so deep—and the great wide sky—up there—granny come home! Nanno's afeard!"

Aileen rose as quickly as her infirmities would permit, and Maureen stood up with the child pressed closely in her arms. Even her curiosity, so strongly aroused, gave way to her tender anxiety for her cherished darling. The hour and the place were somewhat lonely. The straggling parties of young men and maidens who had been enjoying the balmy eve in each other's company, had one after another passed on their homeward way, cracking their good-humored jokes on the strange fancy that kept Maureen and her aged companion sitting so long in such a place.

"Give the child to me, Maureen!" said a deep manly voice behind her; "she's too heavy for you."

Maureen was at first somewhat startled, but speedily recognizing Shan Driscoll, she willingly placed the child in his arms, laughing as she did so. "Why, then, Shan! what in all the world brought you here? I was almost frightened when you spoke."

"An' me, too," said Aileen, "just because it came

so sudden on us, and us not thinking there was any one in it but ourselves.

"Maureen!" said Shan, in a voice that only reached her own ear, "I was lying on the strand behind the rock most of the time you sat there. I was in heaven listening to your voice, which I don't often hear now-a-days."

A light coquettish laugh was the only answer. "Maureen," said Shan, after a pause, "You love this child—" and he pressed the little creature to his heart.

"I do, Shan, there is scarce anything in this world I love better;" here her voice faltered, but still she went on, although in a somewhat lower tone, "and, Shan Driscoll! listen to what I'm going to say: there isn't a time I look at her, but I think of you, for you brought her back from the jaws of death."

Shan was silent for a moment. His heart was full of troubled, fearful joy, and he would not speak lest the blissful illusion might vanish even at the sound of his own voice. He knew by sad experience the strange wayward being with whom he had to deal. At length he said in a low, uncertain, yet fervent tone:

"May God for ever bless you, light of my life! if I died to-morrow them words of yours would be in my heart, an my *heart* is not *sand*, Maureen!"

"Do you tell me so?" said Maureen in her most playful tone, "well, that's queer, anyhow!—ha! ha! here's our Barney—and gran, as I'm a living

woman!" and so saying she bounded off to meet them, regardless, it would seem, of the bitter, bitter pang her apparent levity had inflicted on Shan's true heart.

"Hillo! Shan, is that you?" said Barney, "I'm glad to meet you now for my father wants you up at the house. We'll be out as early as we can to-morrow."

"To be sure—I've everything ready since last night."

"Well, come along, at any rate. Father sent me for you. Why, Aileen! what's your hurry, honest woman? I thought Maureen here was purty light afoot, but, blow me! if she can hold a candle to you. Shan Driscoll! what's that you said?" Shan had not opened his lips. "You want to bespeak Aileen for a jig at your wedding—do you hear that, Aileen?"

"I do," said the aged crone, turning slowly round, so as to face the young people, her wizened face showing fearfully ghastly in the deepening gloom of twilight. "I do, Barney, but I'll go bail all I'll dance at *his* wedding won't tire me. Ha! ha! ha!" There was a strange solemnity in her manner that contrasted disagreeably with her raocking laugh, the wheezing, cackling laugh of extreme old age. Every one felt the chilling effect of Aileen's words and manner; but Shan, unwilling to let it appear that *he* felt it, called after her:

"Don't be cross, Aileen! and I will dance the

first dance with you—if Maureen won't be jealous!"

"Maureen!" repeated the old woman, with scornful emphasis, and again she laughed and trotted on her way without turning to look behind. Maureen was not slow in taking up the latter part of the sentence.

"I'd be entirely obliged to you, Mister Shan Driscoll! if you wouldn't make so free with my name—it's little *I'll* have to do with *your* wedding, depend upon it!"

"Maureen! Maureen! don't speak so to poor Shan!" said little Nanno, suddenly raising her head from the young man's shoulder; "Nanno loves Shan—don't be angry with him!"

They were now threading their way through the mazy windings of the village, not far from the Mayor's cottage, when standing at an open door they espied Brian Kineely talking to a young girl. It was Sally Kirwan, who ranked in point of attraction next to Maureen herself.

"Oh! is it there you are, Brian?" cried Shan Driscoll, well pleased at this rencontre, "what would *somebody* say if she saw you now?"

"Maybe you'd take the trouble of telling her, Shan! I know your tongue is purty long at times"—the words died on his lips, and the color mounted to his face, for turning suddenly he met the cold, calm eye of Maureen, who, whether by accident or design, had her arm through Shan's at the moment. Barney's laugh and Shan's exulting glance were

too much even for Brian's coolness, and he bristled up in a way very unusual with him.

"Humph! I did not know you were in such good company, but it makes no difference, now—we'll meet at the winning-post, Shan. I declare you look mighty well, good luck to you,—pity it isn't your own!" alluding to his quaint-looking burden. "A fine evening, Maureen."

"Wisha yes, the Lord be praised for it—how's the old man, Sally?"

The old man was very well, said Sally, thank God, and the toss of her head and the tone of her voice indicated no small degree of exultation on being found in Brian's company. The glance of her eye was aimed at Barney, who was more than suspected of having a *penchant* for pretty Sally Kirwan. However Barney might have taken it, he was left no opportunity of manifesting his feelings at that time for Randal's voice set the whole party in motion as he called from his own door.

"What the sorrow are you all about there, boys and girls?—blow high, blow low, you'll not forget *that* business—let me see, there's two couple of you there, and—who *is* that with you?—ah! then, Aileen, you old witch, what are *you* doing amongst the youngsters?—who's making love to *you*, achorra?"

Randal's hoarse laugh brought Vara from her culinary employment, and looking out under one of his arms as he held the door-posts with both hands,

she raised her voice in mirthful chorus, but even her mirth was bitter and sarcastic.

"Fresh and well you all look—especially Aileen Rhua—but I think some of you'd find plenty to do within doors—there's Shan Driscoll stravagin' round with the girls and his mother sick at home!"

"Why *no*, Vara; my mother was well enough when I left her three or four hours ago."

"I tell you she's sick, and pretty bad, too—if you were as bad it isn't there you'd be!"

"The Lord bless me!" cried Shan, and he hastily set down little Nanno, "was there no one to come for me?"—and without saying another word to any one, or looking even at Maureen, he hurried away "to see what was wrong with his mother."

There was little mirth or little rest that night in the Claddagh, for all night long the Widow Driscoll lay between life and death, her limbs contracted with racking cramps, and her whole body tortured with the concomitant symptoms of cholera. At midnight or thereabouts, Shan brought the priest, one of the friars from the convent, and the last sacraments were administered. The whole village was in a state of alarm and anxiety, and the house was crowded with women, all busied, or anxious to be busied, about the sick-bed. Vara was present all through in the capacity of doctor, for Vara was believed to have "great skill entirely," and her treatment was very often successful, perhaps fully as often as that of many medical practitioners.

Several consultations took place during the night amongst "the knowledgeable women," of whom Vara was the acknowledged head; every herb and every simple remedy that could be thought of was tried, but all in vain, and at last—just when it was too late, a doctor was sent for. When he arrived, the poor patient was already in a collapsed state, and all he could do was to shake his head, and pronounce it "a bad case." To Shan's agonized question "Can you do nothing at all for her, doctor?" the physician returned a more decided answer—
"all the doctors in Galway could not lengthen her life one hour.

"Well! it's hard enough, doctor!" said poor Shan, "but God's will must be done!" and from that moment he sat in motionless grief beside the bed, aroused only for a brief space when his mother, during the fatal interval of ease that in such cases precedes death, bade him kneel down till she'd give him her blessing.

With bowed head and clasped hands the young man received the precious benediction that came from the heart of the dying parent, while the stifled sobs and pitying ejaculations of friends and relatives were heard from every part of the small dwelling. When the prayerful voice ceased, Shan started up with renewed animation as though the very sound of that familiar voice had given him hope.

"Mother, you'll not die!—God wouldn't be so

cruel to me as that! Oh no! mother dear! you'll not leave me that way!"

"I must, Shan! *Achorra machree*, I must—and don't say it's cruel in God to take me to Himself—wouldn't it be worse if you were taken and your old mother left behind—think of that, Shan! A mouthful of drink, Vara, astore!—and lean down your head to me! I'd die easy, Vara Halliday, if I thought there was any chance of Maureen and Shan comin' together. Do you think yourself that there's any likelihood of it?"

"Ah, then, Judy honey," whispered Vara, evasively, "what makes you be botherin' your head now about such things? let the youngsters settle that among themselves—think of your own poor soul, alanna machree! that's going soon to meet its God!"

"Well, I b'lieve you're right, after all, Vara! but still I'd like to see Maureen again before I go, so as to put in a word for my poor boy—God bless me! what's this, at all? Shan, my son, my one son! where are you—there's a weakness comin' over me, an' a blindness, too—och! thanks be to God that I had the priest in time. Christ and His holy—mother—and all the Saints—help me *now!* Oh, Shan! pray—for me—all of you—pray for me!—lift up—my hand—son of my heart!"—he did, and while that hand was making the sign of the cross, its pulse ceased for ever, and the simple, guileless soul winged its way to the unknown regions of the spiritual world. Many a fervent *pater* and *ave* was

offered up for the departed soul "that was before its God," and then with a delicacy little to be expected from a people so rough in their exterior, Shan was left alone with the corpse "for a little start, till he'd have his cry out, poor boy!"

It was Maureen who first entered, and gently drawing Shan away, she begged of him to go home with Barney and Yeman, "till the place would be put to rights." The young man shook his head sorrowfully: "Don't ask me to go, Maureen. I was all she had, an' you know I couldn't leave her now!"

"Well, but Shan! sure it's me that asks you—will you not do that much for *me*?"

There was no resisting, even then, the eloquent appeal of those pleading eyes, and Shan, after kneeling a few moments in silent prayer beside the bed, left the cottage and the corpse to the kindly offices of "the women." He that never quailed before any danger, he the gayest and blithest in dance or merry-making, the boldest and most fearless of the "Clad-dagh boys," was made by grief gentle and tractable as a little child.



CHAPTER VIII.

Of course there was no fishing that Monday, and the Galway people had to go without fresh fish. In vain did certain magnates of the city, who were about to have dinner parties on that day, send all the way to the Claddagh in search of salmon or salmon-trout. Neither was to be had, for "Judy Driscoll was under board, God rest her, and it wouldn't be seemly to go out till after she was buried."

"Well, but Randal!" persisted the distressed cook, "couldn't you jist send out one hooker or so—do now, like a decent man, and let us have some fish—any kind will do better than none—sure you know we couldn't do at all without *some* on the table."

"I tell you you *must* do without it, then!" returned the gruff Admiral; "It's good for the quality to be put to their shifts now and then. If they can't do without fish, let them wait till the morrow, or next day, and they'll have plenty—we'll go out after Judy's berril—some of us anyhow, God willing."

Further parley was useless, so the disappointed functionary was reluctantly obliged to go back with his overwhelming message, relieving his oppressed mind by sundry ejaculations that were anything

but complimentary to the Claddagh men in general and Randal in particular.

On the first night of the wake, when the sports and pastimes of the youngsters were at their height, Maureen contrived to steal away to the other end of the house, where the men and women of more mature years were whiling away the hours in social chat, for the most part of a serious character, taking its tone from the occasion. Around the door on the outside numbers of all ages, for whom there was no room within, were seated on stools and benches furnished by the neighboring houses.

"Maureen!" said old Aileen, beckoning the girl to a low stool at her side, "Maureen! do you mind what I said to you last night, when we were down at the water-side?"

"Well no, Aileen!—I don't mind—what was it?"

"Didn't I tell you there was something goin' to happen?"

"Sure enough you did, Aileen, an' I asked you how you knew it, but you wouldn't tell me. Maybe you'd tell us now?"

Maureen's request was eagerly seconded by some half a score of the auditors, and Aileen, well pleased to have her prognostic so speedily fulfilled, or rather that it was she who had had the warning, gave an extra puff or two out of her cutty pipe, and spoke with dignified and becoming solemnity: "It wasn't one or two warnings that I got in regard to poor Judy's death, the Lord have her soul this night!"

She paused a moment, and the pause was filled up as she intended by a deep "Amen!" from all who were within hearing. "Last Thursday was eight days as I was goin' home in the dusk of the evenin' from More Kineely's, what does I see but a big white sheet on the top of this house we're sittin' in. Myself thought at first it was a sail they had out dryin', but I soon got out of *that* notion, for the nearer I cum to it, it was gettin' the whiter, till at last it grew as white as the driven snow, an' I knew well enough then that it couldn't be a sail, for Randal O'Hara's never was haif so white." Here Aileen paused again and looked round on her audience as if to mark the effect of her recital.

"The Lord save us!" "Christ between us and harm!" "Thu! thu! thu!"*

Having given a reasonable time for the expression of popular feeling—and by this time her audience was much increased—the old woman resumed her narrative: "Three nights last yeeek I dreamed of raw flesh meat—it's truth I tell you—and the last time there was a young man carryin' it, that I know now was Shan Driscoll. I wasn't sure of him *then*, but I am now, more's the sorrow!"

"Wisha, now, Aileen, wern't them great warnings entirely!" remarked an old man whose head was white with the frost of four-score winters.

* This sound can hardly be rendered in our characters. It is the ordinary expression of extreme wonder, pity, or sympathy amongst the lower classes in all parts of Ireland. It is very commonly heard in country churches during sermons or exhortations.

"I'm thinking they were, Ulick, but that wasn't all"—she dropped her voice almost to a whisper—"sure I heard the Banshee the other night——"

"You did, Aileen?"

"I did—and what's more, I seen her—I was goin' home with some woollen yarn I was spinnin' for Oona Kirwan below, and just as I left my own door I sees a little ould woman with a red cloak on her, and the hood of it up over her head, an' she walkin' on afore me in the dark—for it *was* dark barrin' the light of the stars. I could just see the little bulk, and no more, only the color of her cloak, as I was tellin' you—well! myself was just a-going to speak to her, thinkin' it might be somebody from the other end of the town, but somehow I couldn't get my feet to move a step, and the cowl'd sweat came out all over me. The very teeth began to chatter in my head, Lord save us! when I heard her raisin' the *ullalu*, and her clappin' her hands and moanin' that you'd think her heart 'id break. As true as I'm here this good Monday night, when she got to the openin' here abroad fornenst the door, she popped herself down on her haunches and sat there till I was out of sight. I went round the other way to avoid her, and when I got to Brieny Kirwan's I was likin' to faint only they got me a mouthful o' water. Didn't I tell you, Oona, that I seen the Banshee?"

Oona, of course, corroborated the evidence, whereupon it was generally, or rather unanimously, agreed

that Judy's death had been duly foreshown, if people could only know who the doom was to fall on.

During the latter part of Aileen's revelation, Maureen had noticed little Nanno creeping across the floor with her usual stealthy pace, and she was not at all surprised when she felt her skirt gently pulled behind. Turning round with her sweetest smile to speak to her little favorite, she was surprised to hear her whisper:

"Come and see! come and see—quick, or he'll be gone!"

Involuntarily Maureen rose and followed the child, gliding after her through the various groups scattered on the street around the door, till they reached a part of the village where all was so still that it was quite evident the inhabitants of the respective cottages were "up at the wake." Maureen was just going to ask her strange conductor where on earth she was bringing her to, when, from the shade of a projecting arch, stepped out Fitzstephen, his broad-leaved Panama drawn down over his brows so as to conceal the upper part of his face. Maureen stepped back in some alarm, not at first recognizing the figure before her.

"Why, Maureen, surely you are not afraid of me?" said the merchant, and he raised the hat for a moment from his brow. The voice and the face reassured the girl, and she quickly recovered her self-reliance, and with it her composure.

"Oh! is it you, Mr. Fitzstephen? I declare you

took a start out of me, for I thought it was some stranger was in it. Isn't it late you're out to-night, sir?"

"Well, I own it is rather late, Maureen; but I leave for Scotland to-morrow, and wished to see you *on business*" (he laid an emphasis on the words) "before I go. I shall not be back for, perhaps, a couple of weeks, and it is of importance to me to know what chance there is of my success in what we were talking of on Midsummer Night."

"Why, then, indeed, Mr. Fitzstephen, I'm afraid it's *little* chance you have. The art of man wouldn't turn them, sir."

"Probably not, Maureen," said Fitzstephen, with a smile, "but the art of *woman* might. I know one whom no man in the Claddagh would refuse if she asked it as a favor—one who can wind Randal More around her pretty finger. Do you know such a one, Maureen?"

"Maybe I do, maybe I don't, your honor!—but, at any rate, that's neither here nor there. I know my father would do a great deal for you, sir."

"So I would fain hope, Maureen."

"But, even if he had a mind to do it——" She hesitated, colored slightly, and looked timidly up at Fitzstephen.

"Well, Maureen, why do you hesitate?"

"I was a-goin' to say, sir, that, for all Randal More's liking for you, he can't do much, I'm thinking, this time."

"And why not, Maureen?"

"Why, because, sir, there's some of the boys entirely again' you."

"Indeed! why, I thought I had none but well-wishers in the Claddagh."

"Well, it's sorry I am to say it, your honor, an' ashamed, too, for it's what my father tells them that many a time you stood by us when the rest of the quality were all against us. But some of them won't hear reason at all, at all."

"It is strange," said Fitzstephen, half to himself, half to Maureen; "I have never injured any of them. Maureen! if I only knew who they were, I might endeavor to win them over."

"Oh! then, if that's the way of it, sir, I'll tell you and welcome. But you mustn't blame them, your honor, for they wouldn't harm a hair of your head; only they think that you're a stranger; you shouldn't come next or near us at all. It's Shan Driscoll is the hardest again' you, sir, and Brien Kineely, too—though it's newins for him, poor boy, to be hard on any one. If you could bring them over now, you might do."

Fitzstephen smiled at the charming simplicity of Maureen, but the smile soon faded, and a shade of anxiety passed over his fine countenance. He fixed his eyes on Maureen, as she stood before him in the unconscious innocence of her bright girlhood, and the expression of his face gradually changed till the young beauty shrank from its intense earnest-

ness when by chance she glanced upwards. And yet there was nothing of passion, nothing to alarm the purest mind, in those calm, earnest eyes. It was merely their deep, concentrated thought that was new and strange to the Claddagh girl.

"Don't be angry, Mr. Fitzstephen!" she said in a tremulous tone, "I'll speak to the boys myself——"

"Angry with *you*, Maureen! oh no, my poor girl! Why should I be angry with you?"

"I don't know, your honor, but I thought you *looked* angry."

"Did I? Well, never trust my looks again. But, Maureen, listen to me—for I see you are impatient to go. I do not want you to say anything about this matter to 'the boys' you speak of." He paused, and if Maureen had raised her eyes at the moment she would have seen, even in the dim light, an unusual flush on his dark cheek. "If they are as prejudiced against me as you say, I would not have you *try* to change them. Mind, any one else, but those you have mentioned"——

"Well, I'll not promise to say much to any one, sir, for I'm afeard it's no use——"

"Will you then refuse me, Maureen? Surely, it is not much I ask."

"I don't know that, sir. If you knew our people as well as I do, you wouldn't say so. Still and all——"

"Still and all, you'll try. Isn't that what you would say?" And he attempted to take her hand.

The attempt, however, was unsuccessful, and Maureen drew back with that haughty air which was almost habitual to her.

"Keep your distance, Mr. Fitzstephen!" she coldly said. "This is no time nor place for shaking hands. If I had known where Nanno was bringing me, it isn't here you'd have me. I suppose you have nothing more to say, so I'll be bid-din' you a good-night. Come, little pet!" (to Nan-no, who had been sitting at her feet) "they'll be wonderin' what's come of us."

"Maureen," said Fitzstephen, advancing to her side when she turned her face homewards, "it is indeed a lonely hour and a lonely place, and per-haps I should not have sent for you. Permit me to see you home."

A disdainful laugh broke from Maureen: "Ah, then, are you in earnest, Mr. Fitzstephen? Do you think there's any danger for the likes of me in the Claddagh? It would be an evil day or night when Maureen O'Hara would be afeard to walk the streets of the Claddagh. God be with you, sir!"

"So the words of the old song do not hold good in the Claddagh," said Fitzstephen, still walking on beside her. And he repeated in Irish from the pop-ular song—" *Colleen dhas crudha na bo.*"

"A young maiden is like a ship sailing,
Doesn't know how far safe she may go,
At every blast she's in danger—"

"No, sir," said Maureen, with indignant empha-

sis, "that's *not* true with us, thanks be to God for His good care of us. I think you'd better turn back, your honor, for some of the boys may be comin' to look for me, and they'd wonder what brought you here at this time of night."

"I dare say you are afraid of Shan Driscoll seeing me here; but, surely, to-night he has something else to think of. But I see you are anxious to get rid of me. One word only before I go: who is this strange child?" pointing to Nanno Kenny; "when I was wandering about here to-night, waiting for a chance of seeing you, she came creeping, creeping along all alone by the river edge, crooning a doleful song. Having seen her with you yesterday, near the Chapel, I knew she was a favorite, and that you would follow her at her bidding, so I sent her to you. Who and what is she?"

"Well, indeed, myself hardly knows who she is. She passes for Aileen's grandchild, but I have heard people say she isn't a drop's blood to her. Sometimes I think she isn't a livin' creature at all, the way she talks and the way she looks. But, somehow, she makes us all love her, and me most of all. I can sit for hours, Mr. Fitzstephen, alone with that child; and we often go in the moonlight nights and sit by the river-side lookin' down on the runnin' water and listenin' to the music it makes, and lookin' up into the blue sky where the stars look down at us. And then Nanno and me talk about everything; and I like to hear her talk, for she knows a

power. But it's only to me she talks; now you'd hardly get a word out of her."

Maureen, wrapt up in her subject, had forgotten her haste, and stood once more facing Fitzstephen, unconscious of the wonder with which he had been following the rapid changes which passed over her mobile features as she thus spoke in a way he had never heard her speak before.

"Maureen!" said he, when she came to a stop, "would you not like to *know* something about those bright stars, and this world we live on, which is one of them?"

"Ah! then now, Mr. Fitzstephen! do you think I'm so simple as all that comes to? This world one of the stars! Do you hear that, Nanno? Why, you and me knows better than that ourselves—the gentleman is making his fun of me."

"No indeed; I should be very, very sorry to make fun of you. Only manage this business for me, and I may some day teach you many things that you little dream of. Good-by now, Maureen! I must leave you for I know not how long, and you will not even shake hands with me! Well, no matter. I do not blame you. But mind, when I return, I shall expect good news from you. The herring season will soon be coming now. Good-bye, little one. Speak sometimes of me to Maureen, will you not?"

He turned and walked quickly away without wait-

ing for an answer from either, humming to himself
as he retraced his homeward way :

"Oh! had we some bright little isle of our own
In a blue Summer ocean, far off and alone,
Where a leaf never dies in the still-blooming bowers,
And the bee banquets on thro' a whole year of flowers.

Where the sun loves to pause
With so fond a delay,
That the night only draws
A thin veil o'er the day;

"Where simply to feel that we breathe, that we live,
Is worth the best joy that life elsewhere can give.

"There, with souls ever ardent and pure as the climate,
We should love, as they loved in the first golden time;
The glow of the sunshine, the balm of the air,
Would steal to our hearts, and make all Summer there.

With affection as free
From decline as the bowers,—
And with Hope, like the bee,
Living always on flowers,

"Our life should resemble a long day of light,
And our death come on holy and calm as the night!"

"Ah! sly little Bard of Erin! master of that
strange lyre which we bear within us," went on Fitz-
stephen, when he had got through the words of the
song, "how is it that you can thus express this mys-
terious emotion which fills my soul?—what noble
unsophisticated creature of light and beauty—of
poetry and love, was *your* inspiration when you
wrote those charming lines, you whose associations
were chiefly with the high-born, the learned, and
the cultivated?"

When Fitzstephen reached his own door he found
all dark and silent, with the single exception of
Margaret's room, where a light was burning, very
dimly, as if the snuff had grown long and shadowy

from neglect. "Poor Margaret!" soliloquised the anxious brother, as he let himself in by means of his latch-key, and softly mounted the stairs leading to his own apartment, "poor Margaret! those who see you by the light of day little imagine how your night-hours pass!—People look upon your smiling face and enjoy the brightness of your presence, wondering in their hearts that the sorrows of a bereaved wife and childless mother have left no deeper traces on your youthful brow!—they little know the dark under-current that flows beneath that sparkling surface. I would give a trifle to know what connection there is between her and Arranmore—true it was there she lost her child, but that was years ago, and in the course of nature the wound ought to be healed by this time. There *was* more than grief, too, in her violent emotion when I mentioned the name to try her. I wish that old hag had either kept all to herself, or told more!"

Maureen was unusually silent on her way back, to the evident dissatisfaction of little Nanno, who was well disposed for a bit of chat. "Don't you like to hear him talk, Maureen?" she suddenly asked.

"Who, *acushla*?"

"Why, the dark gentleman—he doesn't talk like any one else—sure he doesn't, Maureen? Even Father Dominick hasn't such a tongue." Maureen laughed at the child's simple earnestness. "I'm sure he knows a power," went on Nanno, in an ab-

stracted, musing tone ; " I wish we asked him where all the people come from that I be dreamin' about every night—it's so queer that I can never see them in the day-time, though I go and sit all alone for a long, long time, trying hard to make them come. Won't you ask Mr. Fitzstephen who they are, and where they come from, Maureen astore—I know he'd tell *you* anything !"

" Now, don't be talking that way, *alanna machree* don't, now, or Maureen won't love you. We mustn't make so free with Mr. Fitzstephen, for he's a gentleman, and besides he's not one of *us*. Not a word, now, there's Brian and Yeman goin' out to look for *us*." Then raising her voice she called to them : " Come this way, Brian ! if it's *us* you want."

" Why, then, who else would we want ?" said Brian joyfully, as he and Yeman approached with a rapid step ; " what took you away from us at all ? everything is goin' wrong without you. The *sorra* play we can play—ask Yeman, now, if you don't b'lieve *me* !"

" Deed I'll tell her no such thing," said Yeman, quickly ; " it's that and the likes of it that spoils her on us. I think it 'd be fitter for her stay with the rest of the girls than be goin' about alone this way *discoorsin'* ghosts and fairies and such things."

" Take care of what you say, *ma bouchal* !" answered Maureen, pleasantly ; " them things are not to be spoken lightly of, as you may find out when it's too late. Them Spaniards that be walkin' about here in stormy nights——"

"Now, Maureen! what makes you be always talkin' of *them*?" cried her brother, in visible trepidation; "I told you before not to do it."

"Hear him now, Brian!" said Maureen, with a merry laugh; "I leave it to you if he didn't begin it himself? Come in now, anyhow, and we'll put the ghosts a one side for this time!"

Maureen's return was hailed with general acclamation, and the shower of questions by which she was assailed would have been overpowering, had not her grandmother's volley of abuse for her prolonged absence created a diversion in her favor by exciting universal sympathy. Maureen took part in the play which was just commencing, and then placed herself beside Shan, who sat in gloomy silence by the bed of death, with his eyes fixed on the face that had been wont to cheer and comfort him.

"Now, Shan!" said Maureen, in a soft, low tone, that fell like balm on his bleeding heart, "now, Shan, where's the use in lettin' yourself down this way?—turn round and look at the plays, can't you?—you'll have time enough to grieve for them that's gone, and besides you're sure if she's not gone straight to heaven she isn't far off it!"

"Ah, but, Maureen, Maureen! still and all I've lost *my mother*—*she* loved me anyhow—I'm sure of that—and it's all the comfort I can have now to look at her and think of all her goodness to me, and all she done for me. Go away, Maureen, and don't lose the fun for me—my sorrow's all my own."

"It's no such thing, Shan Driscoll—we all have our share in it, for poor Judy was everybody's friend."

"God bless you, Maureen!" said Shan, with a quivering voice, "God forever bless you, *achorra*, for the kind word—but sure you were a'most the last one in her mouth afore the breath left her. You didn't hear what she said, did you, Maureen?"

Maureen had not, for the truth was she had stealthily left the cottage on hearing her own name mentioned by the dying woman. Shan was just about to tell her, when Brien Kineely, obeying a sign from her, came forward, nothing loath, surely, and carried her off by force, it would seem, to take her part in some projected play.

"I'll be back again," whispered Maureen.

"Oh! there's no occasion in life," returned Shan, coldly, "it's dull work watching the dead, and, as I told you before, I'm better alone!"

On the following and last night of the wake there was a joyful commotion, amongst the youngsters especially, early in the evening, when no less a person than old Noddy Kinshela, the beggarwoman from town, made her appearance. She had heard of poor Judy's death, she said, and thought it the least she could do to come out to the wake, if it was nothing only on account of the many a rousing cup of tea they had taken together in their time. Noddy, as a sort of ubiquitous inhabitant of Galway, had kept possession of its streets for many a long year, and

in her capacity of queen of the begging community, had had frequent and constant intercourse with the Claddagh women who habitually "stood the market." Her residence befitted her mock-regal quality, being one of those old mansions whose foreign aspect and mouldering grandeur gave so strange a character to certain localities of the City of the Tribes. It had been for centuries the abode of a thriving branch of the Lynch family, but for many, many years it had been given over to decay, and in the great, wide, old-fashioned kitchen had Noddy Kinshela pitched her tent soon after its desertion, when the last of the family died abroad. The old tottering walls, in many places roofless, afforded but little shelter from the winter's wind or the drifting snow; to others, too, the place was perilous in the extreme, but still it had many attractions for poor Noddy, for she had passed her girlhood and womanhood in the service of the family now extinct, and every stone in the old house was dearer to her than its weight in gold. Nor was she altogether as comfortless in her strange dwelling as one might at first suppose; for "some of the neighbor boys had from time to time, repaired the roof just over the kitchen—that is to say, the first floor of the house, and otherwise so improved it that, without at all lessening its air of venerable antiquity, they had kept it in a condition to shelter its lonely tenant. For the rest, Noddy was a person of no small importance in the community; from having lived so long

in the Lynch family, she was necessarily acquainted with the secret history of that and many other houses, and this knowledge, whether real or supposed, gave her an indescribable but most potent influence amongst a people who are proverbially fond of tales and legends of old time. Strange rumors were afloat of high and distinguished personages visiting Noddy under cover of the night, enveloped in various disguises, and these rumors were rather encouraged than otherwise by the stately old beggarwoman, who took pleasure in thus maintaining her former connection with "the quality." Still she was secret as the grave on all points that affected the interest or the reputation of "the ould families," as she reverentially phrased it.

The reader will now understand why Noddy's appearance at the wake was hailed with such joyful acclamation, but of course it was the signal for raising "the cry,"* in which she herself heartily joined. The chorus of wailing and clapping hands was no sooner over than Maureen took possession of a seat at Noddy's side, swallowing with avidity every word that fell from her lips, and ingratiating herself into her good graces by every little attention she could think of, such as lighting her pipe, hand-

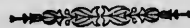
* The *caoin* or death-cry. Amongst the unmixed Celtic communities of Ireland in the remoter parts of the country, "the cry" is renewed at a wake as often as any friend or relative of the dead is seen to enter. Many of our older readers may themselves have helped to "raise the cry" on similar occasions. It is a custom which came to the Celts of Ireland from their earliest progenitors and goes to prove their eastern origin.

ing the funeral snuff, and all other such acceptable services. She had always, indeed, been somewhat of a favorite with Noddy, and this night gave her a secure footing in that enviable position. It was seldom that Noddy Kinshela condescended actually to praise any one, but on this occasion she assured Vara, who was her supporter on the right, that Maureen was "uncommon handsome, and might pass for a rare lady any day, as far as shapes, makes, and features went. To be sure," Noddy added, drawing up her tall, emaciated figure as she sat, "she hasn't the genteel manner that comes from bein' with the quality—how could she have it, poor thing;"

"We don't want her to have it," Vara answered tartly; "she's well to be seen, and she's as God made her. I'd trounce the life out of her, if I seen her puttin' on airs—I would!"

Noddy smiled in pity, and waved her hand majestically, as much as to say: "What better could we expect from you?" Her silence, however, disarmed Vara's anger, so that good humor was speedily restored.

In compliance with the general call for a story, Noddy, after drinking "a good strong cup of tea," looked round on her silent and attentive audience with an eye thoughtful and complacent, and then commenced her story.



CHAPTER IX.

"It's close on forty years now since poor Judy that's lyin' there under boord fornenst us brought me in a salmon for a great dinner we were goin' to have at master's that evenin'—the heavens be his bed this night, and Judy Driscoll's too! Ochone! but its light and easy my heart was that day, an' as for Judy—she might easy be my daughter, poor thing! you wouldn't find a tighter lass or a merrier one about the Claddagh anyhow. Well! as I was saying it, was I that took the fish from her that day, for you see, when there was any hurry in the house, there was nothing but 'Noddy!' here, and 'Noddy!' there, and nothing went right, as the poor mistress thought, if Noddy wasn't hand and foot in it. So that day I was giving a hand to the cook before I'd go up to dress the ladies, in regard to the houseful of company we were goin' to have. It was purty late when all our preparations were made, but still in good time, and everything went as well as heart could wish. The ladies and gentlemen all looked beautiful, especially my own master and mistress, and Master Edward—the Lord be good and merciful to him this night, for ochone! he's gone like all the rest, young, and strong, and handsome as he was then! But the beauty of all was Miss Ellie—ahem!—a young lady that was in it with

her father, a fine ancient, ould gintleman belongin' to one of the Tribes. Most of the young gentlemen were after Miss Ellie, for not to speak of her purty face,—and that's what it was, sure enough!—she was an only child and her father didn't know the end of his own riches. Still and all, there was two that had more conceit in her than any of the rest. One of them was come of an ould Galway family, and proud he *was* of it, and the young lady's father thought mighty well of him, for he was worth a power of money, and had ships of his own sailing on the salt sea far and near, and had neither father nor mother, brother nor sister to claim a share of what he had. Maybe Miss Ellie liked him and maybe she didn't—some said yes and some said no—howsom-ever, the other young gentleman I spoke of was in the way—he was a foreigner, from Spain or some of them outlandish countries beyond the sea, and had no friends or blood-relation in the city barrin' Miss Ellie's father and herself. He was a cousin of the ould gentleman's, it seems, and was sent to Galway for his edication—I suppose there's none to be had where he came from—at any rate he was rich, people said, and I'm very sure he was handsome, too,—a darlin' fine fellow as you'd see from Cork to Kinsale, let alone in Galway city. He had a pair of eyes in his head that were shining and dancing like the waters out in the Bay on a bright summer day, and a head of silky black hair that you never seen the beat of. Well! to be sure, it was as natu-

ral as life, for the young foreigner to have a likin' for Miss Ellie that was so long in the one house with him, and as I said, *maybe* the young lady thought just as much of him as he did of her, but to make a long story short, the ould father of her—a wizened little *leprechaun* of a man—had set his heart on Mr. Fitz—. Lord bless me, what am I sayin' at all?—I mean on the other young gentleman for a son-in-law, because they were doing business together—himself and the young gentleman—and his father before him for many a long year. Here, Maureen, put a coal in the pipe for me—that's a darlin'—where was I?—right, Maureen, right—I said the ould gentleman didn't want his one daughter to marry the stranger—maybe it's what he was afeard, poor man! of her leavin' him in the dark lonesome days of age—I don't know—God knows. It happened, anyhow, on this very evenin' I'm speakin' of that the young foreigner sat alongside of Miss Ellie, at table, and had hardly a word for any one but herself, and maybe she didn't listen to him, the darlin', and smile on him, too! Well! the father was sittin' right fornenst them and so was the other, too, and both seen what was goin' on, as they couldn't help seein' it, for it was plain as the nose on my face. People used to say afterwards that the ould gentleman and young one gave each other the wink to watch the sport, though, dear knows, it was no sport to either of them. When the gentlemen followed the ladies to the drawing-

room,"—Noddy was sorely puzzled to give these words in the Claddagh dialect, but she managed to convey the idea that the ladies *did* go to another room while they of the masculine gender sat over their wine and punch, together with the subsequent movement of the latter in the same direction—"it's no easy matter," said Noddy, with infinite self-importance, "to make you understand the ways of the quality."

"Wisha, then, but it's the quare ways they *are*!" said a rough old fisherman who sat with his back against the jamb-wall, smoking his pipe in luxurious enjoyment of the story; "couldn't they let the women take their comfort out of a drop as well as themselves, the unnatural haythens? if it was only to wash down their bit o' dinner!"

"Why, then, bad manners to you, Dinny!" said Noddy, sending a contemptuous whiff full in his face, "what right have you to find fault with the quality for havin' their own fashions? But sure I needn't blame you, poor man! if you knew any better you wouldn't do it. Well! whereabouts was I—"

"At the gentlemen goin' to the ladies' room," said Maureen—

"That's it, that's it, child! it's you that's always cute and sharp at takin' up things. Well! as I was sayin', when Senor Juan—ahem! the young Spaniard went up to where the ladies was—and what do you think but he went up before any of the others—"

didn't himself and Miss Ellie get together again, and were playin' music together, an everything like that. Well! my dears, when the rest of the gentlemen came up, the ould father was as red as a turkey's head with the dint of anger when he seen how things were goin', but he said nothing. By and by, the young gentleman that he had in his eye for Miss Ellie took him one side, and they had a long talk together, and after that, neither of them took any notice whatsoever of the young couple for the remainder of the evenin'. People were full sure that there was goin' to be a match between the rich young foreigner and purty Miss Ellie, and somehow every one was well pleased at it, for you'd swear they were made for one another. I suppose they thought so themselves, too, the creatures! but if they did, they were all in the wrong, and so was the whole town."

Here Noddy paused, ostensibly to have her pipe replenished, and to imbibe a certain portion of the inspiring essence of John Barleycorn, offered for her acceptance by the sorrowing young master of the household, whom the story had beguiled from his lethargy of woe, and placed on a seat at Maurcen's back, viz.: an inverted fish-creel. Every one cried out to Noddy to go on, but Noddy, with the tact of an old story-teller, was coquettishly playing on the interest which it had been her previous study to excite in the minds of her hearers. So she puffed away at her pipe, took a few sips from the tea-cup

which served the purpose of a glass, and then smoothing down her check apron, looked complacently and indeed somewhat slyly round on her audience as though she enjoyed their visible impatience.

"Ah, then! Noddy, can't you go on, now?"

"Well! Noddy, what came of it?"

"Were they married, Noddy, or what?"

"No, child, they were *not* married: whatever turned up that night after they all went home—and to this hour no one livin' knows—the Spaniard left the city early in the mornin', long afore any one was stirrin', and from that day to this, he was never seen on Irish ground."

"Lord save us, Noddy agra! what came of him, at all?"

"God only knows that," and the old woman shook her head with solemn emphasis, "many and many's the time I heard the ould mistress and master—God be good to them! talkin' about it between themselves, but they could never make head nor tail of it."

"But what did Miss Ellie do, Noddy?" inquired Maureen, eagerly. "Did she die of grief?"

"The sorra *that* she did," said Noddy dryly, almost bitterly; "about a month after she was married to Mr. Fitz—, oh bother to this tongue of mine! I mean the young gentleman that was pleasin' to her father. I declare to you, many a one wondered that she took him, for dear knows! he was a proud, dark-lookin' man as you'd find any-

where, though I can't say but what he was handsome enough, too,—still an' all, there was quare stories goin' at the time about him and the young foreigner—quare stories all out,—” and she shook her head with a mysterious air, and drew in her thin, bloodless lips as though she feared some indiscretion on their part. Seeing that no one spoke,—although every face reflected her own half-revealed suspicion, Noddy went on in a lower and still more solemn tone:

“People used to be sayin' that there were Spaniards made away with by some of his own forebearers in the ould ancient times long ago, and that Master Ar—the bridegroom, I mean, had as dark and down a look with him as e'er a Fitz—as e'er a one of his people ever had. But, howsoever, it was the quarest thing of all that Miss Ellie could bring herself to take *him* for a partner athout knowin' what had come of the poor young gentleman that was a stranger in the place, and ne'er a one to look after him only herself and her father. But, indeed, she took it mighty easy, and grew as fat as a little whale, and to see her and her man walkin' out or ridin' out together, my dears, you'd think she never had a notion of anybody else, or that the Spaniard had never come across either of them. The husband and the ould father are both dead years ago, so they know now whether they done the fair thing or not in regard to the poor stranger. The Lord forgive them their sins anyhow!”

Not a voice was raised to say "Amen!" and for a few moments all were silent. Shan Driscoll was the first to speak:

"Well! somehow or another, Noddy, what you say about the gentleman that married Miss Ellie puts me in mind of Mr. Fitzstephen——"

Maureen turned her head quickly and looked him full in the face, her lip trembled, and she seemed as though she wished to speak, but even if she had her voice would scarcely have been heard in the clatter of the two ponderous tongues which were instantly in motion.

"Wisha, then, isn't he mighty sharp on our hands!" cried Noddy, in a tone of cutting irony; "I'll go bail, now, you could see the grass growin' if you were put to it—eh! Shan?—now in earnest, I want to ask you one question, an' I hope you'll answer me—what in the wide world put Mr Fitzstephen in your head?"

"You may well say that, Noddy agra!" cried Vara, with even unusual force and energy of expression; "you were tellin' of what happened as good as forty years ago, and it's what the *heaveril* puts in his word about a man that's nearer to thirty than he is to forty!—maybe it's what you'd be findin' out next for us that myself or Aileen there is mighty like Noddy's ould madam that does be comin' to her, and cosherin' with her in the dead of night when there's none to hear or see them!"

"Vara!" said Noddy, with an air of offended

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dignity that had deep feeling in it, too, "Vara! don't be talkin' that way—I wouldn't sit by and listen to my own mother makin' free with the mistress's name. No I wouldn't!—and more betoken, I hope she's at better rest than all that comes to."

"Musha, then, but it's thin-skinned you are, honest woman!" said Vara, putting her arms a-kimbo in an attitude that denoted no pacific intentions; "much about your ould quality and far less!"

Whatever the feelings of the audience might have been no one dared to find fault with Vara, and moreover, it was well understood that she had her match to deal with on that occasion, though it was a great word to say on behalf of Noddy. It might well be, on the whole, that the majority of those present slyly enjoyed in anticipation the clash of two such keen-edged weapons as the respective tongues of the old dames. If it were so, their malicious curiosity was not destined to be gratified, owing to a singular delicacy of feeling on the part of the Galway beggar.

"Vara Halliday!" said she, after a visible struggle with her naturally hot temper, "I lave it to your own dacency if this is a fit time for a quarrel!—you and me both had a wish for them that's lyin' there stiff and cowl'd fornest us, an' let no one have it to say that we'd disrespect her so far as to fall out at her wake. If it was your own house we were in, I might act differently an' make myself scarce,

but I came to Judy Driscoll's wake, an' it's not *your* bad tongue that'll send me away. Say what you like *now*, an' I'll keep it all in store for you but mind you'll not get a cross word out of me for this night, anyhow!"

"Wisha, then, Noddy, but it's you that's got mighty sensible on our hands—howsomever, I'll give in to you this time on account of the time it is—but don't keep harpin' on the quality, I tell you—the quality, *inagh!*—it's enough to make a body sick to hear the likes o' you goin' on about them the way you do!"

"I towld you I wouldn't answer you," said Noddy, with disdainful emphasis, "an' I won't—go on now as fast as you like!"

But Randal and some others of the ancients interposing, succeeded in making peace between the angry potentates, and Maureen was ready at Noddy's elbow with a freshly-lit pipe of fragrant tobacco, and a whispered petition on the part of all the youngsters that she'd tell them another story.

"Well! I'll not refuse you, Maureen!" said the old woman, looking kindly down on the beautiful suppliant: "I'm thinking it would be hard to do it," she added in a lower voice; "but as your granny doesn't like to hear about the quality, I must only think of something that'll be more to her taste."

"But, Noddy, I like to hear about the quality," said Maureen, with a pouting lip; "don't mind granny—she's only makin' fun."

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"The sorra that I am now, Maureen! an' I'd thank you not to say it, miss!"

"Never mind, ma colleen dhas!" said Noddy, bending down her head till it almost touched Maureen's, "some other time I'll tell *you* all about the old times and the old people that I used to know. Anything else 'ill do as well now!"

Maureen's countenance brightened, and a glow of satisfaction overspread every feature. For some reason best known to herself this voluntary promise was particularly agreeable to her, and for the remainder of the night nothing could exceed her kind solicitude about Noddy, although her subsequent stories were far from exciting her attention as the first had done.

About midnight the Rosary was said, and on toward morning some hymns were sung by certain young men and women who belonged to the chapel-choir.* After that another round of stories, wonderful accounts of "hair-breadth 'scapes," and perilous adventures amongst the isles and in the surgy creeks and inlets of the Bay, whither the hardy Claddagh men were wont to follow the finny tribes. Even Shan Driscoll had to tell his story when his turn came, and at Maureen's request, old Aileen related, for Noddy's special entertainment, the wreck of the Spanish vessel and the all but miracu-

* It is a common custom in the rural districts of Ireland for the "singers," to attend wakes and celebrate the solemn occasion by chanting the hymns of the Church. It is a beautiful and highly commendable practice worthy the primitive ages of Christianity.

lous escape of some of the crew. Noddy listened with a half-attentive ear, until Vara, taking up the tale, told how the Spanish gentleman lay sick at her father's house for many long weeks—how they cared and tended him, and how generously he would have rewarded them, had they chosen to accept his gifts. By this time the beggarwoman's attention was fully awakened and she swallowed every word with greedy interest. Not a trace of her recent anger remained either in voice or manner.

"Ah then, Vara astore! how long is it since that happened?"

"Well, 'tish't to say very long, either—let me see now—it's jst about five-and-twenty years come next fishery—it was about the days of Hollandtide, I'm a'most sure."

"And what kind of a man was he, agra?"

"Wisha, then, but you're enough to puzzle any one with your questions, so you are, but if you *must* know all about it—he was a middle-sized, black-avized man, with a pair of rollin' black eyes that you never seen the beat of—our Maureen's there wouldn't hold a candle to them, an' then his hair was as curly an' as silky as a water-dog's."

"Well, to be sure," muttered Noddy, to herself, "it *was* about the very time, an' just as I seen him—may be it wasn't his ghost after all."

"And may be Miss Ellie's husband didn't make away with him," whispered Maureen, with an arch smile.

"Why, Lord bless me, child, I think you're a fairy or something that way!" and Noddy fixed her distended eyes on the smiling face that was looking up to her.

"Never mind *what* I am, Noddy agra," Maureen whispered again; "you see I'm good at readin' riddles, anyhow; ask Brian Kineely there if I'm not!"

There was evidently more meant than met the ear, and poor Brian's face flushed to a scarlet hue as he encountered Maureen's sportive glance together with an enquiring look from his old grandmother, who sat "on her hunkers" near the hob, inhaling the aroma emitted by her well-seasoned dhudeen. It was at all times easy to raise a blush on Brian's florid cheek, but on this occasion he was positively abashed and looked as sheepish as could be. At last he ventured to glance at Maureen, and was still more confused when he saw her laughing outright. As if in answer to his reproachful look, however, she jumped from her seat, and darted out on the floor saying:

"Who's for a play—we're all tired sittin'." As she passed Brian, she whispered softly:

"Be up and alive, now, or I'll tell Sally!"

"Sally be—ducked!" said Brian angrily, unconsciously elevating his voice so as to make every one present stare; "you're enough to set a fellow out of his mind, Maureen O'Hara—that's what you are!"

The laugh which followed recalled Brian to a

sense of the ludicrous position in which he had placed himself, and after a vain attempt to recover his composure, he darted out of the cottage, regardless of Maureen's earnest entreaty that he would wait and have his share of the sport.

An animated discussion followed amongst the old women on Brian's peculiar qualities, his grandmother descanting with the garrulity of age and the exaggeration of a doting parent on his never-to-be-told goodness, and calling on Vara so often for confirmation of what she advanced, that even the sorrow-fuiled ear of Shan caught the frequent appeal, and he snubbed the old woman in a way that made the others laugh heartily. More's hearing was none of the sharpest, however, and as she barely heard the sound of Shan's voice, she took it for granted that he, too, was "putting in his good word for Brian, and indeed it was more than could be expected of him." This raised another laugh, and so the general good-humor was no way disturbed by Shan's sarcasm—though it was bitter enough too.

Next morning the funeral took place, Mass being previously celebrated in the house according to the time-honored custom of the people. Then the corpse was carried out and placed on the shoulders of four elders, one of whom was Randal More himself. Shan walked immediately after the coffin with his drooping head and downcast eyes. After him came the oldest matrons of the community wrapped

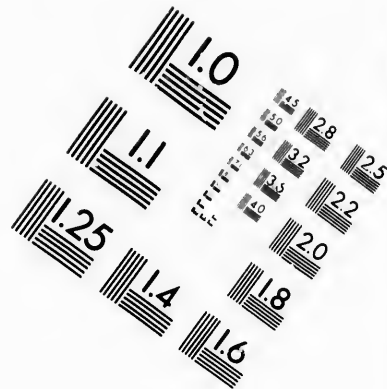
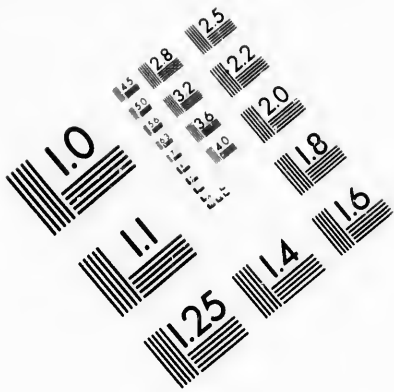
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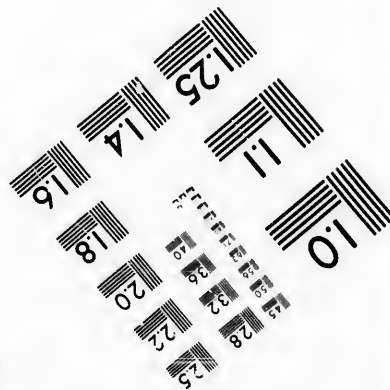
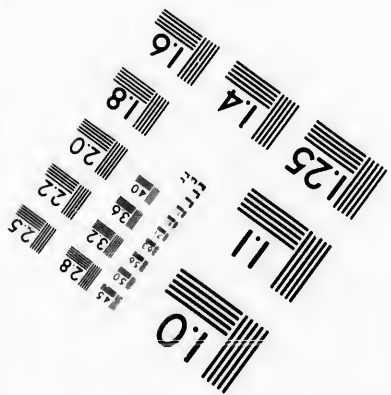
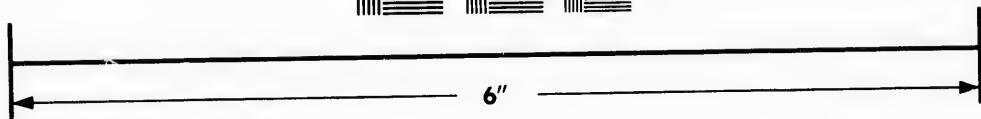
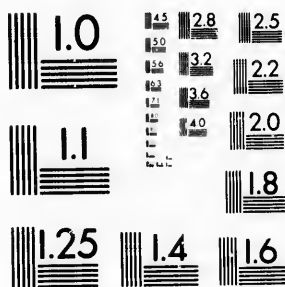
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from head to foot in their long blue cloaks. These were the *caoiners* whose loud impassioned wailing echoed and re-echoed over the wide expanse of the Bay, making known far and near along the shore that some of the Claddagh people was being borne to the ancient Cemetery on the hill-top. The morning was grey, and still and breezeless, and no sound was heard along the line of march save that wild funeral cry as it rose fitfully and by starts on the dull, calm air. At rare intervals, too, were heard the low, half-suppressed moan of filial sorrow bursting from the heart of the bereaved son, as busy memory placed before him all that his mother had been to him.

The funeral was long, so long, indeed, that when the corpse was carried into the Cemetery-gate the rear of the procession was still winding through the lower parts of the village, the route chosen being according to custom, the most circuitous one possible. One of the Fathers from the Convent having then blessed the narrow house wherein the Christian body was to await the Resurrection, the coffin was lowered into its final resting-place.

Up to the moment when the last shovelful of earth was heaped on the grave by the hands of friends and kinsmen, nothing was heard, nothing was seen but the most decorous gravity, and in many instances the unfeigned heartfelt sorrow that follows the rupture of human ties strongly cemented by years and years of kindly intercourse. That

last office of affection once done, however, the scene was entirely changed. The cloud instantly vanished from every brow, even Shan's recovered much of its wonted character, as though the load were well-nigh lifted from his heart when his parent was snugly "laid by." It was nothing amongst the men but one inviting another to "go and have a treat," and off they all went to the several public houses or taverns through the village to render what they considered the very last honors to the memory of the lately dead. The women, old and young, went home to their respective dwellings, with the exception of a few of those strong-minded females to be found in every community who will not be debarred from their lawful share of whatever is going on amongst "the lords of creation." There is no denying that the Claddagh had a certain number of these energetic matrons who could empty a glass of the right sort in as good style as any one might wish to see, and these to a woman insisted on "pouring their libation" to the memory of so honored a member of their community. These funeral festivities* occupied the remainder of that

* "Had this custom been known to the late General Vallancey," says Mr. Hardiman the excellent historian of Galway, "it is probable it might have afforded him an opportunity of tracing some affinity between our Claddagh friends and the Arabs, who, it is said, also rejoice on the death of their friends and relatives. How far this incident would have supported an hypothesis for the learned antiquary this is not the place to conjecture."—*History of Galway*, note on the Claddagh.

The custom alluded to is by no means peculiar to the Claddagh; it was even very recently common in other remote parts of the country. It is happily disappearing, and will soon, I trust, be numbered with the things that were.

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day, indeed, some hours of the night. The great-
 est shrew in the village would find no fault with
 her rough mate for "keepin' Shan company till he'd
 get over his trouble, poor boy!" Any one who
 grudged time or money on such an emergency
 would have been set down as "good for nothing,"
 and "a disgrace to the place." It hardly ever oc-
 curred, however, that any such backslider was found,
 the entire community being under the influence of
 the popular fallacy that the more money they spent,
 the better they proved their respect and esteem for
 the dead. Yet the whole passed off without either
 quarrel or disturbance of any kind, as indeed gener-
 ally happened on such occasions.

Evening was drawing on and Maureen Dhu, all
 alone in the house, sat "spinning her wheel" in the
 sun-lit porch, thinking of anything and everthing if
 one might judge by the clear reflex of her thoughts
 on her fine, intellectual brow. Her father and her
 brothers were, as a matter of course, amongst the
 noisy revellers whose laughter and loud talk came
 softened by distance from a tavern in the next
 street. All at once a shadow darkened the arched
 doorway, and Maureen looking up saw Brien Kineely
 standing with his shoulder to the door-post. Mau-
 ree's first inclination was to laugh in her coy,
 coquettish way, but a second glance showed her
 something in Brian's face that was altogether un-
 usual and surprised her not a little, so she waited
 for him to speak first, which he soon did.

"Maureen!" said he, in a very serious tone, "you know I never cared for drinkin' or boozin', so I thought I'd come and have a talk with *you* in regard to something that's heavy on my heart ever since the night of poor Judy's death, rest her soul in peace."

At another time Maureen would have laughed in his face and given him some saucy answer, but there was something so touching, so earnest in his tone and in his looks that she could not bring herself to speak lightly to him. Encouraged by her silence he went on, while his changing color and faltering voice denoted his agitation:

"Ever since Sunday evenin'," repeated Brian, "I can't get it out of my head that you have some notion about me and Sally Kirwan—I wish the same Sally was in England beyant, or some place where she'd be away out of this, so as no harm came on her—and sure that time you seen us talkin' at the door I was jist tellin' her about two boys that I seen boxin' on her account a while before that, down on the Fair Green. But when I heard the bould jade what she said to you, and, the turn she gave my bein' there, I declare to you, Maureen! I didn't care if the earth opened and swallowed me, I was that through-other.* What killed me out an' out tirely was you makin' fun of me about it last night before all that was at the wake. Now, Maureen!

* This is a singular and yet very common form of expression in Ireland—its derivation can hardly be ascertained. It means confused or extremely agitated.

answer me one question—do you think I have any notion of Sally Kirwan?"

There was a momentary flush on Maureen's cheek, and a slight, a very slight tremor in her voice, as she replied, without raising her eyes from her wheel:

"Wisha, then, Brian Kineely, do you think I'm a fairy or a witch, that I could know what was in *your* heart, or anybody's heart but my own—I'm sure it's little I know about it."

"An' it's little you care either," said Brian, with more bitterness than Maureen thought him capable of. She looked up at him with some surprise, and was just going to make some satirical remark on the wondrous change in his manner, when Shan Driscoll's taller form stood beside him in the doorway, his face flushed with drinking, and his dark eye gleaming with the lurid light of passion. Maureen with difficultly suppressed a scream, and starting from her seat she put back her wheel into the house, then faced the young men again.

"Ha! ha!" laughed Shan, taking no heed of Maureen, but fixing his flashing glance on Brian, "you didn't think I had my eye on you—I guessed what you were at, you see, with your sneakin' underhand work!" and before Brian could say a word in reply, he struck him on the side of the head with his clenched fist with such force that he staggered back a pace or two and was barely able to recover his ground.

"Ah! shame, shame on you, Shan!" said Mau-

reen, and taking Brian by the hand she placed him on a seat within the porch and rested her arm on his shoulder, well knowing that no provocation would cause him to cast it off.

At this Shan was wild with anger: "It's just like you," said he, in a hoarse voice, "to take shelter under the petticoats when there's any danger——"

"Shame upon you again and again, Shan Driscoll!" cried Maureen, pale with excitement, "he didn't take shelter under petticoats, did he, when he jumped on the Sassenach's boat to save *your* life?"

"Never mind him, Maureen!" said Brian, and he tried hard to keep down his passion, "that is just the return I might expect from him—let him go on—he may strike me if he pleases, an' I'll not do or say him ill—*now!*"

"God bless you, Brian!" said Maureen with deep emotion, "I'll not forget this to you—indeed I'll not!"

By this time Shan was somewhat sobered, and he stood regarding the two with a fierce and lowering aspect. Gradually there came a smile, a strange mirthless smile, that might be called a sneer, and he spoke in a slow measured tone: "Don't be afeard, Brian! I'll not harm you now—there's time enough—time enough—I suppose you think you're near the winnin'-post now, but mind I tell you, you're as far from it as I am. Lonely and lonesome I am this day, but I'd rather be as I am than have Maureen's pity—I want her love, or nothing—if she hates me—

well be it so—better that than have her butterin' me up as she does you!"

On hearing this Maureen colored to her very temples—there was something in Shan's haughty independence that found an echo in her own heart. She raised her eyes to his for a moment and then dropped them again. "Why, then, I declare, Shan! you have a good opinion of me when you think I could *hate* any one—and you, Shan! what for would I hate you?"

"Well! I don't know, Maureen, barrin' the wildness that they say is in me, an' I'm sure it's enough to make any one wild to see what I see at times."

Brian began to feel uneasy, and standing up he said: "I think it's time to be movin', we must all be up by the peep o' day the morrow. I'm thankful to you, Shan! for what you said, an' I'm bound to do you a good turn for it."

But Brian, notwithstanding his hurry, did not move an inch, for Shan manifested no intention of going, and he had little notion of leaving him alone with Maureen. The latter herself was somewhat puzzled; she could easily have got rid of both, but she feared to have them go off together, fearing a renewal of the quarrel. Great, then, was her satisfaction, and Brian's too, when Vara was seen approaching on her return from the town. Brian accepted the old woman's invitation to "go in and sit down," but Shan walked away, muttering angrily to himself.

CHAPTER X.

That same evening while Shan, still smarting under his recent discomfiture, paced up and down the narrow street, in front of his now lonely dwelling, ashamed to stay away from the friends and companions who were holding high festival in the next tavern in honor of his recent loss, and yet unwilling to drink more, through fear of Maureeu's displeasure, a gentleman from town, a good customer of his, appeared unexpectedly before him.

"A good evening, Shan."

"A good evenin' kindly, sir—is it taking the air you are out this way?"

"Partly that, Shan, and partly on business with you. Are you going out to-morrow?"

"Well, I b'lieve so—it's three or four days since we done anything."

"I know that, and we have suffered for it, I assure you. But never mind, the worse luck now the better again. Now, Shan, I am going to have some friends to dinner, day after to-morrow, and I want you, if you happen on a good turbot, mind I say a *good* one, to keep it for me. If you shouldn't have one yourself, you know, you can speak to some of the others."

"I don't know about that, your honor," said Shan doggedly, "I can't promise."

"You can't, eh? and why not, pray?"

"Why just because it's my belief that you'll not get e'er a turbot at all in the Claddagh, if there was fifty o' them in it."

"Well, really my good fellow, you surprise me—what *do* you mean?"

"Why, in regard to the difference you had with Brian Kineely about that salmon—you never paid him for it since, did you?"

"Pay him! why certainly not—he was overcharging me for the fish when I came to pay him for it, and wouldn't take what I knew to be a reasonable price, so I told him to make his best of it. I thought he'd have summoned me to the court, and then he'd have to take what the magistrates considered a fair price."

"Humph!" said Shan, in a most contemptuous tone, "what have your magistrates to do with us? when did you ever know a Claddagh man to go before them? No, sir! we wouldn't do it for a score of salmons, or turbots either. But that debt is on you still, Mister Hampton, and till you pay Brian Kineely his full price, and make up the quarrel with him, there's no fish for you in the Claddagh."

"But, Shan! what have *you* to do with it? I'll pay you whatever you ask, if you get me the turbot. Why I heard for certain the other day, that you and Brian were not the best of friends yourselves."

"No matter to you what we are, we may quarrel

X.

Shan, still smarting, paced up and down his now lonely dwelling from the friends and high festival in the recent loss, and yet unshaken by the high fear of Maureen's town, a good customer before him.

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among ourselves at times, but we always take one another's part with strangers.*

"But surely you cannot expect me to give the fellow his own price now, after all that has passed. I tell you, it was out of all conscience."

"So *you* say, but you're out there, I'm thinkin', for we mostly have one price on everything. At any rate, go to Randal More—or stay, I'll bring him to you in a minute, if you'll wait here—he'll tell you what you're to pay Brian, and mind I tell you, keep a civil tongue in your head and don't object to whatever he tells you, or you'll find him worse than Brian, the gomeril! he has a little sup in, this evenin', and he has it again you, besides what you have done on Brian."

By the time Randal made his appearance, Mr. Hampton had almost made up his mind to give up the prospect of having the turbot, rather than allow himself to be imposed on, as he considered he was. He was rather a close man, as regarded money, a characteristic which was well known, and it is always an unpopular one in Ireland. Hampton was, therefore, no favorite with the Claddagh men, and hence Brian's original stiffness in his regard. The sight of Randal's lowering brow and flushed cheek made a wonderful difference in his sentiments, and he was very glad to accede to the terms laid down

* A similar incident is recorded by Mrs. Hall in her very interesting account of the Claddagh of Galway. It is strikingly illustrative of the "clannishness" of these people.

by the crusty Mayor of the Claddagh, in whose hands he deposited the price of Brian's salmon, and having obtained the promise of a turbot, made the best of his way out of the village, internally vowing not to return there in haste.

Some six or eight of the fishermen had gathered together during the brief discussion of the question, and the discordant chorus of laughter which greeted his departure made Mr. Hampton quicken his footsteps. Nor was he at all tempted to imitate Lot's wife, having no hankering whatsoever after the Claddagh, which it is probable he wished some fathoms down in congenial brine.

On his way home to Eyre square, where his house was situated, Mr. Hampton was accosted by the well-known voice of Noddy Kinshela, asking charity for God's sake.

"Go about your business, woman!" was the merchant's stern answer, and he walked on with the air of a man who defied all the beggars in Galway to get a halfpenny out of his pocket.

"Wisha, then, it's short enough but not very sweet," said Noddy, still following; "sure I well enough knew I wouldn't get it for charity, anyhow, but maybe you'd give me something if I'd tell you a little secret."

"Secret! what secret!" and Hampton half turned his head, but still walked on.

"Why, then, how can I tell you anything, man dear! if you go on at that rate—how do you know

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but it's what I'm goin' to tell you, now that the ladies are dying about you?"

The wicked irony of Noddy's words needed not the quizzical "glint" of her eye to strike home, for Mr. Hampton was, "blessed be the Maker!" as Noddy and others used say, "as ugly a man as ever stept in shoe leather." The consciousness of his woful deficiency, in point of personal attractions, rendered Mr. Herbert Hampton particularly touchy on that score, a fact which was well known to Noddy.

"Get out of my sight, you old beldame!" and he raised his walking-stick, "or I'll give you the weight of this!"—

"Arrah sure you would't be so cruel, Mr. Hampton, dear! sich a purty face couldn't hide a hard heart!" and the faster Hampton walked on in his rising passion, the more pertinaciously Noddy kept up with him, to the infinite amusement of the passers-by, to most of whom both parties with their peculiarities were well known.

"So you won't listen to me," said Noddy at length, when the merchant was turning a corner to his own house.

"Go be—hanged I tell you—I'll give you up to the police if you say another word."

"Well! I see you'll not pay me for the sacret—well! listen hither, Hearty Hampton,* and that's

* This ironical nickname 's often given amongst the Irish people to persons of a niggardly disposition.

what you are, God he knows! That dandy daughter of yours may set her cap at somebody else besides Mr. Fitzstephen as soon as ever she likes, for a ring he'll never put on her while her name is Emily Hampton!—d'ye hear that now?"

It was now Hampton's turn to hurry after the old beggarwoman, requesting, in a wonderfully civil manner, to know the meaning of her words. But Noddy, wrapt up in her offended dignity, had no mind to answer his questions, so on she trotted, pretending not to hear. At last she burst out laughing, it was a strangely shrill laugh, too,—and partly turning round told Mr. Hampton she wondered he wasn't ashamed of himself to be seen talking to an old beggarwoman. "If you want a policeman," said she, "there's one—only say the word an' you'll see how nately he'll do the job. Why don't you call him?"

"Nonsense, Noddy; I was only joking—come tell me what you meant—or rather—come up to the house this evening, and you'll be nothing the worse for it, I promise you."

"I suppose not, but still an' all, I'll not go—Miss Hampton is got to be mighty proud an' disdainful of late, an' I'd be sorry to affront her with a visit. Go home yourself, sir, an' tell her what I tould you—but stay—here's a message for her, tell her from me that the ring isn't made, nor ever will be, that's to make her and Giles Fitzstephen man an' wife."

Before Hampton had recovered from his speech-

less astonishment, Noddy had dived into a dark gateway where he could not think of following her, so he had nothing for it but to walk home and summon his daughter to a private conference on the subject of Noddy's inuendo which was, in fact, that nearest his heart. To get his daughter married into the Fitzstephen family had been his ambition for years and years, inspired and encouraged by Giles's early *penchant* for the fair Emily. Although his fortune was now considerable, thanks to his shrewdness and assiduity, together with some fortunate speculations at the outset of his mercantile life, yet Herbert Hampton had somehow never obtained a footing in the higher circles of Galway society. This was partly owing to his being a *parvenu* of comparatively recent date, and worse still without a drop of the old blood in his veins, and partly to that shabby and contemptible peculiarity to which he was indebted for his best known *soubriquet*. The Fitzstephens, on the contrary, were of the purest blood of Galway—that rich and genial stream which had coursed in turn through the veins of all the tribes of Galway. Add to this that the family character stood as high as its lineage in public estimation. Wherever Galway merchants were spoken of, the name of Fitzstephen was known and respected, for honor and probity were hereditary virtues in the race, handed down unsullied from one generation to the other. The present head of the house was also known to be in affluent circumstances, but even if it

were otherwise, Hearty Hampton, with all his closeness, would have willingly overlooked the deficiency of fortune in consideration of birth, character and position being all of the most desirable kind for a son-in-law. The delusive hope of being one day Mrs. Giles Fitzstephen had early taken possession of Emily's mind, notwithstanding that the gentleman was several years her senior, and it was this hope that had induced both father and daughter to try the effect of an English boarding school in giving the last polish to an expensive Irish education. The amount of execution done by this last gun mounted on the battery of Emily's charms is already known to the reader, but it was not as yet known to either father or daughter who still dreamed on in that ignorance which is bliss, according to the poet. The effect, therefore, of Noddy's taunting insinuation was positively startling. Not that it was deserving of much attention, for Mr. Herbert Hampton and the two Miss Hamptons, aunt and niece, were decidedly of opinion that it was simply ridiculous to heed what Noddy Kinshela said, especially as the family was known to occupy no very high place in her esteem. Still from Noddy's well-known and yet most unaccountable connection with the old families, her words had a certain oracular character on all that concerned them, and hence the Hamptons were more annoyed than they chose to own to each other.

Next day the Claddagh men were out all day long

fishing, and at evening when the boats came dropping in it was a pleasant and cheerful sight to see wives, daughters, and sisters, crowding the beach, welcoming the return of all in general, and their own in particular. Shan Driscoll's heart was sad and heavy as his fine hooker neared the shore, as he thought of the mother who was cold in her grave, whose loving smile and kindly voice should welcome him no more. He raised his hand to his eyes to wipe away the trickling tear, when, all at once, a voice, softer and more melodious than that whose silence he mourned, fell upon his ear like balm in the rankling wound. It was that of Maureen Dhu, who, with outstretched hand, awaited his landing.

"God and the Virgin be praised, Shan! you're welcome back to shore!" and the girl seized his hard, rough hand, and shook it as she had never done before. There was a tenderness in her voice, too, that sank sweetly and soothingly into the young man's heart, and solaced him as no other earthly thing could. There were many others to greet Shan kindly, after they had spoken to their own, but Maureen's greeting was the first, and that it was so was Shan's joy and pride.

"It's a fine thing to be in trouble at times," observed Brian Kineely to his friend Yeman, as they leaped on shore together; "see how Maureen made up to Shan—she has a feelin' for him, the darlin', on account of what came across him."

Brian threw out this as a feeler, being by no means

satisfied with the appearance of things, but Yeman, not being in love himself, had little sympathy for those who were.

"Bother to you, Brian! let Maureen alone—I wish she was tied on your back, and maybe you'd soon tire of the load—come here and lend a hand to haul up, will you?—there's my father making signs to us to hurry!"

Brian willingly "lent" the required "hand," but still he kept hammering away on the subject nearest his heart, regardless of Yeman's careless indifference. "Well! I think, after all, she might have said a civil word to others besides Shan. There's me now, that hasn't mother or sister to meet me more than he has. Poor granny isn't able to come down in the day at all. Well! no matter—we must only live without her—it'll be all one to us in a hundred years!"

All particular sounds were by this time swallowed up in the confused clamor of male and female voices, so that Brian's philosophic soliloquy passed unheeded even by Yeman, to whom it was partly addressed. Men and women were all engaged in selecting from their respective boats a few of the finest and most esteemed fish, to be taken up to the Convent, according to the immemorial custom of the villagers. Each of the women having placed her offering in a basket trotted gaily up the hill to deposit it in the capacious kitchen of the Convent, where the Brother-cook received all under protest, declaring that

he didn't know what to do with it. But this was only a little pious piece of affectation on the part of good Brother Stephen, who was rubbing his hands right gleefully all the time as he thought of how many poor hungry claimants he would be able to satisfy out of the superabundance of the Claddagh gifts.

A few of the women waited behind the others to ask Brother Stephen for various little matters which they were in the habit of obtaining at the Convent. Among these was Maureen Dhu, who had brought a fine salmon, with a positive injunction from her father that it was to be cooked next day for the refectory. "Now mind, Brother Stephen!" said Maureen, "it's not to be given away this time—the last salmon we brought you we know where it went to, and something else 'ld just do *them* as well as a fresh salmon, my father says. But that's true, Brother Stephen! have you the plaster ready for poor More Kineely? Her back is very poorly with her these times. If it's ready, give it to me."

The plaster *was* ready, and, having received it, Maureen tripped joyfully down to More Kineely's to put it on, not forgetting, however, to go into the chapel first and offer up a *Pater* and *Ave*.

After putting away his fish, so as to be ready for the fishwomen that would buy it of him in the morning to sell again in town, Brian Kineely went to see how his grandmother was getting on, hoping but hardly expecting that she might have his supper

ready. Great was his surprise to see Maureen there in the act of applying "the poor man's plaster" to the old woman, who was sitting on a low stool with her back to the fire. A trencher of nice "mealy" potatoes was just placed on the table, smoking hot, and the noggin of milk stood ready close at hand.

"Why, a thousand blessings on you, Maureen! is it here you are now?" cried Brian, in a joyful tremor. "Sure it's no time since I seen you below at the quay."

"I was up at the Convent since then," said Maureen, "so I'm thinkin' it is that you lost count of the time."

"Yis, an' she has your supper ready for you, too, ahagur!" squeaked old More. "Ugh! ugh! ugh! this cough 'ill be the death of me, so it will!—she came in an' put on the potatoes as soon as the boats came in sight, for, says she, 'poor Brian 'ill be hungry comin' home——'"

"Well! an' what of that!" said Maureen, very shortly, though she blushed, too, as she encountered Brian's delighted glance; "sure I knew *you* wern't able to lay a hand on anything. I was down at Shan Driscoll's an' done the same, before I came here at all." Brian's countenance fell, and he forgot to peel the laughing potato which he had just taken up. Hungry as he was, the meal was no longer so tempting when he reflected that Shan, too, had his supper prepared by the fair hands of Maureen Dhu.

"I must be goin' now, More," said Maureen, as she pinned the shawl around the old woman's neck; "I'm only keeping that boy of yours from his supper. I wish to goodness," she added, in a voice that was only audible to Brian, "I wish to goodness you'd bring home a housekeeper here at onst. There's Sally Kirwan would be glad to be asked, I'm full sure——"

"Maureen!" said Brian, very earnestly, as he accompanied her to the door, "Maureen! there'll never be a housekeeper in this house of the sort you mane, except *you're* in it—well! don't be angry!" he added, in a sorrowful tone; "I'll say nothing about that if you wish—but, for God's sake, let me alone about Sally Kirwan—I'll bear anything from *you*, only that!"

His voice trembled and his lip quivered with emotion, and Maureen saw that his gentle heart was stirred to its very depths. Perhaps she was more moved herself than she cared to own, but whether or not she made a specious show of indifference, and telling Brian that she hoped he'd soon change his mind for his granny's sake if nothing else, she hastened home, where a good scolding awaited her for gadding about amongst the neighbors when the supper was to be got, and a world of other things besides. It was characteristic of Vara Halliday, that with all this she had a good cup of tea "well drawn," waiting for Maureen, in a little black tea pot beside the fire. The Admiral and his sons

were at their supper of potatoes and milk, in high good humor after "the lucky day they had had of it."

"Did you take up the fish to the Convent, Maureen?" asked her father.

"Wisha, to be sure I did, father."

"Did you think of askin' how Father Terence's rheumatics was?"

"Well, then, I don't know what came over me, father, that it never came into my head!"

"Oh! I'll go bail it did'nt," said the fond father, with something less than his usual gruffness; "it isn't rheumatics you do be thinkin' of, I'll warrant! Is that good tay of Trainor's, Vara?" The Admiral seldom took tea himself, and in general he affected to despise its use. It was to be inferred then from his present question that he was in the very best possible humor, and prepared to do or say "whatever was pleasing to the company."

"Sorra better ever was wet," said Vara, in reply; "what do you think if you'd try a cup, Randal agra?"

"Pooh! pooh! woman, don't be makin' a fool of yourself—sure you know well enough I wouldn't give a *traneen* for all the tay in Galway town—but that needn't hinder you and Maureen from takin' a cup in comfort. Were you in town the day?"

"Faix, then, I was, Randal!—I went to see about that money that the Kerrigans owed us——"

"Well! an' did you get it?"

"The sorra that I did, Randal! times are purty hard with them, for there's not much doin' in the shop, an' the wife's down with the dhropsy, to herself be it tould. So *I* couldn't be hard on poor Dermot when the hand of the Lord is heavy on him."

"Just like you, granny," said Barney, with a laugh, as he stretched his long legs out one side of the fire in luxurious rest, while his father took his accustomed seat on a kind of settee on the opposite side; "you were to do the world an' all on them people if it was true to you for keepin' us so long out of the money, and troth myself was pityin' them on account of the tongue-thrashin' that was afore them, but it all went off in smoke as soon as they made a poor mouth to you. Your bark is ever an' always worse than your bite!"

"That's you for us, Barney! you never open your mouth but you say something. You'll be goin' in for a counsellor some of these days, you have the gift of the gab so well. You had a good run, the day, Randal."

"Middlin', Vara, only middlin'. We done as well as we could, anyhow, though not as well as we'd wish, maybe!" And so saying, he took his dhudeen from his waistcoat pocket, and began to clean it for action with a twig drawn out of the heath broom which stood resting itself in the chimney corner beyond the hob.

"Father!" said Maureen, more timidly than was her wont, "I'm jist thinkin' that, after all, it's a pity

you wouldn't try the trawling—they say you'd have twice as much fish with less trouble than you have now."

Barney and Yeman opened their eyes very wide and looked very fierce. Vara came near letting the tea-cup fall out of her hand, in her first impulse, which was to box Maureen's ears for her. Second thoughts are best, however, at least Vara thought so, and she contented herself with giving her granddaughter "a look that was as good as a pross,"* together with a threatening motion of her clenched fist. But Randal's anger was not to be got over so lightly, and even Maureen quailed from the stern contraction of his brow and the fire that kindled in his eyes as he looked full in her face.

"I thought you'd be the last one livin', Maureen, to do even such a thing to us. If any of these new-fangled notions are gettin' into your head, I'd advise you to go clear an' clean to the Sassenachs—it's a burnin' shame to hear a Claddagh girl talkin' that way, an' I tell you now, onst for all, that you'll be no child of mine if ever I hear you say such a thing again."

"What wonder is it," said Vara, "when you let gentlemen from town come an' go as they like among the girls, an' dance with them, too, as if they were born Claddagh men—fifty times I tould you that their breath is unlucky."

* From *process*, a civil-bill summons to a court of justice. The process-server, whose business and profit it is to serve these notices or citations, is, like most other subordinate minions of the law, a most unpopular character amongst the Irish peasantry.

Randal was just going to say something very severe, judging by his looks, when the latch of the door was raised and in walked Noddy Kinshela with a "God save all here!"

"God save you kindly!" replied Randal and Vara in a breath, while Maureen, much relieved by this seasonable interruption, hastened to place a seat for Noddy near the fire. For this purpose she dislodged Barney from his comfortable quarters, telling him to "get up out of that an' let the decent woman sit down," a mandate which he cheerfully obeyed.

"Put some more tay to draw, Maureen!" said her grandmother; "Noddy 'll be nothing the worse of a cup, for the night's chilly abroad!"

"Musha, it's a friend would ask me," said Noddy; "an' you know," she added with a smile, quoting a popular saying, "I never say 'no' to my tay!"

"What's the news, Noddy?" inquired Randal.

"Well! not much, barrin' what happened Nick Sullivan—I don't know if you heard of it."

"Musha, no—what is it?"

"Why, he's taken on suspicion of killin' an' robbin' that strange man that was found in the river the other day."

"Good for him," observed the Admiral; "he was a graceless vagabond all his days, and left his ould mother to shift for herself when he might have kept her comfortable as long as she lived, on account of the good trade he had. It's as like as not that he

done the deed, an' if he swings for it the town 'll be well shot of him."

"True for you, Randal, but still an' all it's a poor thing to see a tender rearin' comin' to such an end. Ochone! it's a blessin' that the ould couple are under the sod, anyhow! God rest their souls this night! Vara, acushla! don't be in any hurry. I think I'll slip over to Aileen Rhua's while the tay is drawin'."

Maureen started up and offered to accompany her, and the ould woman made no objection till they got outside the door. Then she said in a low whisper:

"There's no occasion for you comin', ma colleen dhas, for you know the night's the same to me as the day, an' besides I have a little private business with Aileen that I don't want any one to know but ourselves; I tell this to you, because somehow I think you can keep a secret—some day or another I mane to tell you what I wouldn't tell to a livin' bein' but yourself."

"I'm entirely obliged to you, Noddy," said Maureen, in a low tremulous tone; "I'd give a great deal to hear some of your ould *scheanachus*, an' I'll give you my hand an' word never to open my mouth about them to man or mortal."

"Well! child," said Noddy, after a short pause, "there's something about you that I can't get over—dear knows I don't wonder now at what I wondered at before—"

"What did you say, Noddy?"

"Och! nothing worth repeatin'. Ahem!—could you manage to come in an' stay an hour or two with me some day in *my* castle?"

"Well! I think I can—the first day that my granny doesn't go to town, I'll make some excuse to go in. My father or nobody 'd be angry at me goin' to see *you*."

"I'll be watchin' for you, then, an' mind don't disappoint me, for there's something on my mind that I want to tell you—an' that before the week is out. Go in now, ma colleen dhas, an' jist tell them that I said there was no occasion for you comin'."

After treading the many purlieus of the village for some ten minutes, talking to herself all the time as was her wont, Noddy arrived at the little mud-wall cabin where Aileen dwelt, and knocking at the door was told to "come in."

She found Aileen in bed, and little Nanno Kenny watching some oatmeal gruel which was simmering over the embers of a turf fire. The usual salutations having passed between them, and an infallible cure recommended by Noddy for Aileen's asthma, the beggarwoman drew her seat close to the bed, and asked the other in a whisper if her hearing was good.

"Well! I can't complain of it, the Lord be praised!"

"I'm glad of it, Aileen astore, for I want to have a word with you—*in private*."

"Wisha, then, Noddy there's no need for tirin'

yourself whisperin' that way,—sure there's nobody here but the child."

"Don't I know that myself as well as you? I tell you I want the place to ourselves?"

"Take that pitcher, Nanno," said the invalid, "and go down to Oonagh Kirwan for the sup o' milk she promised me." The child was gone in a moment to the no small surprise of the visitor.

"Musha, Aileen, isn't she afeard to go so far by herself and it pitch dark?"

"Is it her?—why, I think she has no fear *in* her—she'd as soon be abroad at the dead hour of night as any other time. But what were you going to say?"

Whatever Noddy did say it had a strange effect on Aileen Rhua, for when Nanno came back with the milk some fifteen or twenty minutes after, she found the old woman sitting up in her bed, rocking herself to and fro like one in deep sorrow, while the tears trickled down her furrowed cheeks. Noddy was gone, and the only answer Nanno could get to her repeated inquiries was a passionate caress, and a low heart-wrung moan.



CHAPTER XI.

When Vara was going to market on the following day, Maureen begged permission to go with her, as she had not been in town, she said, for a long, long time.

"You'll not go now, then, not one step!—stay at home and mind the house, and get the dinner ready." Maureen's countenance fell, but luckily there was help at hand.

"Why, then, Vara," said Randal, who sat at the door repairing one of his nets, "what needs you snap at the child that way—let her go, can't you? an' I'll get the dinner for one day—it's not hard to do. An' as for mindin' the house, let it mind itself, there's no one goin' to run away with it, is there?"

"There it is again now!" cried Vara, from the top of her cart, for she was already mounted; "that's the way you've spoiled her, and God sees it's no wonder she'd be as she is!"

"Nonsense, Vara! we were all young ourselves once in our day—don't be hard on Maureen, an' her has no mother but you."

This last stroke told well, just as Randal expected. The old woman look askance at her granddaughter, and smiled a grim smile. "Well! well! it's a folly to talk," said she; "some people will never have sense—here's a man that has ruled the Claddagh for

twenty years, an' he can't rule, or doesn't want to rule, his own child. I suppose I may as well give in. Get up here, Maureen! if you *are* goin', an don't be keepin' me all day."

Before Maureen mounted the cart, however, she went over and whispered something to her father, who smiled and nodded.

"So I may stay all the evenin', father, and you'll send the boys for me!"

"I will, *machree*, I will—it'll be clear moonlight—but go—go—your granny's gettin' outrageous! you can tell her as you go along, an' coax her into it!"

At the outset of the journey Vara was in very bad humor and could hardly speak a civil word, but she really loved Maureen, perhaps better than any living thing, and could never long resist her winning ways when she set about smoothing her down. By the time they had reached the fish-market, the old woman was as agreeable as she ever could be, and had cheerfully acceded to Maureen's request, which was neither more nor less than that she might be permitted to spend the day with Noddy Kinshela, after making some purchases for the house at home, the largest item of which was tobacco, together with a liberal allowance of "Traynor's good tea" afore-mentioned. The principal ingredient for the men's "grog" was by right of privilege purchased of a Claddagh man who drove a thriving trade in that article.

"Well, granny! I'm goin' now," whispered Maureen to her grandmother, when she had brought her last purchase to her to the fish-market to be stowed away in the cart; "you'll not forget to send the boys in for me about nine o'clock."

"No danger," said the old woman, impatiently, for she was selling a large cod-fish at the moment; "be off with you, and don't be botherin' me any more."

As Maureen tripped away, who should come up but Mr. Hampton with his daughter on his arm. They were going to price some fish, but perceiving Maureen, they stopped short and both looked after her with curious eyes.

"La, papa," said Emily, in a low voice, "what a graceful creature that is!—who on earth is she?"

"I shouldn't wonder, my dear, if she were the Maureen Dhu of whom we have heard so much—you see she is a Claddagh girl, and there cannot possibly be two of *that* stamp about the village. I say, Vara!" raising his voice, "who is that girl?" pointing to the receding figure of Maureen.

"My granddaughter!" replied the old woman, very shortly.

"Bless my soul! what a pretty girl!"

"She's jist as God made her, Mister Hampton!—she wasn't behind the door like you an' me when beauty was a givin' out!"

"I see you're still the same," said Hampton, endeavoring to keep down his anger.

"Jist the ould six an' eight pence, sir!—fine cod and mackerel the day, Mister Hampton!—look at that cod-fish, now!—isn't it a beauty?"

"Well! I can't agree with you there, Vara!" said Hampton, with a sickly smile, being evidently desirous of cultivating a good understanding with the queen of the fish-market; "still I think it's fresh——"

"Fresh, sir! why it was in the Bay late yesterday evenin'."

So the fish was deposited in the basket carried by a servant man, and the stipulated price being duly handed over to Vara, Hampton and his daughter walked on, well pleased to have for once escaped Vara's tongue.

Meanwhile Maureen had made her way through moldering arches and fragments of broken masonry into Noddy's castellated dwelling, the door of which was only secured by a latch. The mistress of the mansion was absent, and the old gray pussy who sat in feline dignity, and most philosophic repose, on the well-swept hearth, seemed no ways inclined to do the honors—neither purr nor mew greeted the coming of the stranger, and there was no small dash of contempt in the stare of her great green eyes. A grim, ill-favored cat she was, and Maureen could not help thinking as she looked around on the gloomy walls that she should not like to have her for a companion in such a scene. Still she resolved to make friends with her if possible, seeing that she

was the only living thing in or about the ruin, and so well did she succeed in her attempt, that by the time Noddy came in—it might be a couple of hours after—madam pussy was purring her best on Maureen's knee, while the girl sewed away on some mending which she found under way.

"Why the blessin' o' God on you, ma colleen dhas!" cried Noddy, as she entered and threw down her well-filled wallet, "is it here I have you, and sewin' away for me as hard as you can? Are you long in it, acushla?"

"A couple of hours or so," said Maureen, with a smile; "I came in with granny when she came to market."

"An' I see you have a fire on, too, an' the kettle boilin'!"

"To be sure—I couldn't sit here doin' nothing, you know. Have you e'er a grain of tea in the house?"

"Deed an' I have, then, as good as ever was wet." Unlocking a small deal box of a reddish color, which stood in a dark corner on the flagged floor, she handed the tea to Maureen with a kindly smile, and then took from a little alcove near the fireplace a small black tea-pot, which was soon sitting on the hearth distilling the precious weed which was Noddy's *summum bonum* of comfort, while Maureen's busy hands ranged the two blue tea-cups with their usual accompaniments on a tiny round table, the gift of Noddy's lamented patro-

ness, the former lady of the mansion. The history of this table, with a detailed account of the circumstances under which it was given, seasoned, while it lengthened considerably, the social repast, and while Noddy dispensed to her charming guest, "the cup that cheers," she regaled her ears with the simple reminiscence which formed a bright speck "on memory's waste."

"Old and withered as I am now," said Noddy, "I was young, and maybe well enough to be seen at the time, an' though I hadn't as many after me as some one you an' I know, still there was one or two that would have answered me very well. Myself an' a dacent boy, a carpenter by trade, had made it up to be married, an' there was a hand promise between us, but, you see, the ould madam was bad with the rhumatis at the time, an' we had to put it off till she'd be better, because I couldn't lave her. Still we were gettin' little things in readiness, an' among the rest, the madam, God rest her sowl in glory, gave me this little oak table, an' isn't it a rale beauty?—on account o' the conceit she knew I had in it. Well! Cormac was in a great hurry, to be sure, for the mistress to get well, but lo and behold you! long before she *did* get well, he was knocked down himself with a plurisy an' lived only nine days."

The old woman's voice trembled, and she suddenly stopped short, then put a turf or two on the fire, took a pinch of snuff, and finally answered Maureen's

pitying "thu! thu! thu!" with a long sigh and a longer look.

"Well! God has his own ways of workin', sure enough," said she, when she could again command her voice. "Cormac died, for all so strong and hearty as he was, and the ould mistress got well. Ugh! ugh! ugh! bad manners to this cough I have—isn't it a quare thing Maureen! to see an ould body like me troubled about such things as these. But sure, sure, if we're as ould as the hills we can't keep away the thoughts that rise up athin us—the thoughts of them that made our hearts glad in the days that are gone for ever. Well! well! may they all rest in peace, amen! But I was tellin' you about the table—as long as the family kept together, I had it in my own little room alongside my bed, an' when ruin and destruction came on everything, an' the master an' mistress were taken out of this wretched world, an' Master Edward went abroad to seek his fortune, an' myself was turned out on the wide world to shift as I could, didn't I take my little table with me wherever I went, from one lodgin' to another, till at last I had to turn to beggin' an' myself an' it landed back again to the ould place. Ochohne! but it's the poor, lonesome place now to what it was! but still I'm more content in it than I'd be in the king's palace. I like to sit in the fine summer's evenings an' watch the sun shining in on the floor through the ould arches, an' at night when the wind whistles through the bare walls, it makes me both

glad an' sorry, somehow, for whiles I think it's the voices I used to hear about the house, talkin' to me from the other world."

Maureen listened entranced to the old woman's dreamy recollections, and her beautiful eyes were moist with tears at the visible emotion which the remembrance of half-forgotten affections awoke in her still active mind. The tea-things were put away in the little alcove, some fresh fuel was heaped on the fire, and the glare of its flickering light struggled with the thickening shades of twilight throughout the limits of the old kitchen. The light without grew dimmer and dimmer, while that within blazed up merrily, revealing every object in the quaint apartment, from the great oven which had once baked the daily bread for the Lynch household to the tiny ark-shaped box which contained Noddy's slender stock of salt. In the chimney corner, just within the wide chimney, was seated Mrs. Grimalkin, watching with half-closed eyes the fantastic wreaths of flame ascending from the turf-fire, and in front of the hearth, with the light falling full on their faces, were the strangely-contrasted pair who were drawn together by some invisible chord of sympathy, the nature of which it was not easy to understand.

"Maureen!" said the beggarwoman, out of a deep *reverie*, "you Claddagh people haven't much notion of the wickedness that's in the hearts of men. I know you're fond of stories, so I'll tell you one

that's as true as the Gospel. It happened here in Galway, an' in my own day, too."

The story that Noddy told was of a young girl whose extraordinary beauty made her the admiration of the whole city, although she was only the daughter of a poor huckster.* Her parents, proud of her beauty, wanted to make a lady of her, all out, and so they pinched and almost starved themselves at times in order to give their idol all the learning which they thought necessary to fit her for the high station to which her beauty was to raise her. And sure enough there was every likelihood of her making an extra "good match," one that would raise her and all belonging to her out of poverty, for amongst her admirers were some of the first young men in the city, as far as birth and fortune went. Una, thought, to be sure, and so did her father and mother, that their fine speeches were in downright earnest, and maybe they didn't all carry their heads high on account of it. There was one of the young gentlemen especially that was night and day after Una—he followed her like her shadow, and the old people were so proud of his company that they never put a watch on the pair, but let them go in and out together as they wished, still thinking it would all end in marriage. Some of their friends made bold to advise them to keep Una in a little more, but it's what they were highly offended, and asked wasn't their daughter able to

* A vender of provisions on a small scale.

take care of herself—if she wasn't she ought to be, and all the money that was spent on her. The neighbors all knew well enough that Una was *not* able to take care of herself, for she was a proud, vain creature, with a head as light as a feather. Still they all took the hint, and meddled no more with the matter. "One fine morning," said Noddy, "just when the thing was likely to take a favorable turn, my chap set off somewhere away far beyond seas without as much as bidding good-bye to Una, an' then, my dears! there was nothing but ruin and misery in the house, for Una was from one faintin'-fit to the other, and it turned out that she had good cause to grieve, for she was lost and ruined entirely. The ould couple never held up their heads after that, an' when Una had a child some months after, they turned her out herself an' it, an' I seen that girl with my own eyes beggin' from door to door, for the way she was brought up, you see, she could neither work nor want. The father and mother both died within the year, an' the whole family went to desolation. Wasn't that a sorrowful story an' a poor hearin', Maureen?"

"It was, indeed," said Maureen, and she wiped away a falling tear; "but still an' all, I think both Una an' her people were very foolish—mightn't they know very well that the likes of him was no company for the likes of her?"

There was the slightest possible tremor in Maureen's voice, but still she spoke with her usual calm-

ness, and Noddy was evidently at a loss. She turned and fixed her sharp eyes on the face of her companion, but there was no blush, no emotion of any kind. There was a strange sort of smile curling the thin lip, but Noddy did not perceive it. She muttered some words to herself, still with her eye on Maureen, and at last she gave expression to her thoughts aloud:

"Now, Maureen, you're as well to be seen as ever Una Sculan was—what would *you* do, if a gentleman was makin' love to you?"

Maureen laughed. "Well! it is not very likely that such a thing 'll ever come to pass!"

"But if it did, what would you do?"

"Why, I wouldn't listen to him!" said Maureen, somewhat more earnestly; "for the man isn't born that'll make a fool of *me*—with God's help!"

"Take care, Maureen! take care," said the old woman with increased solemnity of voice and look, "I know these quality better than you do, an' mark well what I say, acushla! it's the only way for poor people's honest rearings to keep them at arm's length." She paused—looked at the fire—stroked down the pussy's back—then looked again at her companion who sat watching her motions with a curious eye

"Maureen, astore machree! I don't know how it is that I come to have such a liking for you—but however it is I have it, an' it's in my heart—there's nobody else now that I feel for as I do for you, and

God knows what I'm goin' to say is for your good. I do be often thinkin' of you, agra gal! when maybe it's litle you're thinkin' of me, an' there's something troublin' me, about you!" She stopped and looked hard at Maureen.

"About me, Noddy! why what in the name o' goodness do you mean?"

"I don't like to tell you plain," said the old woman, averting her eyes, "for I have a likein' myself for them that I want to warn you against —"

Maureen's anxiety was now thoroughly awakened, but still there was no confusion, no embarrassment, no shrinking consciousness in her startled look.

"Wisha, then, Noddy, what's got into you, at all, at all, of late, that you talk this way. Where does my danger lie?"

"In them killin' eyes of yours, machree, and that purty face—there's more than the Claddagh boys thinkin' of my darlin'. Ay! them that you wouldn't expect, an' it's hard to get over the likes of them when they want to come round a simple girl—but mind yourself, achorra! and keep out of the way of temptation, an' when it comes in your way, as come it will! think of Una Scanlan and the old beggar-woman's words, an' shut your ears, an' close your eyes—neither look nor listen, my own darlin', for if you do it 'ill be exposin' yourself to sin, an' you know what we often hear from the altar: 'He that loves the danger shall perish in it.'"

The old woman was silent, and so was Maureen.

Pale and thoughtful was her face, yet still calm and passionless as she sat gazing on the fire. Unwilling to disturb reflections that might be salutary, Noddy arose, and gliding softly to the door, stepped out into the now moon-lit court. At first Maureen was unconscious of her absence, and sat musing in what was evidently no pleasurable frame of mind, judging by the contraction of her finely-arched brows and the firm compression of her lips. All at once she was roused from her reverie by the sound of whispering voices just outside the door, and then for the first time she missed Noddy. The latter in drawing the door after her had unintentionally left it the least thing in the world open, so that the slightest sound without reached the listening ear within.

"I have been waiting for you this some time behind this pillar," said a soft musical voice, "for when I looked in at the window I saw some person with you, so I couldn't go in."

"It's Maureen Dhu, ma'am, that's in it——"

"What! she whom you told me was so kind to the little orphan child?"

"Herself an' no other, ma'am."

"Why, what brings her here?"

"Well! just what brings many a one else. She thinks I'm made of stories, I b'lieve, an' she's so fond of hearin' them that she'd go from here to Arranmore to hear one——"

"Arranmore!" said the other quickly, "and why to Arranmore more than any where else?"

"Why, just because there's so many ould stories tould about it—that's all."

"Well! but what about the child?—what did she say?" and the soft voice sank to a still lower pitch.

"She's not a drop's blood to her—she wasn't willin' to own it, for she's afraid of her life of havin' to part with the weeny crature, but I made as if I knew all about it, an' at last she had to give in."

There was dead silence for a few moments, and Maureen thinking the mysterious visitor was gone, suddenly opened the door, and there, with Noddy, fully revealed in the silvery light, stood a lady whom she knew at a glance—the bright fair sister of Mr. Fitzstephen. It is hard to say which of the three was the most confused for the moment, but Noddy was the first to recover her presence of mind, and when Mrs. Behan drawing down her veil would have retired, she dropped a low curtsey and said:

"May God reward you, ma'am, for all your goodness to me!" (Mrs. Behan had really given her some money, as she often did.) "I'll bring up that herb for the mistress as soon as I can lay my hand on it. Here's Maureen Dhu, ma'am, all the way from the Claddagh. She came on her *cailly* this evenin' to hear some of our ould *shenachus*."

"Good evening, Maureen," said the young widow with a stretch of condescension that was not at all usual with her; "I'm glad to meet one of whom I have heard so much." Throwing up her veil again,

she looked at Maureen, and there was an earnestness in the girl's eye when it met her's, an intensity, as it were, that attracted her she knew not why.

"Your fireside looks so tempting, Noddy," said the lady, looking in at the open door, "that I think I will sit down and rest awhile—that is, if you and Maureen have no objection!"

Of course Noddy was delighted, and Maureen smiled her satisfaction, so in they all three went. Mrs. Behan knew but little of the Claddagh dialect, and Maureen was not much better with regard to English, yet by Noddy's occasional intervention, they managed to understand each other tolerably well.

"So you are fond of stories, Maureen," said Mrs. Behan, as she drew off her kid gloves and warmed her hands over the fire. "I should think you would have plenty of good story-tellers in the Claddagh."

"So we have—there's Aileen Rhua can tell stories from night till mornin'. But I like Noddy's better."

"Aileen Rhua," repeated the lady, and she and Noddy exchanged glances; "who is Aileen Rhua?"

"Oh! an old neighbor of ours that lives all alone by herself, with nobody but little Nanno——"

"Little Nanno," exclaimed Noddy, "why, my pet, you talk as if the lady knew all about these people. Can't you say her grandchild?"

"Wisha, how could I say that when she isn't a drop's blood to her, for all we call her by her name?"

The question that hovered on Mrs. Behan's lips

was anticipated by Noddy, who made a sign to the other to say nothing.

"Well! I suppose she's some near friend anyhow, or the old woman wouldn't be for keepin' her? I know she's dependin' herself on the charity of the neighbors."

"She's not a drop's blood to her, that we know of," said Maureen quietly, with a side glance at Mrs. Behan, whose face was pale as ashes, and her very lips trembling—"But sure," Maureen went on, "the child would be no burthen to any one, for she's sich a gainin' little creature in herself that everybody loves her."

The young widow drew a long breath, as though giving vent to some strong inward emotion that she might not express in words—"Maureen!" said she, with forced calmness, "is that the little girl I saw in your arms the Sunday we went to St. Mary's Church?"

"The very same, ma'am."

"Well! really it would seem that there *is* something peculiar about the child, for I remember my brother spoke of her many times since. He also spoke of *your* extraordinary affection for the little one. For my part, I did not pay much attention to her at the time."

"It was bad *shanagh*,* then, ma'am," said Maureen quickly, "for she took such notice of *you*, in particular, that she couldn't get you out of her head. I

* Very ungrateful.

b'lieve she took you for an angel, or something like that, for she said she often dreamed of you a long time ago."

Maureen certainly said this to try whether or not Nanno was *the child* of whom she had heard Mrs. Behan speak to Noddy outside the door, but she did not expect to see her words take such effect. The blood forsook Mrs. Behan's face and so sudden a faintness came over her that before any one could prevent her she fell back against the wall, motionless but not insensible.

"Maureen, astore! astore! what made you say that?" whispered Noddy in Irish as they both bent over the lady.

"Why, then, what harm was in what I said?"

"Husht! husht! she's comin' to!" With a long, deep sigh, Margaret opened her eyes, and fixed them on Maureen who was supporting her in her arms.

"Maureen!" said she, in a low tremulous voice, "there's some one that child reminds *me* of—some one I once knew and loved—and I think it strange that she also should have some memories connected with me. There!—I'm quite recovered now—sit down, my dear!"

"*My dear!*" repeated Maureen to herself, with a flushed cheek.

Noddy was going to say something, but Mrs. Behan with a smile placed her hand on her mouth.

"Not a word now, Noddy! not a word—I see

there's something in Maureen Dhu that's not in most other girls. My brother has confidence in her prudence and discretion—so have I now, although I laughed at *him* before. Maureen! I see you suspect something with regard to that child whom you have pitied and caressed in her loneliness—did you, or did you not, hear what passed between Noddy and me outside?"

"Well! I did, ma'am,—since you put the question that way—but don't be uneasy about it, for it'll go no farther,—you may be sure of that!"

"I believe you, Maureen!—and now I suppose I must tell you more!"

"I'd rather you wouldn't, ma'am!—unless it's pleasing to yourself—I know that the child was taken up out of the river by one of the Claddagh boys——"

"Who was he?" cried the lady, with startling vehemence.

"Why, Shan Driscoll, ma'am, a neighbor boy of ours!"

"Oh! I have heard of him—he is one of *somebody's* humblest servants—a fine fellow, I believe he is, too!" and she looked very archly at Maureen. The latter blushed and smiled, but said nothing.

"It was him that saved the child, ma'am, at any rate, down somewhere about the Arran Islands—who or what she is Shan doesn't know, nor none of us, an' we don't care to find out for fear we'd be losin' her."

"Well! this much I will tell you," said Margaret rising; "I know whose child she is, and she is neither the offspring of sin nor shame!" She stood erect and looked Maureen full in the face as though challenging her scrutiny. "Noddy can tell you that as well as I, but more you are not to know now. The day may come—and that sooner than you think, when you shall know all. Meanwhile continue your kindness to the poor creature—trust me she is a fitting object for your charity—but as you value my friendship, never mention her and me in the same breath to any one"—she laid her arm on Maureen's shoulder so as partly to encircle her neck, and whispered softly and significantly: "*above all to Giles Fitzstephen!*" Did she kiss Maureen's cheek, or did Maureen dream it? Whether or no when the astonished girl recovered her composure and looked around, she and Noddy were alone. Seeing her bewilderment the old woman smiled and drew her in silence to a seat, but before either could question the other, Barney O'Hara and Brian Kineely made their appearance. They came to fetch Maureen home.



CHAPTER XII.

The following weeks were a season of glad bustle and excitement in the Claddagh. Some members of every family were all day long employed making and mending nets, while all the spare hands among the men were at work on the boats. A sudden influx of life and animation seemed to have taken place in the village. The houses, the streets, the quays, were all alive with a busy, industrious population, all intent on the work of preparing for the great herring-fishery already announced by the numerous sea-fowl, hovering over the Bay. The season had arrived. October with its mists and fogs, its clouded, mellow sunshine, and its wailing winds was drawing to a close. The weather was dry, but grey and lowering, just such weather as usually brought the long-expected shoals within reach of the Claddagh nets.

It was Hallow-Eve, the last day of the month, and the youngsters of the village, boys and girls of all ages, had been out from early morning on the strand digging for worms. It was truly an animated scene; the many-colored garments, the blithe and cheerful faces, the light-hearted, noisy clatter of youthful tongues, as each pair or group chatted away on their own engrossing topic. And yet, notwithstanding the absence of that restraint usually arising from the presence of older persons, and the

hilarious state of mind incidental to the occasion, there was not an obscene word to be heard, nor oath, nor imprecation. Wild and rude was the mirth of the young Claddagh people, but at its very wildest it had nothing to offend modesty. Their speech was curt and sharp, with now and then a strong mixture of irony; the naked truth was told at times where, in more pretentious society, it would have been either concealed or glossed over; flattery was, in fact, so little known or practised that politeness hid her head abashed, but still the Christian precepts were so well observed that one could not help overlooking a roughness which was, after all, but superficial.

The preparations for the grand opening of the fishery were all completed. The phosphoric light, sparkling on the waters far and near, gave indication that the shoals had arrived. Had it been at another time the Claddagh men would have been out in full strength on the following morning, but the next day was Hollantide-Day,* and of course, the wealth of the broad Bay would not tempt one of them to put out a boat. So the fishing was postponed till the following day.

On that Hallow-Eve, however, there was another sort of business to be done in the Claddagh, pending the capture of the multitudinous visitors on the coast. All the young men and maidens had to take

*The Feast of All Saints, so called amongst the lower classes all over Ireland.

a peep into futurity by means of some one of the old-established "tricks," or spells which were supposed to command the services of the fairy host whose duty it was on that fateful night to reward the patience and perseverance of those who worked the spells, by a sight of the future partner of their life, whether male or female. The various devices resorted to by the curious it is unnecessary here to describe. Most of my readers are well acquainted with them, and I question if there are many of them, at least of those whose youth was past in Ireland, who have not, in their time, had their fortunes told by the fairies on Hallow-Eve night. Who knows not the strange, prophetic and most dubious forms, typical of trade or calling, into which the molten lead falls when poured through the ring of a key? Who has not slept on a red-cheeked apple in which nine new pins were stuck, or is any one ignorant of the virtue that abides in the thimblefuls of salt corresponding to the number of the family? Have we not all witnessed, too, the careful sweeping of the hearth, and the raking up of the ashes, which rite was generally performed by an ancient matron on Hallow-Eve night? Wonderful tales have we all heard of footmarks being seen on the smooth ashes in the morning, some turned inward, some outward—none of them have we ever seen, I'll be bound, for it is one of the peculiarities of these spiritual manifestations that they were always heard of, never seen. Still these harmless superstitions, with the

temporary excitement they occasioned, were in keeping with the character of a poetical, imaginative people, whose life on earth is beautifully interwoven with "the unseen things." Their very superstitions are of a social and genial kind, partaking largely of the poetic fervor of their own temperament.

The general custom was for a number of the young people of both sexes to gather together in those houses where there was fun to be expected. Of this class was Randal More's, because of the three young people who dwelt there, and still more because of Vara Halliday's great skill in the fairy lore peculiar to the season. Vara was the priestess of those mystic spells wrought for the sounding of each one's destiny, and whether she really had faith in the oracles or not, she certainly made it appear as if she had. On the night in question, some ten or twelve boys and girls were assembled round the Admiral's fireside. Both Brian Kineely and Shan Driscoll were of the number—so, too, was Sally Kirwan, to the no small annoyance of Brian, who had latterly shunned her company with very remarkable care, all the more so, that the girl evidently sought his, and that with greater eagerness than the Claddagh girls usually displayed on such occasions.

For some reason best known to herself, Vara was particularly anxious that night to have Maureen try her fortune, but Maureen, with her usual caprice, appeared to take no sort of interest in what was

going on. Even when she was placed on the hearth in the form of a hazel-nut side by side with another representing Shan Driscoll, she watched the pair with a half-unconscious eye, nor shared in any degree in the intense excitement with which not only Shan, but Brian, too, awaited the result. Great was the mortification of poor Shan when, after divers threatening motions, Maureen's nut fairly jumped away leaving its mate to burn on in lonely constancy. Brian was just as elated as Shan was depressed, and his heart beat high with blissful expectation as Vara placed another pair on the hearth, designated respectively after himself and Maureen. The two young men now watched Maureen's face with as much anxiety as they did the emblematic nuts, and to the utter dismay of Shan, and the secret exultation of Brian, there was a degree of earnestness in her gaze and a flush on her cheek that they had not seen there all the evening. There was another, a fourth pair of eyes, watching the progress of that particular pair of nuts, and that was Sally Kirwan. In fact the whole circle, including Randal More himself, were now engrossed by that one pair of nuts, and for some moments they actually seemed as if animated by the spirits that ruled the hour, so capricious were their *pirouettes*, and so inexplicable their motions generally. At last they settled down very quietly together, promising a fair share of conjugal happiness and contentment. Shan Driscoll's brow lowered, and his dark cheek grew pale, while

Brian's glowed like one of the turf-coals before him. Even old More, who occupied a low stool next to the hob, was roused from the torpor of age, and clapped her hands right gleefully at the nuts, indicating her unqualified approval of their very sensible conduct. All at once the nuts began to quiver and the hearts of the interested parties were agitated with them.

"She's going!" cried Shan.

"Sorra that she is," said Randal, with much complacency.

"There now! you see how it is!" cried Maureen with a burst of laughter, as Brian's nut made a dart in the direction of the fire. "Brian's gone at last!"

There was a general exclamation of surprise at this most unlooked-for termination of the experiment. Sally Kirwan took no pains to conceal her satisfaction, and Shan took good care to point the triumph in her direction, for which he was sharply rebuked by Brian, who bluntly told him to mind his own business.

Affecting a discomposure which she did not feel, Maureen was rising from her seat, when little Nanno caught hold of her skirt as usual, and said in her low, husky voice: "Stay, Maureen! till we try somebody else—they didn't put down the right one yet!"

"What does she say?" asked one and another.

"Nothing at all that's worth sayin' over again," said Maureen, very composedly, but at the same time she took care to draw the child after her.

"Where on earth are you goin' to, girl?" cried Vara, from her seat of honor on the settle in the corner; "we're jist goin' to melt the lead."

"Well, granny, you can try my luck as if I was here—I think you've tried me well enough, at any rate I promised to go over a while to sit with poor Aileen—you see she sent Nanno for me."

Randal looked as if he was going to forbid her going out, and Vara said it was a shame for her to go on with such vagaries, so Maureen made a hasty retreat, regardless of the supplicatory looks which met her on every side.

"Maureen," whispered Nanno, as they crossed the floor together; "why don't you wait till they'd try you and——"

A look from Maureen silenced the little creature, and made her heart sink within her at the same time, for such a look she had never seen in those beautiful eyes which ever beamed on her with tender affection.

On the way to Aileen's cottage Maureen took occasion to warn her little companion that she must never mention the name of any stranger to her that way—"maybe it might do a deal of mischief to me and others if you did. I don't know who you were goin' to speak of at that time."

"An' why did you stop me, then?" said the keen-witted child, looking archly up with a furtive side-long glance.

"No matter to you," returned Maureen sharply; "I tell you I'm not pleased with you, Nanno, and if

ever you speak to me so again, you and I'll fall out, depend upon it."

This threat touched the child's loving heart, and she burst into a passionate flood of tears, whereupon Maureen applied herself to soothe her, which she did with no small difficulty, just in time to escape Aileen's sharp old eyes.

After sitting half an hour or so with the aged crone who was now bed-ridden, listening patiently to her querulous and fretful reminiscences of departed joys and pleasures, Maureen made up her chaff bed for her, a task which she had imposed on herself ever since the old woman had been unable to do it herself, and then bidding her and Nannogood night she set out for home with that light and springing step peculiar to her own graceful self.

Coming near her father's door, she knew by the obstreperous laughter and other noises from within, that the guests were still there, and taking with her Bran, the big water-dog, Randal's prime favorite, who had been waiting her company outside the door, she walked down towards the water, whose glimmering scintillating surface had tempted her from afar to go and pay homage to its beauty. Seating herself on a stone with Bran at her feet, she looked out on the broad expanse of water which appeared in the darkness as though spangled all over; the sky above was of the deepest, darkest blue, and from its depths shone out myriads of the brightest stars Maureen had ever seen, at least so

she thought. The opposite shores were only visible in outline, with the lighthouse glaring and flickering through the gloom, like some earthly planet of large pretensions. Galway city, though so near, was barely discernible, its taller masses of masonry appearing in relief against the darkened sky. The sounds from the city, and even those from the village, came softened on the ear, making the silence as it were deeper, just as the ray from the lighthouse opposite increased the surrounding gloom. Yet there was something in all this which Maureen relished. Most girls of her age and station would have shrunk appalled from the solitude, the silence and the gloom, but not so Maureen Dhu. There was something within her, and she felt it, too, which assimilated with the wild, lonely grandeur, the desolate vastness of the scene, and she sat lost in thought, dreaming, it might be, till a slight movement of her canine companion arrested her attention. Seeing no one near, she patted the dog's head, and told him to be quiet.

"Maybe you see some of the spirits, Bran!" said she, playfully, "or the good people that they say are a-foot the night."

Her caresses seemed to have lost their usual effect on Bran, for he sprang to his feet with a low growl, and Maureen herself quickly rose, for a voice which she knew to be that of Mr. Fitzstephen, spoke at her side.

"Your dog is sharper than his mistress, Maureen!

—he is a faithful friend, however, and I forgive him his distrust."

"Why, indeed, it's no wonder we'd both be started, Mr. Fitzstephen!—down Bran!—be quiet, good dog!" and stooping she laid her hand on the animal's shaggy neck, for Bran was, at times, somewhat fierce, especially with strangers. "Isn't it late you're abroad, an' me thinkin' you were in Scotland?"

"I only got home to-day, and hearing that the fishing was about to commence the day after next, I thought I would profit by the fineness of the evening to walk out and see you about what you know."

"Well, it's mighty strange to me, sir," said Maureen, drawing herself up, "that you found *me* out in this lonesome place, where I thought there was nobody but myself and Bran!"

"Are you angry, then, Maureen, that I found you out, as you say? Cold and proud, and distant as you are, I thought you would have a word of welcome for a friend who has been weeks—long weeks away!"

There was a mournful tone in Fitzstephen's voice, at all times full and musical, that went straight to Maureen's heart, and she felt as though she would have given much more than she possessed to clasp his hand and tell him she was glad to see him. But the counsels of age, and the prudence which distinguished her from most other girls, alike forbade such a step, and she coldly answered:

"A welcome from the likes of me wouldn't be any great things to you, Mr. Fitzstephen. I think I must be biddin' you good-night, sir! it's time I was at home!"

"Maureen O'Hara!" said Fitzstephen, and he laid his hand on her arm, as if to detain her, "I was going to speak of the communion which you seem to hold with nature—the mysterious instinct which leads you to seek her in her sternest moods"—he was going on, it might be forgetful of the mighty void of ignorance in poor Maureen's mind, when she suddenly interrupted him with:

"Such talk isn't fit for me, your honor!—I don't know what you mean!" There was a touching sadness in the words, and in the tone, that told far more than Maureen was aware of, and Fitzstephen had to pause and make a strong effort before he could answer with composure!

"Pardon me, Maureen! I believe I *was* forgetting—the place—the time—the stars above and the night resting like a veil on the earth—and—the spirit of poetry by one's side—yes, yes, I was forgetting!"

"The spirit!" said Maureen eagerly, taking his words in a very different sense; "yes, there is something in the darkness of night that speaks to my soul. I think it is the voice of God, and I feel while I sit here alone at such a time as if I were dead—away from the world altogether."

The breathless silence with which Fitzstephen listened speedily recalled Maureen from her momentary

abstraction, and she felt her cheeks glow at the thought of her own boldness.

"Well now, if that isn't a funny thing," said she laughing, "to hear *me* talking that way to *you*, sir!—an' I'm sure it's newens for me to speak so to any one—God be with you, Mr. Fitzstephen!"

"Just one moment, Maureen! Did you speak to your father about the fishery?"

"I did, sir."

"And what did he say?"

"Nothing at all that'll be pleasin' to you to hear, your honor!"

"Nevertheless, you must tell me just what he said!"

"Well, sir! he said if ever I'd speak to him again about any such thing that he an' I'd fall out"—here Maureen's voice faltered at the remembrance, "an' that was hard enough on me, Mr. Fitzstephen! for it was the first time he ever said a cross word to me. But no matter for that—he soon got over it. But you see, sir, it's just as I always told you. A body might as well try to move Mutton Island there abroad as move our people from their own ways—and my father especially!"

"If that be so, Maureen, I must only take the matter into my hands."

"What do you mean by that, your honor?"

"It would be no use to tell you now, Maureen! When the Claddagh men refuse to hear reason, we must only try some other means—they shall see be-

fore many days go by that when I have made all the necessary arrangements for a lucrative business, I am not to be driven from my purpose by their blind folly!"

"Take care what you say, Mr. Fitzstephen!—you ought to know by this time that it isn't safe to meddle with the same Claddagh men. I ask you again what it is that you mean to do?"

"Well! Maureen, you are the strangest girl!"—

"I'm a Claddagh girl, Mr. Fitzstephen, and the daughter of Randal More—do you mean to brave my father out for it?"

"I certainly do."

Maureen drew up her slender form to its fullest height, which was considerably beyond that of most females, she made a step or two backwards, and fixed her flashing eyes on Fitzstephen:

"If you do, you'll have but once to rue it, sir, and that's the longest day you have to live." There was a fearful distinctness in her voice and utterance that made every syllable tell, and Fitzstephen gazed in mute astonishment on the still, calm features and the statue-like attitude of the girl, clearly revealed in the starry light. There was a startling contrast between this living, breathing stillness of face and form, and the burning light of the dark eyes whose very depths were stirred with passion. Fitzstephen was at once attracted and repelled by the strange sight, but his mind was so disturbed that he could not all at once get his thoughts into words.

Before he had framed an answer for Maureen's most emphatic warning, a third voice spoke; it was the harsh and dissonant voice of Vara:

"My soul to glory, now, Mister Fitzstephen! If I'll put up with this any longer; what is it that brings you to the Claddagh so often—and by night, too?—why, if you be huntin' Maureen this way she'll get a bad name as sure as my name is Vara Halliday—and that's what never happened to one belongin' to her in the memory of man!"

"Me get a bad name, granny!" said Maureen haughtily; "and how would that come?—sure it's not my fault if Mr. Fitzstephen comes at times when I happen to be out about the doors? Take my word for it, he has an eye to business—he's not losin' his time, anyhow! though in one way he is too!"

"Well, really," said Fitzstephen, with some embarrassment, and he winced more from Maureen's contemptuous manner than from her grandmother's presence, unwelcome and unexpected as it was, "well, really, I must beg to retire—I find I am not able for the pair of you. As for my business, good Mrs. Halliday! your granddaughter may use her own discretion in making it known to you. My visits—either by night or day—will, in all probability, never trouble any of you again. I regret that, on the present occasion, I was not aware of your being near, as I might then have paid my court to you instead of Maureen!"

Vara's discordant laugh grated harshly on Fitzstephen's auricular nerve, as the old woman replied fiercely:

"Ay! I know well enough how it is with you—it would have answered you mighty well if I hadn't been near—but if I hadn't! master, there'd be somebody still worse for *you*. Do you think we'd let Maureen Dhu out here alone at a time like this without some of us havin' an eye on her—especially a night like this? Whatever you may think of her, I'll tell you one thing—though maybe I shouldn't say it to her face—that there's eyes on her wherever she goes—lovin' eyes, Mr. Fitzstephen; ay! an' careful eyes, too!—come along home, girl!" and she took the unresisting Maureen by the shoulder; "I hope this night will be a warnin' to you all your life."

"Whatever I may think of her!" repeated Fitzstephen, as they walked rapidly away from him, without either looking back even once, "what I *think* of her is of little consequence. I have other things to think of at the present time."

Lost in his own reflections, Fitzstephen stood with folded arms looking out on the luminous waters of the broad Bay, disturbed only by the occasional splash of oars, and the rapid passage of some tiny steamboat. Maureen and her granddame were already out of sight, yet there he stood motionless as a statue. He doubtless thought himself alone, but if so, he was mistaken, for all at once a heavy hand

was laid on his shoulder and a Claddagh voice spoke in the Claddagh *patois* close to his ear :

"A word with you, if you please, Mr. Fitzstephen!"

He turned quickly, and in the tall, robust form, and darkly frowning face before him, recognized Shan Driscoll. "What! you here, Shan?"

"Your servant, sir," said the young fisherman, in a dry, ironical tone; "I see I don't need to tell you my name. I'm not willin' to disturb you if it could be helped, but I want to have a word with you in private, an' I thought this such a fine opportunity that I couldn't let it slip."

"Well, Shan, say quickly what you have to say, for it's wearing late."

"You weren't in such a hurry a little time back, Mr. Fitzstephen! but, to be sure, the company was more pleasin'. But if your hurry was *twice* as great as it is, you'll hear what I have to say. There's one girl in this village I have set my heart on; her father an' the rest of her people are agreeable——"

"And what have I to do with all this?" asked Fitzstephen, haughtily.

"I'll soon tell you that, my master! You know Maureen Dhu—you know, *maybe as well as I do*, what it is to have the chance of winnin' her, but maybe you don't know *me*"—here his voice sank almost to a whisper, he made one step in advance that brought him close to Mr. Fitzstephen, and his eyes gleamed with a wild, fierce light that would have

alarmed most men under similar circumstances; "maybe you don't know *me*," repeated Shan, slowly, "for if you did, you'd know that the man doesn't step in shoe leather that could go between me and Maureen."

"If you're so sure of her," said Fitzstephen, with stern composure, "what need is there for all this talk? I give you joy of the girl's favor, since you appear to think so much of her."

"None of your mockin' or scoffin' now, Mister Fitzstephen! I know well what you're about this while back. I know what brought you here at this untimely hour, but I tell you *it won't do!*—if you were hangin' with diamonds, man! you'd have no chance!"

Fitzstephen's lip quivered, and his dark cheek paled. A tremor shook his whole frame, and the words he might not utter swelled his heart almost to bursting. Yet so great was his self-control that he replied in a calm, passionless voice: "It were a strange tale to be told in Galway streets that Giles Fitzstephen had a quarrel with one of the Claddagh men. For myself I should be doubly sorry for such a thing to occur at the present time, and that for the same reason that brings me here to-night, and has brought me some few times before. I forgive your blustering, Shan! because I know you are laboring under a mistake of some kind—you are in luck, be well assured—make the best of it, then, and don't be knocking your head against the rock like a great

fool. If you run fast *now*, you may overtake some that you'll be glad to see,—well for you that is sure to be well received! Good night!"

There was something in the tone of Fitzstephen's voice that Shan did not like, and he was more than half inclined to give him the weight of his fist on the side of the head. But then had he not said it was all a mistake, and no one ever doubted his word?—had he not said that the business which brought him to the village should soon be known, and had he not stood by the Claddagh when it many a time needed his powerful word in Garway? Shan's anger must have cooled down considerably when he could reason in this way, and Mr. Fitzstephen, as was natural, dreading a rupture just at that time with any of the fishermen, and especially with Shan Driscoll, was only too glad to take advantage of his quiescent state, and bidding him once more good night, he turned his steps homewards. Shan stood for a moment looking after him with a surly, discontented look, but whatever were his thoughts he did not follow him, although he kept muttering angrily to himself all the way home; "I'll have my eye on him for the time to come," said he, as he raised the latch of his solitary dwelling, 'he's worth a watchin', that same gentleman,—but he met his match when he met me—ha! ha!—I'll be up to him, or my name's not Shan Driscoll!—if it wasn't for him, this house wouldn't be as it is—an' och! but it *is* the lonesome place now!—hard fortune to him!—oh God forgive

me, what am I sayin'—is it cursin' him I'd be, heapin' sin on my own soul, an' it to do no good either? It's the unlucky night for any one to be a-foot, an' Maureen knows it well—still an' all see how she went out to meet him!" It was both singular and characteristic of the people that no evil suspicion of Maureen's virtue ever crossed the young man's mind, irritated as it was by jealousy and a growing dislike of Fitzstephen. Anxious to make another trial as regarded his matrimonial prospects, Shan put down a salt herring on the embers to broil, and when it was about done he, with much "mouthing" and many wry faces, contrived to swallow it body and bones, hoping thereby to propitiate Queen Mab and obtain at the hands of her pigmy majesty an auspicious glimpse of the future.

Meanwhile Vara and her granddaughter had reached their own door, but, before they entered, the old woman laying her hand on Maureen's arm, told her to "stop a minute."

"Well! granny, what is it?"

"Don't be afeard of me, avourneen! I'm not goin' to say an ill word to you *this* time—but listen to me, Maureen!—I had a dream a little while ago, an' it troubled me very sore. I thought I was tryin' your mother's ring on you, an' it wouldn't go on your finger—that was bad enough, achorra! but it was nothing to what I dreamed last night of all—"

"And what was that, granny astore?" said Maureen, eagerly.

"I dreamed, agra machree!" and Vara fixed her piercing eyes on those of her granddaughter, "I dreamed that I seen a ring put on your finger by one that I don't want to mention—but the ring wasn't your mother's ring—nor them that put it on one of ourselves."

Had it been daylight, Vara would have seen a ghastly paleness succeeding a burning blush on Maureen's face; but as it was, she neither saw nor heard anything to remove or confirm her suspicions, for, at that moment, Randal opened the door, and seeing them there burst into a loud laugh, and asked was it plotting mischief they were, or what.



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CHAPTER XIII.

The Feast of All Saints passed off as such days always do in the Claddagh. The morning, or rather the forepart of the day, was scrupulously devoted to the sacred duties of religion, and the evening to sports and merry-making. The early twilight was closing with a cold, clear frosty air that denoted what is called a "clearing up" of the weather, and augured favorably for the morrow. There was still sufficient light to distinguish objects when two female figures approached the Claddagh from the direction of the city. Under the hood of the gray knapped cloak of one, it was very easy to discover the shrewd, sharp features of Noddy Kinshela, who, as usual, trudged along with a heavy yet rapid step, leaning on a stout oaken staff, which, from its venerable appearance, might have done duty in the days of Old Noll, or "the Forty-one War." Who Noddy's companion was, it was not so easy to say, for the small, graceful figure was wrapped in a large cloak, and the face was carefully concealed by a long, thick veil. Notwithstanding her strange company it was plain that the cloak or mantle enveloped a person of gentle breeding, for there was that about her figure from head to foot that betrayed the delicately-nurtured.

Little conversation passed between the pair as they wended their way through the twisting, twining, bewildering little streets of the Claddagh, the lady drawing her veil closer as they went; an occasional remark from the beggar-woman was either answered not at all or in a low whisper on the part of her companion. On a sudden Noddy stopped, and peering down a narrow opening through which the misty waves of the Bay were visible, she exclaimed almost aloud:

"Ah! there she is, the darlin'!—herself and little Nanno!"

"Where—where, Noddy?" and the lady raised her veil and looked in the direction indicated by Noddy's finger.

"There they are, ma'am!—don't you see them?—daunderin' about like ghosts all alone on the beach—that's always the way it is with Maureen—she keeps by herself, you see, an' doesn't even care to be with the other girls an' boys."

"A strange fancy for one like her; was she always so?"

"Ever an' always, ma'am! ever an' always—from the time she was the height of little Nanno she was just as you see her now, in regard to playin' her lone, an' the like o' that!"

"Isn't it curious, Noddy, the liking she has for Chatty—I mean that poor child!" observed the lady, after they had stood for some moments looking at the strangely-mated companions, who were

strolling along the strand, the child every now and then stooping to pick up a pebble or a shell which she placed in her blue linen bib, gathered up in her little hands.

"It's a pretty picture," said the lady when they had got near enough to see clearly what was going on; "Noddy, don't you think that girl handsome?"

"Handsome!" repeated Noddy, and she looked at her favorite with a mixture of pride and fondness in her old eyes that would have become Maureen's mother; "faix, then I do, ma'am! an' more than that, I think she's a born beauty!"

The lady smiled—it was a sad smile, too—as she turned and fixed her soft eyes on her companion. "Noddy!" said she in a low, earnest tone, "you that knows so much about our family—past and present—need not be told that the witchery of that girl's beauty has enchanted them that should never have come in its way."

"I know it, ma'am dear!" and Noddy's usually sharp voice sank to the same undertone, "but I see you're trimblin'—sit down on this bench—there's nobody within hearin', so you needn't fear—they're about their own sport in-doors, except the pair that's down before us. I know what you mean—an' now that you broke the ice, I suppose I may make bould to say a word to you about it. Before we go any further in the business, I wan't to find out from *you*, whether you think she's in any danger?" pointing at Maureen as she spoke.

There was a dead pause, during which Mrs. Behan—for she it was—seemed agitated by some strong emotion, but at last, clearing her throat once or twice, she replied in a tremulous tone:

"In the presence of God, Noddy Kinshela! I think not. *I know—oh, yes!* I do well—what a noble heart she has to deal with—a high-spirited, generous heart, full of the kindest and tenderest of feelings—that heart may break in the struggle between pride and affection—but pure and guileless it will be while its pulse beats—good Lord! the child! the child!" and with a wild scream she was starting towards the beach, but Noddy catching her arm detained her, begging her to remain where she was. "Don't you see she only missed her foot on the beach—there Maureen has her up in her arms!"

"The Lord be praised! I thought she fell in the water, poor unfortunate creature! and if she did, she might not again escape—we could not expect a second miracle!—but hadn't we better go on now?—Noddy! Noddy! don't you find a great change in me?"

"For the better I do, ma'am! glory be to God! —och! och! but it's the true sayin' for the Wise Man that said it: 'Out of evil comes good!'—are you able to walk now, Mrs. Behan, dear?—if you are, let us be movin', for I'd wish to be in, and have a word with Aileen before they get there."

Charity was the ostensible object of Mrs. Behan's visit to Aileen, and it was not all affected, for her

heart was really good, although vanity had for years obscured its excellence. She regarded this friendless old woman with more than ordinary pity, and had been turning over in her mind sundry plans for her permanent relief. Great, then, was her surprise—not unmingled with disappointment, when on reaching Aileen's little cabin, she found it empty—even the few little articles of furniture which Noddy had been wont to see there were all gone, and the place was cold and desolate.

"Dear me, Noddy! what can this mean?—what has come of Aileen!"

"God knows, ma'am, God only knows—but I'll soon find out from the neighbors."

To this Mrs. Behan was forced to assent, and Noddy having dived into one of the adjacent cottages, returned in a very few minutes with the information that Shan Driscoll had taken Aileen and her grandchild home to his house where they were now as comfortable as they could wish themselves, for there was no one in the village better able to keep them than Shan; "an' sure that same's no wonder," added Noddy, "for you see he has the heart to divide what God gives him!—I wish—I wish Maureen would take him, for I know well he'd make her the best of husbands—and, indeed, it 'id be only kind daddy for him, for a better husband than the father of that same boy never broke bread. Poor Connor! a wild, stirrin' fellow he was, too, jist the moral of Shan! God be good an' merciful to his sowl!"

"Pray Heaven she *may* take him!" ejaculated Mrs. Behan. Aloud she said:

"Shan Driscoll! Shan Driscoll! is not that the young man who saved——"

"Exactly, ma'am! it's himself an' no other!—you see he has a likin' for the weeny creature ever since, an' a care over her—but what are we goin' to do, ma'am?—Aileen doesn't stand in need of charity now, you see, an' so we have no excuse—at least *you* haven't—to go and see her."

Mrs. Behan hesitated. She was unwilling to go without seeing Aileen, and her fair face brightened into a smile as a happy thought occurred to her. "Can we not still go, and make a merit of our good intentions?—you know we have only to tell the old woman how we went to her house, and hearing of her being removed, called to inquire how she is?"

"Why, then, to be sure we can do it, easy enough!—what came over me at all that I didn't think of it? Step out now, ma'am dear! for you see it's pitch dark on us, an' I have business to see to the night yet." So she stumped on towards the Driscoll mansion, ably supported by her "trusty," as she was wont to call her staff, muttering audibly as she went: "Dear, dear! see that now! the cuteness of these quality bates all—mind your steps, Mrs. Behan, dear!—it isn't on the flags of Galway you are now—stoop your head, ma'am!—that's the way—dear knows but it's the quare place all out this same Claddagh—it doesn't answer for you townspeople,

especially by night. Here we are, anyhow, at Shan's door, glory be to God!—let us have a peep before we venture in!"

Having taken a reconnoitering glance through the small window, Noddy raised her finger and whispered her companion to look in. She did so, and the scene which presented itself was one which she could not help admiring, prejudiced as she was against the Claddagh community. Propped up in a high-backed wicker chair right opposite the window, sat or rather lay Aileen Rhua, and close beside her stood little Nanno, her head barely reaching to the arm of the chair, and her large, soft, dreamy eyes fixed in wonder on the old woman's face, attracted, no doubt, by some weird story of the past.

In front of the fire on a low stool sat Maureen, the delicate outline of her face seen in full profile, and her small head, with its weight of dark, glossy hair, reminding one of the chiselled creations of Grecian art. She was knitting, and the needles, rapidly impelled by her taper fingers, glanced and danced in the bright fire light, the only light in the room. It was indeed a scene for a painter. The wrinkled and emaciated features of Aileen, the elfin loveliness of the little hunchback, and the gipsy-like face and form of Maureen Dhu, all tinted with the warm glow of the turf embers.

"Well! I declare that's purty—now isn't it, ma'am?—just look at the child!"

Noddy's whisper was superfluous, for the lady's

eyes were fixed on the little creature with an intensity of feeling that made them moist with tears.

"She's like—somebody you once knew, Noddy! is she not?"

"Well! indeed, ma'am, I never thought so before—I suppose because I never took right notice of her—but I think so now. Isn't it the thousand pities to see her as she is—"

"What matter," retorted the lady, quickly, "if her life is to pass in the Claddagh—!"

"But it isn't, ma'am!—please God! we'll bring it about that she'll have her rights—I've managed as hard matters as this in my time, and you know it, too! Lord bless me! here's Shan—let us turn that other corner, for I'm sure you wouldn't like to meet him at the present time!"

"Not for the world, Noddy!—hurry, hurry for God's sake!"

Noddy would have been well pleased to keep her station at the window, if it could be done with safety, in order to see the effect of the meeting on Maureen and Shan, the former being most probably under the impression that Shan would not be home till much later in the evening, while the young master of the house had little notion of who was sitting by his hearth at that hour, keeping Aileen and her grandchild company. But she had promised to see Mrs. Behan home again, and in any case she could not allow her to go alone, on such a journey at such a time.

After seeing the lady safely housed by the front door, Noddy made her way round to the kitchen, and asked could she see the mistress, or Mrs. Behan, or any of the ladies.

"Well! Mrs. Behan's just come in, Noddy!" said the servant who had opened the door; "and I think she's gone up to her own room, but I'll tell Miss Fitzstephen."

"I'd as soon see the Mistress, Betsey! for it's about one of her pensioners I want to speak to her. Tell her, if you please, that Noddy Kinshela would be entirely obligated to her if she'd let her speak a word to her in regard to the poor woman that was brought to bed of twins the other day."

"Deed an' I tell her no such thing," said the pert mincing housemaid, casting a coquettish glance on the grinning coachman; "do you think I'd deliver such a message, and the master himself to the fore?"

"Dear me! how modest we are!" observed the sarcastic beggarwoman, "if you're too shame-faced to say what I tell you, I'll go up the back-stairs here, an' you can whisper the mistress that there's one in the hall wantin' to see her."

This was done accordingly, but when Mrs. Fitzstephen came to the head of the kitchen stairs and saw who it was that waited there, she quietly followed the motion of Noddy's finger, and showed her into a small room or closet in connection with the butler's pantry.

"Well, Noddy, what is it you want?" inquired

Mrs. Fitzstephen; "I see there's mystery in your looks," and she smiled pleasantly.

"The blessing o' God on that bright face of yours, Mrs. Fitzstephen darlin'! sure it's what I forget at times when I'm talkin' to you that it's not Miss Ellie French I have in it still, dear knows! but it's younger you're growin' every day, and I think Master Juan himself would think so, too, if it was the will of God that he *could* see you!"

This drew a sigh from Mrs. Fitzstephen, and banished the smile from her face. Just as Noddy expected, she became disturbed and uneasy.

"Noddy! Noddy!" said she, "why will you persist in these allusions to the past—idle they are, and yet mischievous, for they recall to my mind doubts and fears and misgivings, which made me miserable for years and years of my life, and which it is my interest to forget for ever. Why do you torture me, Noddy Kinshela?"

Mrs. Fitzstephen had been standing, but she now sank into a chair, and covered her face with her hands. Noddy placed herself before her, and resting both hands on the head of her staff, bent down so that her whispered words might reach the ear of her auditor: "I don't wish or want to torture you, ma'am! God forbid!—but what would you say if I had comfort to give you instead of anything else?"

"Comfort!" ejaculated Mrs. Fitzstephen, suddenly removing her hands from her face, and peering up

eagerly into the old woman's eyes—"what comfort can you give me?"

"Would it lighten the load on your heart to know that nothing had happened to Master Juan that night—that he left the city safe and sound?"

"Would it lighten the load on my heart? Oh Noddy! need you ask the question when you know who they were that were suspected of making away with him?—but what—what—have you heard?"

"I'll soon tell you that, ma'am dear! if you'll only try an' compose yourself—you're tremblin' all over—"

"Well! well! I'll do my best—there now—don't you see how composed I am?" and she looked up in Noddy's face with a sweet smile, while her bloodless lips still quivered with emotion.

Noddy smiled, and nodded, and her old eyes twinkled with fun as she spoke again in that oracular, thrilling whisper that pierced the very soul of the anxious listener. "You thought, an' many a one else besides you—that poor Master Juan never left the city with his life—now I know, an' know for certain, that he was alive six or seven years after—"

"But how—how do you know it?"

"Did you ever hear of a Spanish vessel that was wrecked in the Bay about eight and twenty or thirty years ago?"

"No—but yet—let me think a moment!"—and the lady raised her hand to her burning brow; "yes!

yes! I heard of it, I remember now—but what—what of that?”

Mrs. Fitzstephen's piercing glance gave fearful earnestness to her question, and the beggar-woman looked into her eyes with equal significance, as she replied in slow and solemn accents:

“Juan Gonzales was aboard that Malaga ship——”

“Great God! and he perished——”

“No he *didn't*—most every one on board went down, for it was a fearful storm—but Master Juan and a few others were saved by a boat from the Claddagh that put out when it was against nature to run the risk.”

“Brave fellows! it was just like them!” exclaimed Mrs. Fitzstephen.

“Oh! to be sure,” said Noddy, with no small bitterness of tone; “they're ever so good when you hear the likes o' that of them——”

“Well! well! never mind, but tell me how it was—how can you be sure that it was Juan?—who was it that recognized him?—speak! Noddy!—why don't you go on?”

“Why, jist because you'll not give one time, ma'am!—it 'id take me to have three or four tongues to tell you all at onst. You want to know first an' foremost, how it happened. I tould you already that it was a couple of the Claddagh men that put out in a boat an' saved the Senore as you used to call him, an' four or five o' the crew. After

that, he fell sick, an' was minded an' tended for weeks an' weeks at the house of Oyney Hallinan, the man that saved him—at least him an' his son."

"But did he never tell' who he was—did he never speak of—of us?"

"Well! I b'lieve not, ma'am! he only said he was from Spain, an' the Claddagh people made a great wonder at him speakin' English as well as anybody—"

"So he did—well he spoke it and oh! how sweetly!"

Noddy pretending not to notice Mrs. Fitzstephen's emotion went on: "He said he knew Galway very well, ma'am! an' had some acquaintances in it, but he didn't want to see any of them—"

"Merciful Goodness! can it be?—was Juan so near me at that time—so long, too—and he sick—depending on the charity of rude fishermen—and I not know it! But, Noddy!" and she laid her hand emphatically on the old woman's shoulder, "what brought him here then—or, being here, why did he not make himself known?—why did he not make an effort to—" she stopped, colored, and looked down—"But what am I saying?—it could not be Juan—no, no, it could not—he *would* have come had he been so near—no! no! it was all a mistake!"

"Was it, indeed?—did you ever see that cross before?"

One glance at the cross was quite sufficient to

convince Mrs. Fitzstephen. Pale and trembling she fell back in her chair, her eyes fixed on the little *reliquaire*.

"See it before?—oh! *yes*, I did—it is the same—I'm sure it is that Juan used to wear. Where—how—from whom did you get it?"

"The Se-nore."

"The Signor?"

"Yes, the Senore gave it to the daughter of Oyney Hallinan—she was a young widow-woman, then, but she's a'most as ould as myself now. Her father and brother are both dead many a year ago."

"Do I know her," interrupted the lady?

"Well! then, there's few in or about Galway town that *doesn't* know her—it's Vara Halliday, ma'am."

Mrs. Fitzstephen's countenance fell. "Oh, if that be so, Noddy! I fear I have little chance of getting the cross, she is so testy that I should not like to ask it of her, even to buy it?"

"I suppose, ma'am, you'd give something handsome for it?" said Noddy, musingly.

"Any price she may choose to set on it—tell her so from me."

"It wouldn't be the least use in life, ma'am dear! if Vara had it still, but I think them that owns it won't keep it from you."

"How is that, Noddy?—who is the owner of it now?"

"Why, Maureen Dhu, ma'am! Vara's granddaughter—the old woman gave it to her to guard her from evil. I'll tell you what I'll do, Mrs. Fitzstephen, then! I'll bring the girl here to see you, and I'm sure she'll not say again you, if you ask it from her."

"Hush! there is my daughter, Mrs. Behan, coming down stairs, and I hear my son moving in the parlor. I must leave you now, Noddy! but one word more before you go—what brought Juan here?"

"Vara can tell you that, ma'am! I partly guess it myself, but she knows it—she's as close as can be when she likes, an' I often done my best to get it out of her, but not a word—she gave me a hint of it onst, and that was all. Well, ma'am! I must be goin'."

"But how am I to see Vara?"

Noddy made a show of serious reflection, before she replied: "I'll tell you what I'm thinkin', ma'am—I'll coax the ould Trojan to tell it all to Maureen between times, and when she comes, you can get it out of her."

"Why, Noddy! I'm surprised at you!—would you have me speak of such things, or hear them from a mere girl?"

"A mere girl! Ha! ha! I ask your pardon for laughin', ma'am, but you know nothing at all of Maureen Dhu, or you'd know very well that you might trust your life to her—she can keep a secret

as well as if she was fifty—oh never fear to trust Maureen, ma'am! for them that has seen her from she was the height o' my knee, could tell her anything—anything at all, ma'am! But that's true—I was forgettin'—I wanted somethin' for that poor creature that had twins the other day."

Mrs. Fitzstephen was really very kind and charitable, and had many pensioners amongst the poor of the neighborhood. In many cases as in this one, Noddy was her almoner, and a very efficient one, too, and Mrs. Fitzstephen, glad of an excuse for the old woman's visit, in case it transpired, went directly to the parlor, and told her daughter, who was also interested in this poor woman. Between them they filled a small basket suitable to such an exigency, and when it was handed to Noddy in the hall, she thankfully stumped away, after hearing Mrs. Fitzstephen's whisper:

"Send the girl to-morrow afternoon—towards evening if possible, as my son and daughters will be from home—if the weather is sufficiently fine, they are to dine with some friends a couple of miles out in the country."

Noddy gave a consenting nod, tramped heavily down the steps with her basket, Mrs. Fitzstephen insisting on letting her out by the front door.

When his mother returned into the parlor, Fitzstephen looked up from his book with a significant smile. The traces of tears were still plainly discern-

ible on her face. "You've had a visit from Noddy, mother."

"Yes! she came for something I promised her for another person."

"I don't know what you would do, you ladies, without Noddy."

Both mother and daughter started and changed color. Affecting not to notice their embarrassment, Giles went on: "If Goldsmith's 'gaping rustics' admired the fathomless depth of the village master's erudition, truly *we* may well stand aghast at the amount of *intelligence* locked up in Noddy's cranium. Never was beggarwoman or any other woman the repository of so many secrets. Eh, Margaret, what say you?"

"Well! I really can't say much on the subject Giles!" replied the sister, making a great effort to appear indifferent; "I presume you speak from experience—can't you bear testimony yourself, now, to Noddy's oracular powers? See there now, mother! I leave it to you if his face does not betray him. Ha! ha! you set traps for others, take care that you are not caught yourself!"

"Nonsense, Margaret! how your tongue does run on! But I think you'll have the laugh all to yourself this time;" and he glanced significantly at their mother, who bent with an air of abstraction over a portfolio of engravings which lay on the table. Margaret made no answer, and finding it difficult to keep up an appearance of composure she soon

after left the room, muttering something about a headache.

For some moments after her departure not a word was spoken in the parlor. Fitzstephen was apparently engrossed with his book, and his mother with the contents of the portfolio. This did not last long, however, for Mrs. Fitzstephen was restless and uneasy to a degree that she could not conceal.

"Giles!" said she at last, with more petulance than she ever before manifested, "I wish you would lay aside your book—can you not devote a little while to your mother?"

"Certainly, my dear mother, if you wish it, but I thought you were better pleased to see me intent on the book just now. You know I am *always* desirous of doing your will—if I only knew it."

"Giles," said his mother, with an emotion which she was no longer able to conceal, "you have been, and are still, the best of sons—may God requite you, and He will, for has He not promised His choicest blessings to the obedient child? yes! you have been my chief solace for many a weary year, but, tell me! have you not, in your heart, accused me of coldness and reserve, because there were subjects connected with my early life on which I never talked to you?—tell me, my son was it not so?" and sitting down beside him, she threw one arm around his neck.

"Well! mother, if truth must be told, I have had from time to time some such undutiful thoughts," replied the son, in a tremulous voice, "but still I nev-

er blamed you, because I knew you must have had some sufficient cause for a reserve so different from your ordinary habits."

"Bless you, my son! bless you for doing me so much justice!—Giles, I have this night received intelligence which will, I think, justify me in speaking to you of matters which I was, heretofore, obliged to keep to myself—"

"To yourself and Noddy," said Giles, with a smile which he could not repress.

"Precisely, my dear son, precisely—and that because Noddy was all along acquainted with the whole affair—I never would have made her a *confidante* from choice, although I must confess I have never known her to betray the trust reposed in her."

There was silence for a few moments, during which Mrs. Fitzstephen was evidently making up her mind to what was still a painful task.

"Giles!" said she at length, "for the present it is only to yourself I mean to open my mind—I may, after a while, extend my confidence to the girls, but not just yet. I suppose I need not tell you, Giles Fitzstephen! that your father was not my first love?"

"I have long suspected as much, my dearest mother."

"And the mysterious picture in the drawing room—" she paused and looked into her son's face.

"I have further suspected *it*, too, madam, as representing some one who had played an important part in the drama of your life!"

"You are right, my son, quite right; the original of that picture was Juan Gonzales, the plighted lover of my early years—you look surprised, and no wonder, for his name never crossed your father's lips or mine since the day we were married. I am now going to tell you what part he *did* play in my drama, as you say!—there is still a cloud of mystery overhanging his fate, but to-morrow may clear it up a little further, and I will now tell you all I know myself."



CHAPTER XIV.

The late dawn of the following morning found the Claddagh all in commotion. Men, women and children of every age were "alive and stirring," all in the best possible humor with themselves and others, all eager and expectant, in anticipation of the glorious "take" awaiting every household net in the still waters of the Bay. Tom Flaherty and three or four others had been out all night, by Randal's orders, coasting around in a small hooker, in order to prevent trespassers from encroaching on the fishing grounds until all should have a fair start together.

When day began to break, the waters and the shores were alike enveloped in a dense fog, but this did not at all trouble the fishermen, who, from long experience, were "weather-wise," and could foretell every atmospheric change with unerring precision. So on they went, stowing on board what provisions they required for their uncertain voyage—uncertain as to its duration. Oaten cakes, fish and potatoes formed the staple articles for every larder, with a quantity of spring water, which forms the only drink of the Claddagh men during their aquatic excursions. On shore they are fond of something stronger, it is true, but when at sea, they never permit themselves any, even the smallest quantity of

"grog," or any other intoxicating liquor. The women were all in a state of excitement, very busy indeed, but *appearing* to be still busier. Running messages to and fro, conveying the provisions and other requirements for the voyage down to the boats, halloing to their mates on board the boats, jostling each other on shore in the fog with their respective baskets and bundles, they were *just* in their element and would have desired no better fun. On board the boats the men were equally busy, and as the various craft were provided with necessaries for the expedition, they moved out to give place to others, their movements being performed with an ease and a quickness which were truly surprising, considering the density of the fog.

When the preparations were all completed, Randal sent a messenger up to the Priory to say so, and only a few moments had elapsed when one of the fathers was seen making his way down to the quay. By this time the sun was rapidly dispelling the autumnal mist, and the noble features of the scene gradually coming into view, illumined by the hazy splendor of the mellow sun-light. The waters were gleaming and glancing through the wreathing mist which still lingered above them, and their rippling surge made glad the hearts of the bold fishermen as it broke against their tiny craft with a wild music all its own—and theirs. When at length the sun shone out fairly above the horizon, and the last shreds of the misty curtain vanished from earth and

sea, a cheerful shout burst from the Claddagh boats and was re-echoed from every surrounding height where numbers of people were already stationed, waiting to see "the start."

And it was a sight well worth seeing, and one not easily to be forgotten. About that time the Claddagh fleet numbered over five hundred boats of every size, from the large, handsome hooker of thirty or forty tons burden to the frail skiff, in which less hardy sailors would fear to venture around the nearest headland. Conspicuous amongst all was the Admiral's hooker, with gay streamers floating from its tall mast, and its white sail reflecting the roseate sunbeams. The sails of all the others were of the usual dull greyish color. Randal's, alone was of "full bleach," that being one of the prerogatives, as it was also the distinctive mark, of his high office.

On the prow of his gaily-decked boat stood the Admiral himself, his blue rug jacket, and coarse trousers, and glazed hat of a flat round shape, exactly corresponding to the costume of the other fishermen. Still there was a sort of rude dignity, the effect of conscious power, in the attitudes and gestures of the hale old man, as his quick eye glanced along the line, and his stentorian voice directed the motions of the different boats.

"Now, father," said Randal, when everything was arranged to his satisfaction, "now, father, your blessing before we start!"

Instantly every one of the fishermen bent a knee,

and the good Dominican, raising his voice and his right hand, made the sign of the cross over the fleet, and pronounced a blessing on the undertaking. Familiar as the sight was to him, Father Edward was moved by the simple piety and earnest faith of the sturdy fishermen, and his voice sank almost to a whisper as he reached the last words of his paternal benediction.

On an eminence, overlooking the Bay, about midway between the city and the Claddagh, stood Mr. Fitzstephen with his mother on one arm and Charlotte on the other, while Margaret was playing off her airs and graces for the especial benefit of Captain Hamilton, who had offered his arm for the occasion, well pleased to have the sprightly and handsome young widow under his charge. That the satisfaction was mutual, Margaret's sparkling gaiety sufficiently indicated. The whole party were watching with the keenest interest the animated scene before them, when a violent puffing was heard in the rear, and with it the shrill voice of Hearty Hampton, declaring the sight wasn't worth half the trouble it cost. It evidently had cost *him* some bodily exertion, for chilly as the day was he was wiping his face at a prodigious rate, as though he were very much incensed at it for perspiring so unreasonably.

"Well! well!" said he, "if ever you catch me again undertaking two feminines when I go up a hill to see sights—there now, Cecily!" to his sister,

"I'm sure you may let my arm go now—why, bless my soul! Emily, my dear! here are all the Fitzstephens!"

Emily affected to be much surprised, but the truth was that her keen eye had detected that identical group from the roof of a neighboring house, and very slyly indeed she had persuaded her father that there was a much better view from the height in question. Hampton's ill-humor quickly vanished, and with it went his fatigue. He was, of course, very glad to see the Fitzstephens, and one of the Fitzstephens was very glad to see him. As for Giles and Margaret, they, I am sorry to say, wished the new-comers anywhere in the wide world but where they were, and that for reasons which to themselves appeared amply sufficient. Fitzstephen, however, was far too polished to appear disturbed or incommode by the addition to the party, and Margaret's pride would not suffer her to manifest any misgiving as to the probable effect of Emily's more youthful charms on her gay cavalier. Mrs. Fitzstephen was so excessively rejoiced to see her very good friend Mr. Hampton, on that occasion that, in order to enjoy his charming company (which, if truth must be told, she usually set down as "a bore"), she must needs take his arm, saying to his fair daughter at the same time, with a gracious and truly maternal smile:

"There, *cara mia*, as I feel particularly good-natured this morning, I will do both you and Giles a

favor;" and she pointed to the vacant arm, which her son, of course, presented to the lady with a most bland and courteous smile. It is hardly necessary to state that the offer was cheerfully accepted, but it may be well to observe, *en passant*, that while Emily stood there leaning on Fitzstephen's arm, she was much more intent on looking out for lady-friends and acquaintances amongst the lookers-on, than in watching the movements of the Claddagh fleet. Her motive will be understood, doubtless, by all young ladies who have ever been placed in a similar position on a similarly public occasion. As for the Captain, he did certainly turn his head oftener than Margaret wished, in the direction of *la belle Hampton*, as he styled her, but seeing her after a while hanging on Fitzstephen's arm, he said philosophically, and indeed legally concluded, that there was little use in poaching on another's preserves, and that other Giles Fitzstephen, of whose stern reserve and lofty bearing the gallant Captain, tall as he was, had a sort of instinctive awe that compelled him to keep his distance. Besides, if the lady on his arm was not quite so young, she was certainly quite as attractive in other respects, and in manner had decidedly the advantage, and somehow she had already obtained a hold on Hamilton's heart of which he was not himself aware. So on the whole, he was well content to leave the new-comer to Fitzstephen, so long as the merry little widow fell to his own good keeping.

"There—there, Charlotte!" cried Fitzstephen, "see, there's the admiral's boat in motion—see the fine old man how well he looks, standing on the prow with his two noble boys beside him!—he has just given the signal for sailing!—what hooker is that next to his?—ha! that's Shan Driscoll's—"

"What a splendid-looking young fellow that is to be sure!" observed Charlotte, in her cool way; "and so that is Shan Driscoll, who is to marry the flower of the Claddagh!"

"Nonsense, Charlotte! one would think you had been taking lessons from Noddy Kinshela, you speak in such an oracular tone."

"Why, what harm did I say, Giles?—but tell me where's Brian Kineely?—somehow I have a great respect for that young man ever since I saw him carry his aged parent to the church—do tell me if you see him?"

"Brian Kineely!" repeated her brother slowly, "let me see!" and he cast his eyes along the now moving line; "I fear I shall not be able to satisfy your curiosity, Charlotte, for I really cannot see him. Stay—yes, I do—there, there he is—the fourth boat from Randal's on this side."

"What a crowd of women and children!" observed Emily; "wild-looking creatures, I protest—dear me! Mrs. Fitzstephen, only look at them! why positively they are quite primitive in their red petticoats and blue jackets."

"There's one, Miss Hampton!" said the Captain

suddenly, and he pointed with his finger, "one that might serve as a model for painter or sculptor—neither Grecian chisel nor Italian pencil ever exceeded that naiad."

Fitzstephen turned short on the Captain and a cold smile curled his thin lip. "You speak warmly, Captain! I dare say you have recognized in that naiad, as you call her, your partner in the dance on Midsummer Night?"

The slightest possible flush suffused the officer's brow—his face was an English one, and had, at all times, a sufficiency of color. "Well, upon my honor, Fitzstephen! I did *not* recognize the girl, but, it appears, others were not so."

"And yet you had good cause to *remember* her," persisted the other, regardless of Margaret's imploring look, and Charlotte's gentle pressure of his arm; "you cannot surely have forgotten your forced march into town that night, and the cold bath administered by Brian Kineely yonder, not to speak of anything more serious—you will not easily persuade us that you have forgotten Maureen Dhu?"

The angry response hovering on Hamilton's lips was prevented by Mrs. Fitzstephen, who, hearing Maureen's name, came eagerly forward, asking: "Where? where? which is Maureen Dhu?"

"Why there she is ma'am!" said Emily Hampton; "a conspicuous object she is, too, in her oriental costume! See where she stands, a little in advance of the other women looking for all the world like

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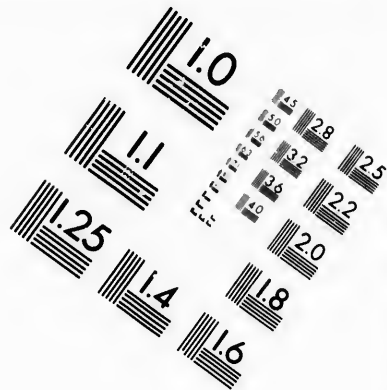
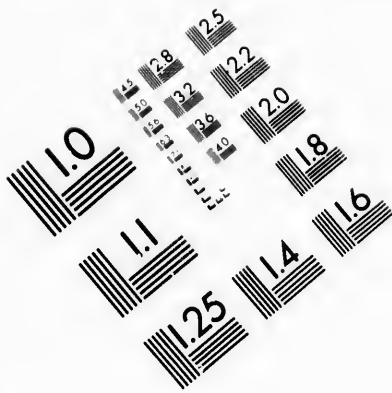
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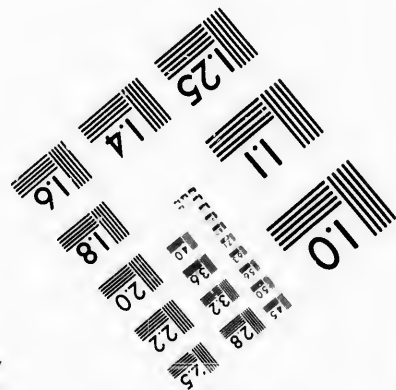
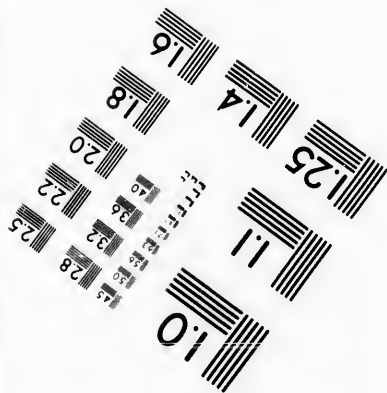
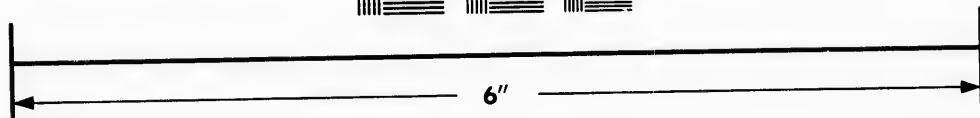
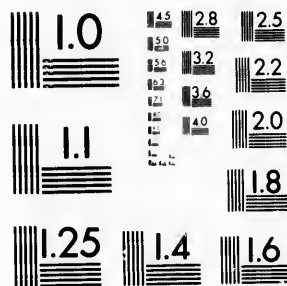
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something fixed in a field to frighten crows! She wants to show off that fine figure of hers, to turn the heads of the young fishermen. I think she *might* put something around her shoulders such a day as this. It makes one cold to look at her, she's so long and thin."

Fitzstephen turned a withering glance of scorn on the envious belle that brought the red blood to her peachy cheek. What he was about to say might for ever have annihilated Emily's hopes, but the bitter words were left unsaid, for just at the moment a diversion was made that sent anger to the winds.

"Is this yours, Miss?" asked Noddy Kinshela, from behind, holding out to the disengaged and mortified young lady, one of those elastic machines ingeniously contrived for the disfigurement of nature's fair handiwork, the female form.

"Get away out of that with it!" cried the fair Emily, pale and red by turns; "its none of mine!"

"But I tell you, it is Miss! Didn't I see it drop-pin' from you as you came up the hill?"

The Captain and Fitzstephen turned away their heads partly from politeness, partly in order to conceal the smile which they could not repress. This Emily perceived, and her distress increased accordingly. Her father, hitherto engaged in conversation with Mrs. Fitzstephen, had not noticed the occurrence, but Emily quickly challenged his attention.

"Father, do send this nasty old woman away!"

"What! what is it, Emily?" said Hampton, coming forward.

"Why, sir, I'm doin' no harm in life," said Noddy very innocently; "I'm only givin' Miss Emily back somethin' I found belongin' to her. Bedad myself doesn't well know what to call it," and Noddy holding it up so that all might have a good view, affected to examine it very attentively; "I b'lieve it's something that the ladies wear to make hips on them, like—Miss Fitzstephen, I needn't be askin' if it's yours," said the malicious old woman, "for I see you'r shaped something like that girl below on the beach that Miss Emily was makin' so little of in regard to her bein' a whippin' post, or a scarecrow, or something that way. I suppose, now, it's some of the English fashions Miss Emily brought over to us—well! well! it's no wonder my head is gray, anyhow!"

A gentle "hush, Noddy, hush!" from Charlotte, and a sharper rebuke from her mother were, alike, unavailing—the old woman's caustic humor was welling out in yet more bitter sarcasm when Emily unexpectedly reached out her hand, and snatching the unlucky *bustle* from the shrivelled hand that held it, pitched it as far as its own lightness would permit it to go in the direction of the water.

"It won't do, you see," said the imperturbable beggarwoman; "it won't leave you so easy as you think—*it's* not ashamed of its owner, though it's owner is of it!"

"I'll tell you what it is, my old dame!" said Hampton, taking her by the shoulder, "if you don't march from here in double quick time I'll hand you over to the police."

"Arrah! you wouldn't be so cruel, Hearty honey!" said Noddy, with a mocking laugh; "is it to send me to the black-hole you'd do, avourneen, for givin' back your daughter's what-dye-call-it?—why! man alive, here's Mister Fitzstephen, your son-in-law that's to be—ahem!—sure he's a magistrate, now, an' knows the law well, an' I'll lave it to him if I misbehaved myself in any one way."

Fitzstephen turned and assuming a sternness of manner that his smiling look belied, he ordered Noddy to "take herself off, or he would be under the necessity of showing her that some articles of property are *not* to be returned when found, any more than truth is always to be told, which you know, Noddy! my good woman! is not always the case!"

"Well, sir," said Noddy, in a very deferential tone, and with a gravity assumed, like his own; "well, sir, I'm agreeable to whatever you say—but sure you wouldn't hinder me from seein' the sight, more than another!"

"Certainly not—if you'll only keep—the peace." And he turned again to look at the boats. They were just sailing, and a hearty cheer from the spectators on every height rang out over the waters as a "God-speed," to which the fishermen replied by another cheer, in their own peculiar fashion.

Fitzstephen and the Captain took off their hats and joined in the cheer, for there was no resisting the inspiration of the moment.

"Why, Captain!" said Mrs. Behan, with a gay laugh, "do I live to see you take off your hat to the Claddagh men?"

"Upon my honor," replied the officer, "I must plead guilty to a sort of liking for those fellows, rough and all as they are. I may well afford to take off my hat to them, for I should not be here to do it were it not for one of them. What is that?—what are they about now?"

No answer was returned, for every eye was fixed on one of the large hookers which, breaking from the line, was making for the shore.

"Who is that?" cried Fitzstephen, as a young man darted from the boat to the land, and bent one knee to the ground. "As I live, it is Brian Kineely—and—what! he kneels to Maureen!"

"No, your honor," said Noddy Kinshela, from behind; "he does *not* kneel to Maureen,—though maybe it isn't his heart 'id hindher him. It's his ould granny, sir, that's stannin' close to Maureen,—don't you see now?—ah! may the Lord mark you with grace, Brian astore! it's you wouldn't go athout her blessin'! He forgot to ask it, you see, goin' out, as it's customary with them all, an' he put in again when he thought of it."

"That is the very fellow that saved my life," said the Captain, "and see—the girl gives him her hand."

"I say, old lady!" addressing himself to Noddy, "you who seem to know these people so well, what the deuce is there about yonder damsel that fascinates all the beaux of these parts?" And he glanced furtively at Fitzstephen.

"Well, the sorra know myself knows, Captain!" returned Noddy with great apparent simplicity; "it isn't the *bustle* she wears, anyhow. Faix I'd advise you to keep out of her way yourself, your honor, or maybe the bird-lime that's about her 'id catch you too. Here's Mither Hampton, for all so *sosh* an' 'sponsible lookin' as you see him, I'll bet my ould cloak again your honor's fine blue coat that he got a blink afore now from that same evil eye. To himself an' the green stone be it tould."

Every eye was, of course, turned on Hampton, and the blank astonishment visible on his homely features was only equalled by the drollery of Noddy's grotesque countenance, as she looked from one to the other with eyes full of mischief.

"Is it I?" cried Hampton, almost choking between anger, horror, and confusion; "why, you unfortunate old wretch! I never—I never——"

"Oh! that is easy said, Mr. Hampton!" said Fitzstephen, with difficulty refraining from joining in the general laugh. "But you know Noddy is quite an authority in these matters."

"Mr. Fitzstephen" said Hampton, solemnly, "I pledge you my word of honor, I don't know the girl from Adam!"

"Bah, Mr. Hampton!" said Noddy, as she gathered her old cloak about her for a start, "sure what else would you say—doesn't your own purty face tell a different story?—ah then, Miss Emily! don't be throwin' sich sour looks at me, if you please!—keep them all for Mister Fitzstephen!—*do* now, avourneen! an' don't be makin' little of sich a sweet, darlin' pair as they are, tryin' to turn an old beggar-woman into vinegar with them! Mrs. Behan, ma'am! it's proud an' happy I am to see you in sich good company—but take care o' the captain, ma'am dear!—he's worth a watchin', mind I tell you!—though, I b'lieve he's about the best of the tribe, after all! Mr. Fitzstephen! my advice to you is, sir, to keep clear of the *bustles*—they sail too fast, your honor!—I mane them that wears them—well! I b'lieve it's time I wasn't here!—this 'out get the grain o' tay or the smoke o' tobacco for me—my sarvice to you all, genteels!" And with a very pre-tentious curtsy, Noddy and her trusty staff were moving off in Indian file, when Fitzstephen laughing heartily at the general "rub" she had so ingeniously given all round, drew himself away from between Charlotte and Emily and following the old woman placed a piece of silver in her hand, telling her in a low voice: "That will get you both."

"It will so, your honor! may the Lord reward you! for many's the time you supplied my wants before like a rale gentleman, as you are!" lowering her voice, she added in a tone of deep feeling, "I

wish I knew what was for your good, an' I'd wish it to you with all my heart—but go back, your honor! don't stand a minute, there's sharp eyes on you there behind!—you have *my* prayers an' good wishes, anyhow!—more power, Captain! I always tuk you for a sprig of the rale quality!" and she stooped to pick up a silver shilling which the officer threw after her with a good-natured laugh.

Hampton looked as if he were almost shamed into bestowing a trifle on the satirical beggar-woman, but still his heart hindered him, and he stood irresolute, rattling the silver in his breeches pockets with both hands. Even this did not escape Noddy, and after she had pocketed the Captain's gratuity, she made an ironical curtsy to Hampton.

"Mushin, thank you kindly, Mистер Hampton! sure it's what I didn't expect from *you*, anyhow. Oh! then, I beg your pardon, sir, sure I thought it's what you were goin' to reach your hand to me for onst in your life—but never mind, buddagh aroon! never mind! sure I know what a grip the money has on you—it's hard to part you an' it!"

"Really, papa!" said Emily, when Noddy was out of hearing, "I would give that old beldame up to the police, if I were in your place!—it was but the other day she insulted you on the public street, just because you refused her charity!—"

A look from the prudent father silenced the amiable daughter, and from that time nothing more was said to disturb the general peace. The Clad-

dagh fleet was now some distance down the Bay, sailing on steadily together, for as yet it had not reached the fishing grounds, where each boat takes its own way in quest of the finny tribes, following them into creeks or coves, wherever they may take shelter. It was a sight of great beauty and no small interest, and the highest aristocracy of the city and its vicinity derived as much pleasure from watching the vast flotilla of fishing-boats moving seaward from the shore, as though it had been the gayest and most brilliant regatta ever planned for their amusement. The semi-annual commencement of the great herring fishery at the Claddagh is always a scene of public interest, and for that day, at least, the citizens are proud of their marine suburb and the gallant show it makes.

Some of our party on the hill would willingly have walked along by the sea-shore under pretence of enjoying the fineness of the day and the beauty of the scene, but Fitzstephen had an appointment, it appeared, which demanded his speedy return to town, and his mother all at once remembered some shopping which must be done that afternoon. It is probable that if Giles had consented to remain, the shopping might not have been of such pressing moment, but when he was willing to resign the fair Emily to the paternal arm, the good lady had no inducement to stay behind.

The short winter's day was drawing to a close, and the Claddagh women had all betaken them-

selves to the preparation of the evening meal, although there was little chance of "the bread winners" being back "in any time to eat it." They were all busily engaged, however, in their culinary avocations, when Vara Halliday and her granddaughter might have been seen conferring together at the east end of the village, being that nearest the city. They were both wrapped in large woollen shawls thrown over the head and partly shading the face. Maureen had on her best merino dress, of a dark crimson color, and her small feet, plainly visible, were encased in prunella boots, a thing by no means in common use amongst even the belles of the Claddagh. It was pretty evident that the girl was attired with more care than usual, and her grandmother, moving back a step or two, surveyed her with a look of mingled pride and fondness that one could hardly expect from so stern a nature.

"Well, acushla!" said the old woman, "you had best be goin' anyhow. It's one thing they can't make little of you as you stand—my own darlin' needn't hang her head afore the best lady in Galway town. But listen hither, avourneen! Noddy tells me they have *his* picture somewhere in the house—if we could only get a sight of it, I'd be well pleased—I'd know him anywhere I'd see him, and Noddy says it's the born image of him. Maybe some of the sarvants 'id get us a peep at it some time when the quality's out of the way."

"Maybe so, granny!—I'm sure I'd have a wish to

see it myself on account of hearin' so much about the gentleman."

"Don't ask the madam, anyhow!" said Vara, calling after Maureen; "just say as little as you can. When she asks to see the cross, show it to her, an' mind you turn your back while she's lookin' at it. An' another thing, Maureen! see an' be nice an' mannerly, an' not let the lady have it to say that Randal More's daughter didn't know how to behave herself decently. God bless you, avourneen! I'll be in, God willin', about an hour after dark, an' you'll find me waitin' at Noddy Kinshela's below! I declare to my heart, here's Nanno, creepin' along like a snail!"

"Run! run and bring her back, granny," said Maureen walking rapidly on; "I wouldn't have her follow me, poor thing! for a mint o' money!"

"Vara!" said the child, as she and the old woman trotted along together, "I'd like to go with Maureen—maybe she'll see the fair lady with the curled hair."

"What lady is that, alanna machree?—sure there's many a lady like that in Galway town."

"Oh, why! sure I mean the purty lady that came in the coach that Sunday with the dark gentleman—oh! I'd like to see that lady, for all she never looks at poor Nanno."

"Well! I don't think Maureen 'll see her this time, anyhow. But listen to me, Nanno," and the old woman bent down over the child; "Maureen

was at your house last night, an' I'd wish to know what passed betwixt herself an' Shan."

"There didn't much pass, then, that I seen," said the little girl, with an air of recollection that sat strangely enough on one of her years; "my granny done her best to get Maureen to talk, but she wouldn't, all she could do, when onst Shan came in. When Maureen was goin' away, Shan said he'd leave her a piece—an' when he came back a good little while after, you'd think he wasn't the same man he looked so joyful."

"Do you tell me so, Nanno?" ejaculated Vara, in a tone of astonishment.

"Well, I do, then—an'—stoop your head lower Vara!"

Vara took the child up in her arms, and then she whispered: "He asked me how I'd like to have Maureen come an' live with us."

"He did now?"

"He did, indeed!—them's the very words he said, an' then he began to talk to my granny in the Sassenach tongue, so I couldn't know what he was sayin'. Oh! *wouldn't* I be glad if Maureen 'id come to our house!"—and the elfin child clapped her little hands with exuberant glee; "still an' all—" she stopped.

"What were you goin' to say, achorra?"

"Well! it jist came into my head about somebody else that maybe wouldn't like it over well."

"If it's Brian you mane, darlin', you might swear that!"

"No, it isn't Brian I mane, but—look! look! Vara, isn't that some o' the boat's comin' in?"

"I delare to my sins but it is, child! an' I must hurry home to get the supper, maybe it's Randal himself."



CHAPTER XV.

MRS. FITZSTEPHEN'S elegant parlor was a scene altogether new and strange to Maureen O'Hara, and during the few moments that she was obliged to wait, she was busily occupied taking notes of what she saw. The approaching interview she looked forward to with anything but pleasure, having a very natural dread of the presence of "a lady." It may be here premised that in Ireland, as in all the other old countries, ladies are by no means so common as they are on this western side of the Atlantic. There certain properties are required to constitute a *lady*; for instance, birth and breeding, with the accident of *fortune*—the latter, in Ireland especially, is not absolutely necessary, but the two former are, to a certain extent, and one of them, viz.: breeding or education, is so essential to the character, that failing it, the other two are comparatively valueless. The term, indeed, in those older countries, has a signification—a positive meaning—which in this New World is wholly lost sight of, and the consequence is that it is here falling into disuse and the general term *woman* applied as more honorable and more distinctive.*

* In Ireland or any other European country, you would never hear of "the lady next door who takes in washing," "the young lady who does the chamber-work," or "the gentleman round the corner who mends boots."

To Maureen's simple mind, then, "a lady" was a great personage, placed at an awful distance above her in the social scale, and, moreover, she had early imbibed so exalted an idea of the Fitzstephen elevation generally that each member of the family was surrounded with a halo of dignity. Being introduced to the interior of their dwelling in no wise lessened, but rather increased this feeling, and it was, therefore, with a sort of mysterious awe that the young Claddagh girl awaited the entrance of Mrs. Fitzstephen. When she did make her appearance there was something so affable, so free and easy, as it were, in her demeanor, that a very few minutes sufficed to restore to Maureen a portion of that modest, and yet firm self-reliance which was natural to her.

In the short conversation which took place, an unforeseen difficulty arose. Neither spoke enough of the other's language to convey or receive much information. The advantage was on the side of Maureen, who knew more of the English tongue than Mrs. Fitzstephen did of hers.

"I understand you have got a cross," said the lady, going right into the subject, "which was given your grandmother by a Spanish gentleman."

"I have the cross, ma'am!—you like to see it—to see if you know it!"

Maureen drew the relic from her bosom, and snapping asunder the black cord on which it hung

handed it to Mrs. Fitzstephen who at sight of it turned pale and her hand trembled as she took it.

"Ah! my God!" she sighed as she sank on a seat with her eyes fixed on the little silver crucifix, a curious specimen of antique workmanship; "ah, my God! it is indeed the same! his heart must have been overflowing with gratitude when he gave that, for I know—I know he valued it highly. Ah Juan! friend! companion of my happy youth! never, never forgotten! why did I not know that you were so near me—sick, lonely and deserted!—oh! that I had but known—even Arnold Fitzstephen could not have objected—for shame he could not—to my ministering to you then?" She had forgotten for a moment the presence of Maureen, till a slight noise made by the latter caused her to start, and then checking by a sudden effort the tears which were falling thick and fast from her eyes, she said without raising her eyes:

"Girl! this belonged to a dear friend of mine—will you sell it?"

"No, ma'am!" said Maureen, with a hauteur that made the lady glance toward her in surprise; "no, ma'am! I give it to you, but not for money—it was *given* to us, we wouldn't *sell* it."

"Do you mean to say, my girl! that you will make me a present of it?"

"Yes, ma'am, my granny said so and I'm willing."

"Well, really, I am at a loss how to thank you.

It is a thing I could not expect from strangers. I am deeply sensible of your kindness, and would wish to do something in return, if possible!"

"Oh ma'am!" said Maureen with a smile, "the Claddagh people have a liking for you all—Mr. Fitzstephen is a good friend to the Claddagh. We can't do much, but we know our friends. I'll be goin', if you please, ma'am, for it 'll be dark very soon."

"But, Maureen!" said Mrs. Fitzstephen, rising with difficulty from her seat, "is there nothing I can do for you—nothing at all?—I want to do something, if you'll only allow me."

"There is something, ma'am! but I'm afeard it's too much to ask!"

"Tell me, my child! what it is!—fear not to ask, for I promise beforehand to grant your request."

"Well, ma'am!" said Maureen, "somebody told my granny about a picture—a picture of him that gave the cross—and——"

"And what?"

"I'd like to see it—if it was pleasin'," said Maureen, timidly.

"And is that all? Certainly, child, you shall see it. Come with me, but mind you make as little noise as you can going up stairs."

At the bottom of the wide staircase Maureen stopped and was taking off her shoes. She never could go up with such shoes, she said. Mrs. Fitzstephen was in no laughing mood and yet she could

hardly keep from smiling. But still she did preserve her gravity, and succeeded in convincing Maureen that it was only necessary for her to wipe her feet on the mat. She then conducted her to the drawing-room, and having pointed out Juan's picture, whispered that she would leave her alone for a few minutes.

The few minutes, as it happened, turned out to be a full half-hour, or more, but Maureen did not mind the lapse of time, for if the parlor had excited her admiration, the drawing-room filled her with amazement. Her imagination had never conceived anything so grand, so beautiful as the scene around her; and as she gazed on the rich furniture, the countless ornaments of taste and value, the gorgeous colors of the Persian carpet, the graceful drapery of the windows, and all the rare trifles which go to make up the decorations of a modern drawing room, she almost believed herself transported to another world—such a world as little Nanno used to dream of. At last her eye returned to that Spanish portrait, and her lips parted with a bright smile, and her dark eyes beamed with sportive animation, as it were, reflecting the character of the sunny face on the canvass.

"Well! I'm sure it's no wonder she loved him—that Miss Ellie!" she said, within herself; "Miss Ellie, indeed!—sure I partly guessed who it was all along—avoch! avoch! wasn't he mighty pleasant an' well-favored!—I'm thinkin', Master Spaniard,

your purty face was not always as bright as that—bad manners to them eyes of yours, but they'd make me laugh whether I would or no!"

Having given sufficient attention to the picture which she had been so anxious to get a sight of, Maureen moved stealthily on—as though fearful of detection—to another portrait and then to another, making her comments on each, sometimes half audibly, till at length she reached that of Arnold Fitzstephen, and there she stopped. A sudden change came over her beautiful features—a glow, as it were, of glad surprise; she clasped her hands together and stood looking up into the pictured face with a dreamy, thoughtful air that was neither sad nor joyful, though it partook of both. The light was, by this time, waxing faint, giving a shadowy, misty look to the dark face on the canvass, and Maureen felt as though the eyes were animated, yet she shrank not from their cold, fixed stare. Like the basilisk that picture attracted her she knew not why, and though her cheek lost its rich hue, and her lustrous eyes grew dim and glassy, still she looked on.

All at once she started, blushed, and trembled; between her and the portrait glided the living form of Giles Fitzstephen, his fine face radiant with smiles and his hand outstretched to greet Maureen. Almost mechanically she gave him her hand, though it was withdrawn almost as soon as given.

"I don't believe I ought to shake hands with

you here," he said, "when you have more than once refused to shake hands with *me* in the Claddagh. I see you are surprised by my sudden appearance—I have no time now to explain it, for my mother will be here in a few minutes. Tell me only, Maureen! why I found you gazing so earnestly on that picture—my father's?"

"Your father's," Maureen repeated, slowly, her eyes again rivetted on the picture; "so it's your father's, sir!—well! I don't know—there's something in that face that I like to look at. Oh yes! I could look at that for hours!"

Fitzstephen turned for a moment to the window before he spoke again, and when he did speak his voice was low and tremulous. "And what is there in that face to attract one so young, so full of life? It is a dark face, Maureen! dark, and stern, and cold, there is passion there," he added in a still lower tone, as if to himself; "but *you* cannot see it, Maureen! why do you like that picture more than the others?"

"Well! I can't tell you that, sir!—maybe it's because I'm fond of the dark lonesome night, and the storm, and the thunder,—I like them better than what's bright an' sunny. But that's a fine picture all out!—wisha, Mister Fitzstephen! wasn't your father mighty like yourself?"

"Or rather *I*'m mighty like my father," said Fitzstephen, with that smile which gave such a singular charm to his countenance; "but never

mind the picture now, Maureen! I wanted to speak to you for the last time about the fishery. You think there is no hope of our succeeding?"

At the same time he took a seat near a window, and motioned for Maureen to take one at some distance. Maureen, however, remained standing, being unwilling to sit in such a place and in such a presence. She also moved nearer the door, so that in the deepening twilight, her figure alone was visible.

"Well! I don't know, your honor!—there's some of them beginnin' to come round a little, an' them we thought the worst, too."

"Why, how is that, Maureen? Does your father begin to hear reason?"

"Oh no! sir, my father's just the same as ever—you know he forbid me ever to speak to him again about it, so I daren't do it after that—oh! no, sir, it's Shan Driscoll I mean!"

Fitzstephen started to his feet. "Shan Driscoll!" he exclaimed, "can it be possible?—and pray Maureen, how did you bring *him* round, him of all people?"

"Well! sir, it wasn't me that brought him round, at all, only when he seen me so eager for it he began to soften a bit—poor Shan did, sir! an' he said—he said—" she paused, fingered at her shawl, and looked down, although she need not have done so, for there was hardly a gleam of light remaining.

wanted to speak
the fishery. You
saying?"

near a window,
one at some dis-
tance standing, be-
cause and in such a
the door, so that
figure alone was

or!—there's some
a little, an' them

Does your fath-

the same as ever—
speak to him again
that—oh! no, sir,

"Shan Driscoll!"
?—and pray Mau-
round, him of all

brought him round,
eager for it he be-
gan did, sir! an' he
glared at her shawl,
she need not have
y a gleam of light

"Go on!" said Fitzstephen, in an imperious tone,
"what *did* he say?"

"I'm not goin' to tell you now, Mister Fitz-
stephen!" said Maureen, proudly; "what right have
you to order me that way?"

Before any answer could be returned, the door
was flung open and Mrs. Fitzstephen entered with a
lighted candle in her hand with which she lit an
astral lamp on the centre table. The light flashed
full on Maureen's face and figure, but the other
occupant of the room was still in shade.

"My poor child!" said she, "how cruel it was of
me to forget you so long—it is true it is only about
twenty minutes or so, but still you being all alone,
and standing, too!—bless me, Maureen! why did
you not sit down?"

"She was not alone *all* the time, madam," said
Fitzstephen, laughing; "every one is not so forgetful
as *you*."

Mrs. Fitzstephen started at the sound of her son's
voice: "Why, Giles, you do astonish me," she
said, turning towards him; "I am sure I had no idea
when I told you who was in the drawing-room that
you were going in. You said you were in a great
hurry to join the girls!"

"Well! you see I changed my mind—on second
thoughts I came to the conclusion that I would see
Maureen, before she left, in order to ascertain how the
admiral's pulse beats."

His mother looked him steadily in the face for a

moment, but there was nothing there that could at all tend to strengthen her suspicion, if suspicion she had. Calm and self-possessed was Giles Fitzstephen as he returned his mother's fixed gaze, and it was with a feeling of relief that the lady turned to Maureen, who had been a silent observer of the scene which she was, however, very far from understanding.

"Maureen! my good girl!" said Mrs. Fitzstephen, "you have conferred a favor on me which I can never, never forget. You have refused money in lieu of what you gave me—can I do nothing for you?"

"Nothing at all, madam," said Maureen, quickly; "thanks be to God we want for nothing. But I think it's time I was makin' my way home."

Mrs. Fitzstephen requested her to wait a moment, and going over to her son asked him in a low voice what she ought to do. "Do you think," said she, "the girl would like to be employed about the house? Margaret and Charlotte could teach her a great many useful things, and she could just wait on them. I should think such a situation would be very pleasant for her."

"For your life, mother, don't hint at service to her!" said Fitzstephen, eagerly, in the same low tone; "you don't know how proud these people are, and Maureen—oh mother! look at her—did nature intend that girl for a servant?—no! no! the fire of intelligence is in her eyes—stately she is, and no

wonder, for she has all her young life ruled as a queen—knowledge she must have, but not here—not to this house, mother, shall she ever come as a servant!" Then, changing his tone, he added with a smile, "I should not like to hear you mention such a thing to her father or grandmother."

"Well, upon my word, Giles, you speak strangely——"

"Maureen," interrupted Fitzstephen, raising his voice to its natural pitch, "Maureen is my accredited agent in the Claddagh—everything there would go wrong without her."

"Well, child, you may go now," said Mrs. Fitzstephen coldly, "but are you not afraid to go home alone?"

"No, ma'am, not the least, but anyhow, my granny's to meet me at Noddy Kinshela's. Good night, ma'am!" and she dropped a low curtesy. "A good night to you, Mister Fitzstephen!"

"Good night, Maureen! but how do you think you are going to get out? I suppose, mother, you don't want any of the servants to see your visitor."

A freezing negative was the answer, but Mrs. Fitzstephen motioning for her son to remain behind, conducted Maureen herself to the hall-door, and telling her to come some other time and see her, she let her out into the street. Returning to the drawing-room, fully determined to have some serious talk with her son, she was much surprised to find him already gone. Leaving her to "chew the cud of

sweet and bitter fancy" in the luxurious solitude of her own chamber, we will, with the reader's leave, follow Maureen.

Her thoughts as she left the Fitzstephen mansion were anything but pleasant. She had noticed, and now keenly felt the coldness displayed by Mrs. Fitzstephen during the latter part of their interview, and could not help contrasting it with the kindly warmth of her previous demeanor. Unable otherwise to account for the sudden change, she was forced to believe it owing to something which Mr. Fitzstephen had said, and she was just thinking with a burning cheek: "It's long then before I'd say anything again *him*," when Fitzstephen himself was at her side.

"Maureen!" said he, in a low, hurried tone, that was, however, both deep and earnest; "Maureen! I want to know what it was that Shan Driscoll said—tell me quickly, for I cannot be seen with you here—don't refuse me now, Maureen!"

"Well, I won't refuse you, sir, when you ask me as you ought—he said if I'd consent to—to——"

"To what, Maureen?"

"To marry him, your honor, that he'd take to the trawling himself, and he'd engage he'd soon get my father and the rest to do the same."

"Ha! I thought so—and what—what did you say, Maureen! Of course, you consented, and—and we are to have it all our own way—is it not so, Maureen?"

"Well! I don't know that it is, sir!—but still then my father's at me, too——"

"And your grandmother—a host in herself—eh?"

"No, no, sir, my granny's all for Brian Kineely—she says my mother's ring 'ill never go on my finger, if I take any one else—I'm sure," she added with touching sincerity, "it's not easy for me to please them all——"

"And yourself at the same time," said the deep, low voice at her side.

"Oh! as to myself, your honor, it isn't much matter—but arn't you glad to hear, sir, that Shan's comin' round—before now, he'd a'most knock one down that 'id speak of trawling."

"Maureen!" said Fitzstephen, "stop one moment!" for they had just reached Noddy's dilapidated dwelling; "will you do one thing for me?"

"I don't know, your honor, until I hear what it is."

"Will you just drop this trawling business altogether, never say another word about it to any one?"

Maureen turned her face toward him, and endeavored, as well as the dim starlight would permit, to read his countenance. As that was impracticable, she merely replied:

"If you wish it, I will, sir, but I thought you were bent on it."

"So I am, Maureen!" He stepped through the

ruined doorway into the court, and the girl mechanically followed. Once screened by the walls from the observation of the passers-by, Fitzstephen resumed: "I have made up my mind to wait no longer."

"And how will you mend yourself, sir?" said Maureen, with sudden animation.

"It would be no use to tell you now, Maureen. It might only bring blame on you hereafter, if you knew it beforehand. I'll only say another word before I go. The Claddagh men are obstinate, Maureen, when even *you* could not move them, but they shall find others as obstinate as themselves, and so you may tell them from me. I will do them good against their will, and they will thank me in days to come. Farewell, Maureen! we meet no more as we have met—such underhand doings, longer continued, would not serve either of us."

"Mr. Fitzstephen!" said Maureen, earnestly, and for the first time in her life she laid her hand on his arm, evidently forgetful of what she was doing; "Mr. Fitzstephen! take the advice of one who wishes you well—don't meddle with the Claddagh men! don't an' you'll have *my* blessing!"

Fitzstephen took hold very gently of the hand that rested on his arm, and pressed it between his own. For a moment it seemed as if he were about to set Maureen's mind at ease, but the struggle was only momentary, and dropping her hand as it were coldly, he said in a low but determined tone:

"It cannot be, Maureen!—fare you well! I owe you many thanks for all your trouble, and although it has proved unsuccessful, I thank you none the less."

He was gone before Maureen could utter the cutting retort that rose to her lips, but she muttered it to herself, as she stood looking after his retiring form:

"So you are all alike, you gentlefolk. Kind mother for you to make light of anything that's done for you. You'll turn on the boys, will you?—ha! ha! you'll get the worst of it, if you do—that's one comfort! I'm sure it's well rid I am of you, appearin' to me like a ghost every time I went out after nightfall!—there's more than me will be pleased, I'm thinking!"

With a heart full of mingled emotions which she could not, herself, have analyzed, Maureen raised the latch of "Noddy's Castle" with a tolerably composed "God save all here!" which was promptly responded to by the hostess.

"Why what in the wide world kept you so long, Maureen?" said her grandmother, sharply; "I was afeard something happened you."

Noddy said nothing, but she looked significantly at Maureen as though she could have answered if she would. Maureen's reply amazed them both.

"I'll tell you what it is now, granny," said she "if you ever want a message sent to them quality you can go yourself, or send Noddy that has such

a liking for them. My heart's sick of them, so it is!"

The two old women looked at each other in mute surprise. Noddy, especially, could hardly believe her ears. "Why, Maureen, in the name o' goodness, what's wrong with you?"

"Oh, then, sorra thing's wrong with me," said Maureen, with a strange hysterical laugh, "only that I don't like the ways of your grand friends, an' I'll have nothing more to do with them."

"Did you see Mrs. Fitzstephen?" asked her grandmother, anxious, if possible, to get at the cause of the girl's nervous excitement.

"See her! to be sure I did, an' I gave her the cross, an' she made ever so much to do about it, but mighty little about me. I asked her to let me see the picture, an' she takes me up to a great grand room on the loft above, an' well becomes her she leaves me there all alone an' goes off with herself somewhere, an' sorra sight I seen of her for as good as half an hour, an' it dark night on the ground."

"Well?"

"Well, Mr. Fitzstephen came in while she was gone, an' he took a start out of myself, only I didn't let him see that I was frightened, an' he got a questionin' me about things, an' when his mother came back with a light, she said she forgot all about me, but when she seen her son there, my dears! she was ever so angry with him, an' she could scarce afford myself a civil word, an' I declare I thought I'd

never get my heels out o' the house—so I came off an' left them——”

She paused and hesitated, then went to the door and looked out, and asked her grandmother if they hadn't best be moving home.

“Time enough, astore! time enough—so you left them there, and that's all!”

“No! it wasn't all!—Mr. Fitzstephen overtook me before I was far from the house, an' was with me to the door——”

Vara started to her feet, and a lurid light shot from her eyes: “Ha! I knew it!” said she—“I knew it all along. But he had best keep his distance for the time to come, or I'll—I'll raise the town about him.”

“Granny!” said Maureen, coldly, “don't put yourself in a passion about nothing at all. Mr. Fitzstephen was about his own business every time he came after me, an' to-night it was just the same. But the business is all a one-side now—at least he says so—an' so I may tell you before Noddy Kinshela. He was all along wantin' me to coax my father an' the boys to try the trawlin'—he said if they would they'd soon be rich themselves an' serve *him* well too. Now, granny! there's the whole of it.”

“Well! I partly suspected *that*, Maureen!” said the old woman, considerably cooled down; “but will you put your hand on your heart now, and say again that that was all that ever passed between you?”

Noddy moved silently from her seat near the fire and stationed herself a little behind Vara, where she had a full view of Maureen's face. It was pale, but calm and composed, and the beautiful eyes steadily encountered the double scrutiny that pierced to their very depths.

"I tell you again, granny! that Mr. Fitzstephen never spoke to me about anything but what I tell you—at least he never said anything that—that I could take ill."

"Well! well, child! I never knew you to say what wasn't true, but I'm glad there's goin' to be no more such work, an' while you live again, achora machree! never listen to the likes of *him* in private. I'm old and you're young, Maureen, an' I tell you no good can come of the like——"

A heavy sigh from Noddy smote on Maureen's ear, and great was the girl's surprise to see her old friend's eyes suffused with tears.

"Why, my goodness, Noddy! what's the matter with you?" she said, gaily; "I thought you were goin' to give us a cup of tea before we start, but I think you're forgettin' all about it."

But Noddy was not oblivious to the tea which was already in a state of preparation, and although Vara was unwilling to wait, she could not get over Maureen's wild gaiety, and her laughing determination to have a cup of Noddy's tea before she went. "Sure we'll drink Brian's health in it, granny!" she added, with an arch smile that, together

with the gracious words, delighted her admiring duenna.

"Ah! then, that's true," said Vara, "did I tell you, Maureen, that poor Brian had to put in again he got so sick?"

"Why *no*, granny, you did not," and Maureen's cheek turned ashy white; "Lord bless us! what ails him?"

"I don't know, avourneen, I don't know, but it's all in his head, whatever it is. Poor More is frightened out of her wits about him, an' no wonder she would, for a better boy never broke the world's bread!"

"What are you about, Maureen?" said Noddy, seeing her drawing her shawl around her.

"I'm going home, Noddy, where else?—it isn't here I ought to be when Brian Kneely's sick, without e'er a one to mind him but his poor old granny that's like a child herself. Granny, aren't you comin'?"

"God's blessin' on your tender heart, avourneen!" was Vara's fervent prayer, as bidding Noddy good night, they set out together.

"It's the *hard* heart I'd have, granny, if I didn't feel for *him*, for there's no one in this wide world would have more feelin' for me if anything ailed me. Hurry, granny, hurry!"

None of the other fishermen got home till the next morning, and Maureen and her grandmother spent the night in Brian's cottage—to the great

comfort and relief of both its inmates. It was a heavy cold of a catarrhal form that had been hanging on Brian for some days, and his malady was so much increased by the keen sharp air of the sea that morning, that the young man had not been many hours out before he was forced to return home. He was hot, restless and feverish all night, but happily never lost his senses, and the presence of Maureen made him forget his pain. Nectar never was so sweet, so soothing to the Olympian deities as the mint tea prepared and given by Maureen's hand to Brian Kineely, and when she raised his aching head on her arm to administer the potion, he felt as though he could have wished to die then and there with those pitying eyes looking down upon him, and that heart for whose love he would have given worlds, softened thus to tenderness—for him.

Many were the joyful nods and winks exchanged between the two old women, as they marked the untiring solicitude of Maureen, but Maureen's own thoughts and feelings were a mystery to all, even Brian himself.



CHAPTER XVI.

By noon the next day Brian Kineely was so much better that Vara pronounced him out of danger, "if he only took proper care of himself, an' didn't make too free." Towards evening he got out of bed, and sat by the fire while his grandmother crouching on the hearth watched the progress of a certain pottage intended for their evening meal. All at once the latch was raised, and who, of all people, should step in but Shan Driscoll. He had come, he said, to inquire after Brian, and when invited by More to take a seat, complied with the utmost alacrity. He appeared to feel sorry for Brian's illness, wondered to find him "so much pulled down," and asked More what she had given him to cure him so soon.

"Well! the sorra thing *I* gave him, at all, at all, Shan!" replied the old woman, in her wheezing voice; "it was Vara and Maureen that doctored him betwixt them, an' glory be to God for it! they've brought him around finely. The two o' them sat up with him last night, an' I declare if he was their own a thousand times over they couldn't do more for him than they did."

Brian's eye was on Shan, at the moment, and he could see a dark shadow settling on his brow as he listened. The blood left his cheek, then rushed

back again, crimsoning cheek and brow, and the glance which he cast on Brian was like the lurid flash bursting from the storm-darkened sky.

"It's little wonder you got over it so soon," said he, with suppressed anger; "it's you that has the knack of gettin' sick in the right time, Brian Kineely!"

"Sickness comes and goes when God pleases, Shan!" said Brian whose natural gentleness was increased by bodily weakness; "but anyhow I'm thankful to you for comin' to see me."

"Oh! never mind the thanks," said Shan, doggedly; "I want you to get well soon, so as to be able to dance at my weddin'."

"Your weddin'?" questioned Brian with some surprise, "an' when is *it* to be?"

"Well! I can't tell you that—I must ask herself first."

"An' who is *herself*, if it's no harm to ask?" There was a tremor in Brian's voice that did not escape the other's notice, and he smiled maliciously as he answered:

"Why, *who* would *it* be, Brian Kineely? You know well enough there's but *one* in the Claddagh that I'd put a ring on."

Brian turned pale—pale as death. "Why, sure it can't be"—he gasped for breath, "sure it *can't* be Maureen!" The tone, the look, the gesture betrayed the gaping wound that Brian would fain have concealed.

"Sure who else would it be, aviek?" said Shan, with cruel mockery. "We've everything a'most settled barrin' the day—but what's wrong with you, Brian?"

"Nothing, nothing!—granny!" raising his voice to reach her dulled hearing, "I'll take some of that drink Maureen left for me!" A sudden faintness had come over him and he leaned back against the jamb wall. Shan, forgetting for a moment all bitter feelings, snatched the tin cup from the trembling hand of More and held it to Brian's lips. Instead of taking it, the young man raised his languid eyes to his rival's face, and murmured:

"Not from you, Shan! not from you! you've torn away the heart from within me, an' you want me to drink my own heart's blood!—no! I tell you no!—give it to my granny an' let me alone!"

The vehemence with which Brian spoke startled even Shan, and made the old woman stare from one to the other in wild affright. Her obtuse faculties had failed to detect anything unusual in the demeanor of the two young men towards each other, and as former scenes now flashed upon her mind she turned on Shan with the glare of impotent wrath. Just then the door opened and in came Maureen Dhu, her eyes beaming with the kindest sympathy, and the bloom of the healthful breeze glowing on her cheek. She was somewhat surprised on seeing Shan, but his presence made no difference in her treatment of Brian. Taking the cup from More's

hand she bent down and held it to his lips till he quenched his thirst, then softly inquired how he felt. Brian's eyes filled with tears, and his heart was too full for words. Shan was galled to the quick, for Maureen had hardly noticed him.

"I think *I'll* get sick next," said he in an ironical tone, "till I see how people will nurse *me*."

"Don't grudge me this poor comfort, Shan," said Brian, with sudden animation; "won't you have her always—*always*—to comfort *you*?"

"What's that you say, Brian?" cried Maureen, raising herself up with a kindling eye.

"Ask Shan there—*he* can tell you."

Maureen turned quickly, and fixed a glance of haughty inquiry on Shan that made him quail for the moment.

"I was only jokin' when I said it, Maureen!"

"Well, mind I tell you, never make such a joke again, Shan Driscoll!—you an' me are two—and we'll be so, please God!"

The lofty contempt with which Maureen uttered these words cut Shan to the heart, yet his fierce and proud nature would not suffer either grief or mortification to appear. Drawing his tall form to its fullest height, he returned Maureen's look with one equally imperious.

"With all my heart, Maureen O'Hara I never say it twice!—the girl that can find a mate in *him*," pointing contemptuously to Brian, "is no match for Shan Driscoll. It was no joke after all, Brian

Kineely, for whatever notion she had in her head, she as good as gave in to marry me, an' that only a couple of nights ago. But now, I'll leave her to you, an' much good may she do you! Give us your hand, old woman!" (to More) "I gave you an unlucky blow onst, but I know you forgave me long ago. God be with you all! an' I hope you'll take care of yourself, Brian!—good people's scarce, you know!"

"Wisha what's your hurry, Shan?" said More, who by no means understood what was going on; "can't you sit and rest you? sure it's altered times with you, if Maureen frightens you away!"

A derisive laugh was Shan's answer, and a contemptuous glance at Maureen and Brian as he passed them to the door.

What strange impulse was it that brought Maureen so far out of her way home half-an-hour after as to pass Shan Driscoll's door, and why did she stop, when she saw Shan himself stretched at full length on the bench outside, his face buried in his folded arms? No sigh or groan escaped him, but there he lay motionless and silent, as if death had stilled the pulses of that impetuous heart.

As Maureen stood there, but a few yards distant, her mind involuntarily placed before her what Shan Driscoll was wont to be—what he would still be but for her. She thought how many girls in the village were ambitious for a glance from the eyes that ever dwelt on her with fond devotion, and murmuring to

herself "It's little I thought to see you this way, Shan, after the anger that was on you a while ago!" she unconsciously moved a few steps nearer, with words of kindness on her lip, when between her and the recumbent form of Shan glided a figure whose noble proportions and stately bearing were not to be mistaken, any more than the pale, stern countenance which confronted Maureen in the dim and misty moonlight. A strange sensation tingled through Maureen's frame. Her very heart was chilled, and her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth so that she could not utter a word, although she tried hard to get out an exclamation of surprise. And there before her at the distance of a few feet stood the statue-like figure with its glassy eyes—oh, how changed! fixed on her own, and the cold impassable face, unwarmed by the breath of life. Faint and sick at heart, with an undefinable sense of awe, Maureen would have fallen to the ground had not Shan started up, at the moment, as though actuated by some sudden emotion. Who can picture his astonishment when he beheld Maureen standing motionless within a few feet of him, her eyes fixed on vacancy, as it seemed, and no tinge of color in that cheek which half an hour before bloomed like the rose.

"Why, then, Maureen," he cried, approaching her, "is it you that's in it, at all?"

At the sound of his voice the girl began to revive. Drawing a long breath, she felt the glow of

life returning to her fear-chilled frame, but still she could not speak.

Shan was alarmed, he knew not why. "Maureen!" he said, taking her unresisting hand, "Maureen, pulse of my heart! why don't you speak to me?—what are you lookin' at, Maureen?—speak to me, astore machree! if it's only one word! I can't bear to see you that way!"

"Don't you see him, Shan?" whispered Maureen, in a thrilling tone.

"See who, darlin'?—I see no one but you—an' I want to see no other, surely!"

Maureen heaved a deep sigh and then raised her eyes to Shan's face with a look that made his heart swell with joyful emotion. She was evidently recovering the use of her faculties.

"Didn't you see Mr. Fitzstephen?" she asked, still in a low whisper.

"Mr. Fitzstephen?" repeated Shan; "why, Lord bless me, no!—where is he——"

"He's gone now, but he was here a minute ago—just on that spot!——"

"Lord save us!"

"Come with me, Shan!" said Maureen, faintly, "there's a weakness on meso that I can hardly stand—it was his fetch I seen, I know well!"

Shan was of the same opinion but he affected to think it all imagination, and even went so far as to laugh at Maureen's nervous fears. At heart he was nearly as frightened as herself for brave and light-

hearted as he was, he had an overwhelming dread of the supernatural. But it would never do to let Maureen see his trepidation.

"*Fetch here or fetch there,*" said he, with a forced laugh, "I'd advise him to keep from betwixt you an' me, Maureen! But that's true, how did yourself come there? Sure *you're* no fetch, anyhow!"

There was the slightest possible embarrassment in Maureen's manner as she replied: "I was goin' over to your house to see Aileen and the child—won't you come in, Shan?" They had just reached her father's door, and the hum of cheerful voices from within gave strength and courage to Maureen. Of course the invitation was not to be refused, and the hearty welcome which greeted Shan on every side made his heart bound and his eyes sparkle, especially when he found himself seated next to Maureen by a good natured sign from her father. One would naturally expect that the recent apparition would have been the first thing told to ears which ever opened eagerly to the marvellous, but no such thing. Maureen merely mentioned having met Shan at Brian Kineely's, and strange to say, neither one nor the other alluded to what had blanched the cheek and disturbed the very soul of each.

That same night, and it might be about the same hour, Giles Fitzstephen and his sister Margaret sat together in the front parlor of their dwelling, engaged in conversation on what appeared to be some topic of absorbing interest, judging from the in-

pressive seriousness of the brother, and the unusual agitation of the sister. It was seldom that Margaret manifested deep emotion of any kind, for though at all times lively and animated, she had so great control over her feelings that people suspected her of having few or none. Certain it is that whatever sensibility she had was all in connection with self, the affairs of others giving her at any time very little concern. It must be something which concerned her very closely that affected her now so deeply, and it was pitiful to see how her color came and went, and her features worked almost convulsively as she listened to the words which Giles was saying in a calm, deep, earnest tone. How timidly her eyes sank beneath the searching glance that was fixed on her.

"I say again, Margaret, as I said before, that evasion will no longer serve your turn. Captain Hamilton will expect an answer, indeed I promised him one—by to-morrow or next day—and if you are willing to accept his proposal, as I believe you are, I have not the slightest objection, provided you explain to me the mystery in which a certain portion of your life is enveloped. Remember you have no time to lose, for my mother and Charlotte may be in any moment, and then you lose the opportunity which I managed to give you. Speak now, Margaret!—of what are you afraid?"

"Oh Giles! Giles! you of all people—you so stern—I cannot—no, I cannot!"

"Upon my honor, Margaret!" said Fitzstephen, smiling, notwithstanding all his seriousness, "you are more candid than polite this evening—to hear you talk, one would be apt to think me a very tyrant—but I give you my word you shall not find me stern on this occasion. Come! come! let me hear this secret whatever it is—why, Margaret! how strangely moved you are—surely, my sister! it cannot be so very, *very* bad——"

"It *is* bad, Giles! bad and very bad—oh! that I should have to tell it—and to you—still I can do it now better than I could a few weeks since." She looked up with something of her wonted archness.

"And why so, Margaret?"

"Why, because I have found that more than myself have hearts of flesh——"

It was now her brother's turn to change color, and for a moment his eye fell, but it was only for a moment—the emotion passed like a summer cloud and Richard was himself again, calm, cold and passionless. Yet even the momentary confusion he had betrayed was a source of encouragement to Margaret. Rising from her seat she removed the lamp from the centre table to one just behind her, so that her face was in deep shadow, and this done, she felt as though her task was somewhat lightened.

"Giles," said she, after a moment's pause, "I am about to humble myself before you, and I trust the humiliation which I am to undergo may serve to expiate the sins of which I have been guilty. Believe

me, I was not alone to blame. Edmund Behan and myself had hardly one feeling in common, except it might be the desire of outdoing every one else in house, furniture, equipage, dress, and all the other items which go to make up a fashionable 'appearance.' In this, Behan went even beyond me, may the Lord forgive him his sins! and I verily believe every faculty of his being was absorbed in that one passion. Love for me he never really had—he was proud of my personal attractions, just as he was of his horse Brutus and his Dublin carriage and all the rest. I am quite sure he thought fully as much of that set of porcelain vases which he bought at the Marquis of Ely's sale as he did of me or any other human being. This I early discovered, and having, in reality, much more sensibility than the rash judgment of the world gave me credit for, I felt it keenly at first, for I did love Edmund until love became impossible, and even pity was changed into contempt.

The worst of it was, however, that the associates whom he drew around us were ill calculated to make things better. The world at large, seeing no farther than the surface, thought Edmund Behan and his gay wife a very happy couple, because we dashed through thick and thin, and lived in a constant whirl of giddy excitement that left us no room for sober reflection. But there was one who penetrated below the surface, and saw that I, at least, wore a smiling mask before the world, and that there were depths within my heart unseen to mortal eye. Much know-

ledge had he of the world and of human nature; I little, very little, and he applied himself to gain my confidence, knowing well the natural effect of such a connection on a mind so vain, so giddy, and withal so deeply piqued as mine was. He was handsome, witty, and of polished manners—subtle and insidious, yet to all appearance frank and open-hearted. Ah! Giles! I did not know him then—” she stopped, much agitated.

“Margaret!” said her brother, starting suddenly from his quiet attitude of attention, “you *must* mean Richard Dalton—there could not be two such specious villains!”

“Of course I do mean him—him and no other—”

“Then how can you say you didn’t know him?” said Giles, angrily; “did not I myself warn you again and again, to keep him at a distance?”

“Would that I had taken your advice!” These words were half-choked with sobs, yet Margaret’s visible distress had lost its effect on her brother. Stern and more stern grew his face, and when he spoke his voice was thick and husky.

“Say on!” he said, “let me know the worst—and yet—and yet—*Margaret Fitzstephen!* if you have a lower depth of degradation to reveal, be silent. I could not hear of your shame, I think, and live!”

“Giles—brother!” said Margaret, suddenly removing her hands from before her face, and standing up with all the dignity of her proud race; “Brother! of what do you suspect me? Beware of sup-

posing even for a moment that the daughter of Arnold Fitzstephen—I speak not now of religion—could or did forget her lineage!”

“Thank God!” said her brother, fervently; “I can bear anything and everything now—then there is nothing to prevent me from accepting an honorable man’s proposal for you?”

“As to that you shall be the judge. You remember my little girl, the only child I ever had—owing, may the Lord forgive me! to the dissipated life I led—you remember her, of course.”

“Ah! poor Chatty! how could I forget her?” and Fitzstephen’s moistened eyes attested his affectionate remembrance of the little helpless creature, who, during her short existence, he had but seldom seen, for, weak and infirm from her birth, she had been kept out at nurse at so safe a distance from the city that her fashionable parents were never mortified by having her come under the eyes of their estimable associates. “That was the poor forlorn child, and, to tell you the truth, Margaret! I was well pleased when the Lord took her. There were many who considered that she was taken in mercy!”

“Go on, Giles! heap it on plentifully!” said Margaret, with a smile like that which we might imagine on the face of a Red Indian at the stake; “I know I deserve it all, but, as it happened, God was more lenient to me than my fellow-creatures.”

“How is that?”

“I am going to tell you. Now that the wound is

open we may as well probe it to the quick. You know how strenuously you persuaded me to go spend that fatal summer at Arranmore with my little girl. You thought, of course, and so did my mother and every one else, that that was the best plan to get rid of Dalton, and you even condescended, during one of your visits, to congratulate me on having sent my hangers-on adrift. You did not understand the smile with which I listened, and you little thought that I was secretly exulting in the power of my own attractions which could draw the fashionable and admired Dalton after me to the wildest of wild coasts amid the surging waves of the Atlantic. Edmund Behan did not often trouble me. A visit to Arranmore, he used to say, was the greatest bore imaginable, and it always took him a full week to get over the effects of it. But Dalton's visits were frequent, and, I am ashamed to say, but too welcome; for he always brought me a budget of news, some new music, and everything that was most likely to minister to my amusement. He never came, however, without some company, generally that conceited sister of his and their cousin Fred Staunton, both chips of the same block. One day in the early part of October the three of them came down in Staunton's yacht, and I was easily prevailed upon to take my guitar and go out with them for a sail. The gentlemen had brought a flute and a clarinet, and as Honora Dalton and myself both sang, we had quite a pleasant concert of it to the great delight of poor Chatty

whom I had taken with me that day as a special favor. Suddenly, very suddenly, the scene was changed. The weather, which had been remarkably fine for the season, all at once became dark and cloudy, so dark, indeed, that objects were barely discernible. Fierce gusts of wind swept in through the narrow channel between the islands, and the sea boiled and surged around us with fearful fury. Several fishing boats from the Claddagh and from the islands, whose motionless forms we had so lately seen reflected in the calm water, were now drifting to and fro at the mercy of the winds, and our own frail craft, nutshell that it was, danced, and rocked and quivered to every breath of the storm. So sudden was the rise of the tempest that we had not time to go below until the mad waves were tumbling over the deck. We could not even speak, but each one clung to whatever came within reach. The violence of the first shock was so great that it seemed as though destruction awaited us, and occupied solely with the horrible thought that I was about to be hurried before an angry God, I forgot my child. All at once I heard a faint cry, and my heart sank within me for I knew it was her voice. For the first time I missed her. I called her again and again. There was no answer. I dared not let go the post to which I was clinging, but I cried to Dalton that I feared the child was gone. His answer, when he could speak, was very cool. He didn't know but she was, but, of course, it couldn't be helped. It

was every one for himself. Oh my God! the torture of that moment. The sharp pang of remorse that pierced my soul, and the dread, the overwhelming, the annihilating sense of the tremendous judgments of God. I felt, as though like Jonah, I, by my sins, had been the cause of that awful visitation, and I was half-tempted to fling myself into the depths of the sea after my poor unhappy child. Still I hoped she might have crept below before the storm commenced, and I believe it was this hope that saved me from eternal ruin. I never valued the poor child while I had her, but then I felt as though her loss would overwhelm me with sorrow. Faith that had been well nigh dead for years sprang up at once into life and vigor, and I prayed, oh! how fervently! that Mary the Star of the Sea would save me from a death so sudden and unprovided, that I might have time to repair the evil I had done. It could not have been my unworthy prayers that were heard above, yet certain it is that at the moment a stillness came upon the waters, and the dense black clouds above us were rent asunder as by a mighty hand, then sank to the rim of the horizon, leaving the mid-heavens clear and blue. Down I rushed to the little cabin. No Chatty was there—

“Good Heavens, Margaret! she was lost—”

“Ay! lost—lost she was, Giles!—lost in the twinkling of an eye—so it seemed, at least, and amid all the terror and confusion of the moment, the dreadful thought was uppermost that I, by my crim-

inal levity and folly, had drawn down on myself this fearful scourge. You will, doubtless wonder, as I often did since, how it was that I lived through the horrors of that dark hour when I found myself childless—and by my own fault.”

Fitzstephen listened to the sad story with a lowering brow that had little of compassion in its sternness, and when his sister paused here he started and appeared much excited. “And yet you gave us to understand then and ever after that the child died of croup—”

“I did—to my shame I own it—and I took advantage of the rough unsettled weather which lasted for some days to keep the knowledge of what had happened from you all—”

“Yes! I remember how much we admired your considerate kindness in *not* letting us know anything of poor Chatty's death until after she was buried!—ah, Margaret! Margaret!—and the little grave in that lone churchyard near your house which was pointed out to us as hers—”

“And the pretty monument which you—not Behan—placed over it!”

“Why Margaret! you really appear to take it very lightly now, whatever you did at first. This, I take it, is the worst of all—this heartless levity of tone and manner—judging from present appearances, I suppose you soon got over your remorse and—your good resolutions!”

“No, Giles! I did not—heartless or whatever else

I may be, I never got over my remorse—nor broke through my good resolutions—at least as regarded Dalton. From that hour I never received him in Behan's absence, nor gave him the slightest encouragement of any kind. As soon as I possibly could I cut the connection altogether both with him and his sister. I received two letters from him, it is true, since Edmund's death, but both were returned unopened, and he soon gave up the pursuit as hopeless. As for Behan, I am quite sure he was much relieved by the child's death, for he never concealed his unnatural dislike of her, and her infirmity was a constant source of mortification to his vain, egotistical mind."

"Well, really, Margaret! you don't seem overburthened yourself with feeling for her. My opinion is that God was singularly good and merciful in taking her from such unnatural parents." Fitzstephen pronounced these words with unusual asperity, but Margaret's incorrigible levity was proof against all.

"Perhaps so," she said with a light smile and a toss of her head; "I fancy we should have made sad work in the way of education. But now you have 'the head and front of my offending'—what do you think of it? Do you know *I* feel much the better for the confession, and now that it is over, I declare I begin to wonder at myself for being so much afraid of *you* in particular. It is to be hoped that you will report favorably to Hamilton after all!"

"Margaret Behan!" said the brother with touching solemnity, "you have acted in a manner wholly inexcusable—you have been, I tell you plainly, a bad wife—you have been accessory to the death of your own and only child, by going out boating under such circumstances—you practised a grievous imposition on us all by making us believe that the child had died a natural death, but I tell you plainly that your present levity is the worst feature of all, inasmuch as it shows you dead to feeling—dead to remorse. How can you think of that mocking tombstone—that monumental lie—on the bleak island-shore, without a feeling of shame and degradation?"

"*Here lies the body of Charlotte Ellen Behan, aged three years and six months,*" ejaculated Margaret, in a sepulchral tone and with a face corresponding to the lugubrious sentence. Before Giles could give vent to his horror and disgust, his sister had stalked out of the room with a most ghostly air.

"Good God!" said Fitzstephen to himself, as he paced up and down the room in meditative mood, looking as much in sorrow as in anger, "good God! how revolting is this levity!—to repeat the very inscription on the stone in mockery! If Hamilton takes my advice he'll have nothing to do with you, my good lady! Well! really, my penetration has been egregiously at fault in your regard—here I have been giving you credit for mourning in secret—mourning, indeed!—if you did mourn I suppose

it was because you couldn't get another dashing husband with a fortune to get through!"

He was launching out into a fierce invective against the ruinous vortex of fashionable dissipation, when his soliloquy was brought to a close by the entrance of his mother and Charlotte who had been spending the evening at Mr. Hampton's. They were both full of Emily's perfections, Mrs. Fitzstephen especially—Emily's singing, Emily's playing, Emily's drawing as exhibited in the contents of a portfolio on the drawing-room table, Emily's charming manners, and all and each were enthusiastically dwelt upon, until Giles could stand it no longer. He fairly burst out laughing.

"Well, on my word, mother! you would make an excellent matrimonial agent!—assuredly it is not your fault if Emily still bears the honored name of Hampton! There's Charlotte laughing slyly behind her disposed of, and leave Emily Hampton's praises to her father and truly eloquent sister! Seriously, my dearest mother! you will confer a favor on me by doing so—it frets and annoys me to hear *you* blowing the trumpet for those whose fair semblance is as hollow as 'the tinkling brass.' For God's sake—for my sake, let me alone about this piece of painted pasteboard—this heartless, soulless puppet!"

"Giles! Giles!" cried his mother, using her fan at a prodigious rate, although no one but herself felt over warm, "Giles! you are both unjust and un-

grateful—it would be well for Emily if she were only half as blind to your perfections as you are to hers. It is ungenerous of you to speak so harshly of one who, whatever her faults may be, loves you—”

“Loves me!” repeated Fitzstephen with bitter scorn; “say rather that she loves my *position*, and has a yearning after our family honors—such love as her’s is not worth the drop of dew that melts before the first sunbeam—good night! my dear mother!—good night! Charlotte! I have much business on hands for to-morrow and must try to secure a *good night* myself!” With his own peculiar smile he left the room. Not so his mother and Charlotte, who sat talking till the night was far advanced.



CHAPTER XVII.

THE next day was one of uninterrupted sunshine. From early morning till the close of day the Galway waters shone like burnished gold: the river, swollen by the autumn rains, dashed boldly on freighted with the waters of Lough Corrib, and the surface of the basin without heaved and surged and pulsated like a huge thing of life. Multitudes of the finny tribes were sporting in its depths, darting up at times to the surface, their bright scales glittering in the sun's ray amid the sparkling waters. Little fear had they of the numerous craft that flitted to and fro, hither and thither, over the Bay, for they knew well in their piscatorial wisdom that the Claddagh men would not touch one of them that day for love or money. It was set down as an "unlucky day" in the Claddagh, but out in the Bay it was quite the contrary, for the tribes of the deep were free to enjoy the bright sunshine, without fear of net, hook or line. In and about the Claddagh a more than Sabbath stillness reigned. Most of its inhabitants, both men and women, were within doors, or somewhere about their houses, the former washing and scrubbing with that exactness which makes their domestic neatness proverbial, the latter mending and otherwise arranging their fishing-tackle for the morrow's use. Here and there at the quay might be seen

groups, or individuals, as the case might be, repairing and cleaning boats, mending sails, and other such professional jobs, all in that quiet, easy, careless way characteristic of the Claddagh men in a state of repose.

Many of the women were in town disposing of the fish taken on the previous day, and amongst them was Vara Halliday. Maureen was, accordingly, keeping house, and, contrary to her usual custom, she went through her household duties with a dreary, thoughtful air. Silent she was, and sad she appeared to be, starting at times from deep thought and looking around with a half-frightened air as though fearful of seeing some strange sight. She would listen, too, at times, with head erect and hand upraised as though expecting some unwonted sound. Her father and her brothers were all out most of the forenoon, and as soon as they had got their dinner they went off again to the quay, where, they said, "a couple of the boats" were badly in need of repair. Maureen felt relieved when she found herself again alone, but, as the afternoon wore on, her fears, of what kind soever they were, became intolerable. "Well, whatever it is that's on me," she murmured, "I can't stand it any longer, I feel as if something was for draggin' me down to the water side, though I'm sure I have no heart to go anywhere—God save every one from harm this day, for an ill day it is! And, still, sure there is no one in harm's way. I don't know *that*, either—maybe there is—God

knows! at any rate, I'll take a stroll down an' see what's goin' on. Ochone! I wish my granny was home—it 'id be something to have her to talk to. I'd like," she said again, as she wrapped her heavy shawl around her, and took her knitting in her hand, "I'd like to know, now, what's Shan about?" and then she sank again into a deep *reverie*, nor raised her head, even to answer passing salutations, till she had reached the wharf. The sight of the water, and the ships, and nearer, the Claddagh men scattered at work along shore, brought her quickly back to a sense of security, that was probably owing to the life and animation pervading the scene. The Admiral was there hard at work in his shirt sleeves, in defiance of the chill November blast that from time to time curled the bright waters far and near. He and his sons were keel-hauling their best hooker, which lay in a slanting position on the strand. Casting her eyes around in search of Shan, Maureen perceived him sitting, mending sails, at no great distance, with Tom Flaherty and old Ulick Kearnan. Shan's back was turned towards her, and somehow she felt glad that his eye was not on her. It was just as well that he should not know of her being there.

Maureen, with her stocking on her arm, stood for a few minutes near the spot where her father and brothers were at work, her eyes wandering with a half-conscious glance over the sunlit scene, beyond the water, where the blue mountains of Clare

stretched away into shadowy distance, their summits traced on the far horizon in many a graceful curve and tapering cone. But Maureen was not thinking of the fair page of nature's book that lay before her. Other thoughts were in her mind, all tinted with the gloom—the supernatural gloom, attendant on her last night's adventure. All at once, she was roused from her musings by the voice of little Nanno calling out to her with childish glee: "Look, Maureen, only look who's here!"

Turning quickly, Maureen was much surprised to see old Aileen hobbling down to the beach, partly supported by her little grandchild, partly by her stick. It was a strange sight to see the ghastly and withered old crone bent almost double, as it were, sustained by the elfin creature, who was herself bowed down by the weight of her own pitiful infirmity. Aileen's hand rested on the child's misshapen shoulder, and it was easy to see that the pressure gave pain to the gentle creature, for her cheek had a hectic flush all unusual to it, and her large, gazelle-like eyes were filled with tears. Yet on she toddled, bearing up bravely herself and cheering the old woman with many a kind word. Now if Maureen had seen a veritable ghost at the time she could not have been more astounded, for the old woman had not left her bed for many a long day before.

"Wisha, then, Aileen! is it yourself that's in it, at all?" she cried as she hastened to her, and with

much difficulty placed her on a broad stone, or boulder which there rose some feet above the sand. "Sure I thought you weren't fit to put a foot under you."

"Ugh! ugh!—bad manners to you for an ugly cough!" croaked the old woman, "sure I'm fine an' strong the day, Lord be praised! an' we'll not have many such days as this, so I thought I'd struggle down to see the fun. Ugh! ugh! ugh!"

"Ah, then, what fun do you mean, Aileen astore?"

"Och, you'll know it by and bye, avourneen! There'll be great fun entirely. Don't ask me to tell you any more, achree! for you see it's chokin' I am—with this thievin' cough. Ugh! ugh!—sure I seen it all last night—is Randal More down?"

"Yes, there he is," said Maureen, pointing him out. The bleared eyes of Aileen could hardly distinguish him, but knowing him to be present she seemed quite content. Her words troubled Maureen more than a little. It is true her reason was gradually falling, but at times she gave utterance to strange and mystic words which startled the hearers, as would a voice from the other world. She had been for years both feared and respected in the village as "a wise woman;" that is to say as one having knowledge of hidden things, and this weird power seemed in no way diminished by the blank fatuity which had of late come upon her. Aileen Rhua, helpless and infirm, and half idiotic as she

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had become, was still looked up to by her simple neighbors as a semi-supernatural being whose eye could at times pierce the veil which conceals the world of spirits from mortal ken. Her mysterious words, then, gave rise to a strange tumult in Maureen's mind, giving as they did, a sort of confirmation to her own undefined misgivings. Aileen, it is true, had spoken of "fun," but Maureen knew her too well to expect anything good or agreeable from that, for there was a biting irony in her tone that meant anything rather than *fun*.

It was about one o'clock, and the sun was just bending its course downward, when little Nanno, who had been watching with childish interest the graceful motion of the various ships and boats passing up and down, to and fro, on the river and the Bay, suddenly observed in her low, asthmatic voice:

"Why, then, Maureen, isn't that a fishing-boat?"

"A fishing-boat!" repeated Maureen, in some perturbation, "why, surely no!—there's no fishing-boat out the day. But, Lord bless me! it is—och, wirra! wirra!"

"Sure I tould you there was goin' to be fun!" said Aileen with her shrill, cackling laugh, "an' there will, too—he! he! he!—where's Randal More! why don't he stir himself!—run, Nanno—no, you Maureen—run an' tell him!—he! he! he! I knew we'd have fun! I knew it bravely!—whereabouts is the pirate now, children?"

"For God's sake, Aileen! let us alone," cried Maureen, with a querulousness that was all unusual with her, "my father 'ill get sight of her time enough!—ah! I knew," she muttered to herself, "I knew it wasn't for nothing that I saw what I did last night. It's him—I'm full sure it is—didn't he as good as tell me he'd do it! Blessed St. Nicholas! what a beauty of a boat he has!—an' I declare she's bigger than either the Sheelah or the Nora Creina—well if that isn't a sight anyhow!—ah! it took *him* to do it!"

Lost in her instinctive admiration of the large and handsome boat, Maureen almost forgot the danger which awaited her venturesome crew, when a wild shout from the Claddagh men along the shore—a wild, vengeful shout—announced that the strange craft was noticed by them. Maureen's heart sank within her as she heard the stentorian voice of her father raised high in command, and saw several boats instantly in preparation.

"Who and what is she?" cried Randal More. "She comes from the city—here, boys!" to his sons, "get out the Nora at onst—don't have it to say that *we'll* be hindmost. I thought there wasn't a man in Galway that 'id venture out fishin' the day in sight of the Claddagh!—an' she's a tight bit o' wood—well put together—more's the pity that she must go down—Shan Driscoll! man alive! make ready—is Brown Bess in proper trim?"

"Safe and sound she is, I'll go bail!" returned

Shan at the top of his voice; "but can you guess who that is?"

"The sorra a guess—it's little matter, anyhow—well, I vow to God that's an aggravatin' *omadhaun* whoever he is!—all ready, boys?"

"Father!" said the soft voice of Maureen at his side, "father do you know who that is?" pointing to the now distinct figure of a man standing on the prow of the boat. "I'll lay my life it's Mr. Fitzstephen."

"Mr. Fitzstephen!" repeated the old man, sharply, "why, you're ravin', child, what 'id bring *him* out that way—do you think *he'd* come out again us in broad daylight?"

"I think he would, father," said Maureen earnestly, still holding her father by the arm, "because it's partly for your own good, that's *his* notion."

"Shan!" shouted the Admiral, "do you hear that? Maureen says it's Mr. Fitzstephen, an' after all, maybe it is, —, my soul to glory but I b'lieve it is!—don't you see she's a trawler?—jump in, boys! jump in! more power there, Shan, you're always first out!"

Maureen made no attempt at expostulation, for she well knew that no earthly power could turn her father at that moment from his purpose. Shan Driscoll and Brown Bess were already under weigh, and the Nora Creina's white sail was flung to the breeze by the stalwart hands of the two young O'Haras, themselves as excited as any, in fact too

much excited for talk. Several other boats were starting in rapid succession, all making for the obnoxious hooker, their crews all armed with such weapons or missiles as came within their reach. Yet all this threatened display did not appear to intimidate those on board the strange craft. Still she kept her onward way steering right for the fishing-ground. Steadily on she went as though wholly unaware of the volcano over which she passed. Even the wild cheers and halloos from the advancing boats appeared to have no other effect than that of giving increased power to the graceful craft, which moved over the waters like a creature of life.

But where was Maureen Dhu all this time, for no sooner had she seen the first boat put off than she turned her back to the shore, and fled like an antelope to the centre of the village? On and on she ran, without stopping to look behind. Was she anxious to get out of seeing and hearing of the tragic scenes which she knew to be at hand? They knew but little of Maureen O'Hara who would suspect her of such puerile weakness. Two minutes had hardly passed since she left the beach when she stopped breathless and well-nigh exhausted at Brian Kineely's door, where she had left him an hour before "sitting in the sun," pale and languid after his short but severe illness. He was still there, but no longer listless or inanimate. He had heard the tumultuous cheers from the beach, and catching the inspiration, though

ignorant of what was going on, the poor fellow was eagerly watching for some intelligence from the shore. More than once he had tried his limbs, impelled by a curiosity which became every moment more painful, but as often did those refractory members refuse to bear him. He had seen people hurrying past through the cross streets, and a vague rumor of what was passing below had reached his straining ears from a distance, but as no one chanced to pass within hearing of his weakened voice, he was compelled to remain in that state of ignorance which is *not* bliss. Like some beautiful spectre Maureen suddenly appeared before him, and he had not time either to express his surprise or ask a question when she grasped him by the arm.

"Brian Kineely! you must put out after the boats!"

"What boats, Maureen?—sure there's no one 'id venture out the day! but anyhow, I'm not able," he added, in a melancholy tone.

"You *are* able, Brian!—you *will* be able! Come off this minute, an' God will give you strength, for it's to save *life*, Brian! an' sure isn't that His own work? Come! come! *come!* I tell you—don't you hear the shouts—we'll be late!"

"Well, Maureen! I'll do your bidding in God's name. Can't I speak to granny, jist to tell her where I'm goin', for fear she'd be throubled when she misses me?"

"Not a word—you'll be back soon please the

Lord in heaven—there now, you see you can walk well enough—I knew it!” And in reality Brian did find himself so much stronger under the impulse of Maureen’s earnest solicitation and the contagious excitement which he could not resist, that to his great and joyful surprise, he hardly needed the support of Maureen’s arm as she hurried him along in the direction of the beach. There was no more time for questions. “You’ll know it all time enough,” said Maureen, in smothered accents, as they reached the beach, and she pointed to the strange boat. One glance was enough for Brian’s practised eye, but still he turned an inquiring eye on Maureen.

“Who is it, Maureen? and what would you have me do?” he said.

“Make them get out a row-boat—Brian! Brian! brother of my heart! it’s Mr. Fitzstephen—if you love me, Brian! out at once, or there’ll be bloody work this day—there’s ne’er another in the village I’d depend on *now* but your own self.”

There was a ghastly paleness on Brian Kineely’s brow and on his cheek, but he leapt into a boat and motioned for one or two fellows who were lounging near to jump in after him and take up the oars.

“How can I save him, Maureen?” demanded Brian, with a tremulous voice; “only tell me what I’m to do, an’ if I lose my life I’ll do it!”

At this moment and before Maureen could answer, a carriage dashed up at a headlong speed, and

out of it rushed Mrs. Fitzstephen and her daughter Charlotte. The half-frenzied glance which the mother cast around enabled her to observe Maureen to whom she at once addressed herself.

"Daughter of Randal O'Hara!" she cried, "is his life in danger, as they tell me!"

"It is!" was the stern and, it seemed, sullen reply of Maureen.

"Great God! can nothing be done?" and the widowed mother wrung her hands in anguish as she saw the boats from the Claddagh nearing her son's. "Oh! I told him to have nothing, nothing to do with them."

"So did I, ma'am," said Maureen, in what seemed a quiet tone. Quickly and fiercely Mrs. Fitzstephen turned on her.

"Girl! girl! how coolly you take it—do you know that he is my only son—oh, Charlotte my daughter! is there no one to help us—look! look!"

"Lady!" said Maureen Dhu, "have patience and hope in God!—you tell me I am cool—don't say it again, for I'll save his life for you or lose my own."

She had been standing on the prow of Brian's boat, and as she said these words she turned to him with a crimson cheek and bade him push out for God's sake and here.

"Has he a medal or cross or anything?" she asked of the amazed lady on the beach.

"He may—I think so—I'm not sure."

"Give me that cross I gave you—if you have it about you?"

The cross was handed over by a young man who leaped with it to the boat and then back again to the beach.

"Now, Brian! for life or death pull out—stay, don't you touch the oars—you're not able—give that one here to me!" As if laboring under some strange spell, Brian handed her the oar in silence, and seating herself near the prow with her face turned to the other boats, Maureen threw off her shawl and plied the long oar with a lightness and ease that were surprising in one so young and so delicately formed.

By this time the Claddagh boats had come within hail of the bold trawler. If the fishermen had been in doubt as to the offending party, their doubt was now removed. Fitzstephen himself stood on the prow in sight of them all. Whatever uneasiness he might have felt, he suffered none of it to appear, but kept watching the approach of the boats with a calm smile as if apprehending no danger.

"Good morrow to you, Kandal!" said Fitzstephen cheerily; "how is all with you?" Without waiting for the answer which he well knew would have been a gruff one, he went on quickly: "You see, I'm going to try the trawling for you, when I could'nt get you to do it yourselves. Just see how it works now, and if you don't like it, Admiral, why, then, I'll give it up."

This easy self-possession and good humor quite disconcerted Randal. He was prepared to encounter opposition, and had made up his mind to show no mercy, but this new turn of affairs he had not foreseen, and it baffled all his calculations. Still he had a duty to perform, and that he would do no matter how things went.

"Mr. Fitzstephen!" said the Admiral, in his roughest and gruffest voice, giving his trowsers a hitch-up at the same time; "Mr. Fitzstephen, don't try to come it on me, now—you tried your hand on it afore now, an' even made so little of yourself as to *collogue* with that *gersha* of mine about it—all was no use, sir, an' still you wouldn't give in. It's for a taunt an' an aggravation you're out here now, an' you needn't think to lay any of your soft soap to me. A fish you'll never catch in that net!"

"Nonsense, Admiral! we've some seores in it now, I think, though it's not long since we let it down. Do look at it, man!"

"Down with the pirate!" shouted Shan Driseoll, impatient at this delay.

"Down with the pirate!" was echoed by all the others, and grasping their various weapons, they placed themselves in threatening attitudes on the deck of each boat while they still kept moving in on the more stately trawler.

Fitzstephen made a sign to his own crew to move backwards, while planting his feet more firmly on the

prow, he thrust his hands deep into the pockets of his pilot-cloth overcoat.

"Randal O'Hara!" said he, in a firm, collected voice, "what is it you mean to do?"

"To sink your boat!" was the stern reply.

"Then you're bent on murder!"

"Sink or swim, we'll not lay a hand on one of you, but down the boat goes as sure as you're aboard of her. If you go to the bottom the fault's your own—what business had you here?"

"Randal O'Hara! this is a poor way of showing your gratitude," said Fitzstephen; "I think I often served the Claddagh men——"

"This does away with all, an' you know that well. There's for you, Shan! this is no time for *palaver*. Do your will, boys! into her at once!"

"Advance one step and you're a dead man!" said Fitzstephen, with stern determination, and from each of his pockets he drew a double-barrelled pistol, one of which he handed to one of his crew who rushed to his assistance. The other he aimed at Shan Driscoll, who was the most active and the most forward of his assailants.

A derisive laugh was Shan's answer, and with a sudden stroke of a long iron-spiked pole which he grasped by the middle, he dashed the pistol from the boatman's hand. It went off in the fall with a loud explosion, and a wild shout of terror came faintly from the shore. One single cry was heard nearer,

but all were too intent on the pending contest to think of looking from whence it came.

"Must I fire?" cried Fitzstephen, whose cheek blanched for the first time as he saw one of his pistols dashed thus into the water; "back, I tell you, or your blood be on your own head!"

Shan made no answer, but a blow of his handspike instantly descended on Fitzstephen's shoulder. Almost stunned by the force of the blow, Fitzstephen still had power to discharge his pistol. But the fearful handspike again interposed, and knocked up the pistol so that the ball merely grazed Shan's up-lifted arm.

"Now, boys, come on!" cried Shan, with a flourish of his formidable weapon, "it's plain sailin' now—down with the pirate trawler! Scuttle her!"

There was a rush to the side of all the Claddagh boats. Foremost in the attack were the two young O'Haras, but somehow the Admiral himself hung back, contrary to his wont, and he made a sign to Barney to wait a moment. There was something in the depth of his honest heart that made him sympathize with Fitzstephen, whose gallant resistance commanded his admiration. He had at bottom, too, a sincere regard for the generous and high-spirited Galwegian, and although he blustered so loudly against his daring attempt at innovation on the ancient customs of the Claddagh, and incroaching on their cherished rights, still it was not without pain that he saw his life in danger. He felt that duty

demanded of him to make an example of so daring a trespasser, and he also feared the reproaches of his people if he even appeared to fail them at such a moment, but still his rough cheek lost its color, and his heart sank within him at the thoughts of Fitzstephen's imminent peril. It was the first, and, perhaps, the only time in his long career of office that he wished he had not been Admiral of the Claddagh. Every eye was turned on him, and the fishermen, wrathful and impatient as they were, would not strike a blow until he gave the word or the signal. Shan Driscoll was furious at this, and in his wrath he forgot even his habitual respect for the Admiral's high office. Turning his eyes back on him, he called out in a tone of cutting irony: "That's it, Randal! keep them back till he get clear away. We all know you have a gra for him! Keep close, boys! move after her—if the Admiral is afeard to boord her, we'll go without him!"

Almost maddened by this insolent taunt, Randal More aimed a blow at Shan which, had it struck him, would have sent him right over, but Yeman caught the blow on his own weapon, and glancing reproachfully at his father, made a thrust at the exposed side of the trawler by way of commencing the assault. His father said not a word, but raising his heavy pole in both hands struck it right through the trawler's stern, yet so that the hole it made was far above water. Fitzstephen's crew came manfully to his succor, armed with whatever missile they could find.

and himself had his finger on the trigger. But even supposing he did shoot one of his assailants with the only ball which now remained, what was he to do then? There he was, wholly defenceless, almost surrounded by the vengeful and excited Claddagh men, whose angry passions now thoroughly aroused were beyond all control, save that of their own commander, from whom nothing was to be expected. Bent on the destruction of his boat, the fiery assailants would hear nothing, stop at nothing, and for the first time, Fitzstephen blamed himself for attempting to force instruction on those who would not be instructed. But as often happens, repentance came too late, and Fitzstephen had only to brace his mind so as to meet his fate as became a Christian man. Breathing a prayer for his own soul and for those whom his probable death would leave so desolate, he grasped his pistol still more firmly and stood waiting for the moment to use it to the best advantage.

"Now, God have mercy on my soul!" said Fitzstephen to himself, as he saw the terrible handspikes again in motion, and more formidable still, many a hatchet flashing in the sun as desperate hands wielded them around to give greater force to the meditated stroke.

Suddenly a shout was heard from the trawler's stern, and Brian Kineely was seen lifting Maureen on board. Brian's appearance would have been easily accounted for, and the Claddagh men raised an encouraging cheer, supposing that he had, by a

manœuvre, taken the trawler in the rear. The sight of Maureen Dhu, in that position, however, was something both strange and unaccountable, and when she advanced to Fitzstephen's side with a firm step and that queenly air which she could so well assume, every soul on board the Claddagh boats was, as it were, spell-bound for the moment. The gleaming weapons remained aloft as though suspended in the air, and every eye, distended with amazement, was fixed on Maureen. Fitzstephen's feelings would be hard to describe, as Maureen, with a smile and a blush, handed him the Spanish cross and desired him to hang it round his neck.

"Take that, and throw the pistol from you, sir!" she said, in a low voice; "they'll not hurt you now, never fear!—thank God I'm not too late!"

"Maureen!" cried her father, "what, in God's name, brought you there?"

"It was Brian brought me, father," said Maureen, calmly, "and I came to save Mr. Fitzstephen's life, and keep you from doin' what I know you'd rue the longest day you have to live."

"Randal More!" said Shan Driscoll, with the dread calmness of desperation, "Randal More! bring your daughter off that boat or she'll go down in it,—for down it goes before I'm many minutes older—"

"Take care what you say, Shan!" said Barney O'Hara, turning on him fiercely; "you'd best not threaten harm to Maureen!"

"Take her out of that, I tell you! or you'll see what I'll do as well as threaten!"

"Shan! Shan!" said Yeman, gently, "think of what you're sayin', my poor fellow!"

"I see there's no use in talkin'," said Shan, "so I'll do it myself when nobody else 'ill do it!—be ready, boys! as soon as I get back with that mad girl beyant!" So saying, he jumped on board the trawler and made a grasp at Maureen, but Fitzstephen, with ineffable dignity and coolness, placed one arm around her slender waist and with the other pointed the pistol to Shan's breast.

"Back, young man! back, I say! or I shoot you dead!"

"Back yourself, son of the stranger!" cried Shan, in a suffocating voice, while his face grew purple with rage; "back with your pistol—I care nothing for my life, but the girl I'll have!"

"Never!" said Fitzstephen, with preternatural calmness, "*never!* mine she is, and mine she shall be—in life or death she can never be yours!"

A groan of anguish from behind made Fitzstephen turn his head for an instant, when Shan, with the fury of a maniac, threw himself on him, and attempting to force the pistol from his grasp it exploded, and a cry of pain from Maureen told that she had been wounded. In the twinkling of an eye the Admiral and his sons held Shan as with a grasp of iron, and a chorus of execration arose from the fishermen, whose wrath was now turned on Shan. The

unhappy young man was insensible to their cries—insensible to the reproachful voice of the heart-struck father who was now bending over his child where she lay in Fitzstephen's arms pale and faint, yet still conscious.

"Don't be frightened!" said she, when her own fright permitted her to speak, "it's only my arm, I think!—father!—Mr. Fitzstephen!—I'm not much the worse!"

"Oh! Maureen, Maureen!" whispered Fitzstephen, "why did you risk a life so precious—if you die what will become of *me*?"

"If I did what matter—sure it 'id be for you!" The words were hardly spoken when Maureen, faint and bleeding as she was, regretted having spoken them, and she stretched her arms towards her father with an imploring look, while her death-like face was suffused with a momentary flush. Fitzstephen resisted the old man's attempt to take her. "No, no, Randal! I must see what injury she has sustained before I can give her even to you. I presume there is peace between us now."

"I don't know that, Mr. Fitzstephen," returned the Admiral gruffly, "this, by right, only makes things worse—if I lose my child by your means, do you think it'll make peace!"

"Father, father!" murmured Maureen, "what makes you speak that way to him? don't you *know* it wasn't his fault—?"

"No, Maureen! the fault was mine," said Shan,

"it was I done it—it was I done it—an' if it had only struck *him*, or myself, or any one but you,—I wouldn't be sorry—but you, Maureen!—*me* to spill *your* blood!—oh! Mother of Heaven! what's come on me, at all?"

"Here's my hand, Shan! I'm not angry with you," said Maureen, making an effort to speak. Wildly and eagerly Shan seized the outstretched hand and sank on his knees as he passionately murmured:

"If God only spares your life, Maureen! I'll give you up to *him*, or any one you choose—an' och! but that's the hard sayin', pulse of my heart you were!"

"God bless you, Shan aroon!" said Maureen, as her brothers forced him away; "don't be hard on him, boys, the worst is his own! Father dear! take me home!—there's a weakness comin' over me!—oh!—sure, sure! you'll not let them harm him?"

"Achorra machree, no!—don't be afeard—if *you* wish it, we'll not cross you!" said the old man, bending fondly over her, and his tears fell warm on her beautiful face, that was every moment growing paler and more death-like. "Sure there's ne'er a man in the Claddagh, darlin', let alone your father, that wouldn't do your biddin'."

"Go and get them away, then," whispered the girl, "I'm in dread for him while they're so near!" The fishermen, hearing from their Admiral what

they considered Maureen's last request, one and all prepared to comply, and that with a heavy heart. Slowly and sadly they turned their prows homewards, leaving the luckless trawler to follow with its precious freight. Fitzstephen sat on the deck with Maureen's head resting on his bosom, while Randal, on bended knees beside his daughter, held her hand in his and watched every change in her color, every motion of her features, with a tenderness which could hardly be expected from him.

Fitzstephen said little, but many thoughts and emotions were at work within him as he gazed on the marble face that lay all but motionless on his arm. When the boat touched the strand, and his mother rushed to clasp him to her bosom, he barely returned her fervent greeting, then said in a low earnest whisper, as he pointed to Maureen: "Mother, I bring you another daughter!—She has purchased my love with her blood, and from this day forward she is the dearest thing on earth to me!—Pray that she may be spared to me!"

"I acknowledge her claim, my son," said the agitated mother, and stooping she kissed Maureen's cheek. The girl opened her eyes and a faint smile passed over her wan features.

All at once there rose from Fitzstephen's boat a wild and piercing cry. Maureen, as if some fearful presentiment struck her heart, raised her head and looked up wildly in Fitzstephen's face. "It's Brian, sir!" she almost shrieked; "It's my poor Brian—*he's*

dead—or something bad has happened him!—wait! wait!—I can't leave him!—oh! how could I forget him?"

Fitzstephen strove to soothe her but all in vain. She struggled to free herself from his grasp, and he was obliged to summon her father and brothers to his aid. They bore Maureen to her home, faint and exhausted with her recent emotion, and well for them that they got her housed so soon, for in a few moments the lifeless body of Brian Kineely was carried past—not to his own cottage but to Shan Driscoll's, for fear of the shock being as fatal to poor More as Maureen's supposed death had been to him. Weak and wasted as the brave fellow was, the sudden annihilation of his dearest hopes in regard to Maureen chilled his heart's blood, and when the pistol went off and he heard her cry of anguish echoed from all around, that faithful heart broke; on the instant he made one step toward her whom he had loved so well, but that step was his last—he gasped, his head reeled, and he fell on the deck, unheeded by all in that moment of awe and terror and confusion.

"Ho! ho! ho!" croaked old Aileen, as she gathered herself up and toddled along after the last mournful procession; "ho! ho! ho! didn't I know it bravely that there 'id be a stir the day!—hould your whist, Nanno! what's the use of cryin'?—sure we all have to go some day or another!—Brian and Maureen!—Brian and Maureen! well it's quare, too,

if they have both gone together!—Nanno!" raising her voice as she saw the child hurrying along after the crowd. But Nanno did not choose to hear her. Frightened and grieved, she hardly knew why, her only anxiety was to get a sight of Maureen and know what it was that ailed her.



CHAPTER XVIII.

THAT WAS a mournful day in the Claddagh, for Brian Kineely was beloved by young and old, and his death threw a gloom over the entire community. Then Maureen Dhu, the pride and darling of the village, was said to be almost dying, and her misfortune was laid at the door of Shan Driscoll, who, strange to say, was more heavily blamed than Mr. Fitzstephen. Excuses were now made for the latter and people all at once discovered that there *might* be no harm in trying the trawling, and that the gentleman was for their good. Even Randal More was never, after that day, heard to inveigh against the system, and long before the year was out he himself gave the example, which was taken up by several others of the principal boat-owners. Shan Driscoll alone doggedly adhered to his own method, and to the last day of his life could never be induced to adopt the new one. Indeed he left the Claddagh soon after in a pout and took up his dwelling on a distant part of the Clare coast, where a lonely and deserted cottage tempted him to settle, far away from his kith and kin, where the name of Maureen Dhu never reached his ear, nor her fatal beauty met his eye. Lonely he lived in misanthropic seclusion from his fellow-men, in the more congenial company of rocks, and winds, and waves.

This move he did not take, however, until he had heaped the last sod on the desolate old creature whom he had taken to his home, and a beautiful trait in his otherwise rough character was his almost filial devotion to the comfort of that half-crazed, querulous old woman. One other glimpse the reader will have of poor Shan before the curtain falls on our characters.

The news of Brian's hapless fate was studiously kept from his aged parent for many days after he was laid in the grave, and when at last she discovered the truth from little Nanno she neither wept nor lamented. Her feeble mind gave way, "reason toppled from its throne," and she quietly remarked with an idiotic smile that she knew her boy was gone somewhere, but she supposed he wouldn't be long away from her. In this state she was taken to Randal's house, while Maureen was still suffering from the effects of her wound, and there the lonely old woman found a peaceful and comfortable home during the year or two that she remained on earth. Vara took her under her special patronage, and so tenderly did she soothe and minister to the helpless creature that she conceived an extraordinary attachment for her, and would, if permitted, follow her like a child wherever she went.

But how am I to describe the state of fierce excitement in which Vara arrived breathless at her home, on that memorable afternoon, just as Maureen had been laid on her bed in what seemed to her the

sleep of death. What no one else did, she bitterly reproached Fitzstephen, and declared she had always thought and said that no good would come from his hanging about the village. "Sure the black curse is on you all," said she as she wrung her hands in tearless sorrow, "ever since *ould* Shamus Dhu* put the rope round his son's neck and hung him—the haythen!—it's easy knowin' the black drop's in you all!"

The scathing taunt would at another time have galled Fitzstephen to the quick, but then his heart was too full of sorrow and remorse to have room for anger, and his only feeling was one of thankfulness that his mother and Charlotte were gone home before it was uttered. For himself, family pride and all personal considerations were swallowed up for the time in the sense of Maureen's danger. As he hung over her motionless and senseless form, and thought of her heroic act, and the love unconsciously revealed in the few half-uttered words she had spoken to him after receiving her wound, and as memory brought back the girlish art with which she had so modestly concealed that love, he felt that the possession of such a heart was more precious to him than silver or gold, or all the ships that ever sailed the Spanish

* James Lynch Fitzstephen, whose hapless story is familiar to many of our readers. While Mayor of Galway, he was obliged to hang his own and only son who had committed a cruel and treacherous murder. The stern father, who has been justly called the Irish Brutus, unable to find any one who would execute the sentence of the law on his unhappy son, who was much beloved by the populace, was under the dread necessity of doing it himself.

seas freighted with the wealth of his fathers. The thought that she might die was too horrible to be dwelt upon, and he resolutely kept it away from him. Inexpressible, then, were his joy and gratitude when the doctor whom he had himself sent for, an old friend of his family, after examining her wound declared that there was no danger of her life, although her recovery might be tedious.

"Even so," said Fitzstephen, joyfully, "provided it be certain, it is all right. Show your skill now, if ever, doctor!" he added in an under tone, "for my happiness depends on her recovery."

"Your happiness!" repeated the doctor in the same tone, "surely you jest, my dear sir!"

"Upon my honor, I do not!—I never was more in earnest—if that girl lives she shall be my wife!"

"Well! I confess," said the doctor, "she is fit to be any man's wife as far as beauty goes, but still—*chacun à son gout*,"* and the worthy gentleman shrugged his shoulders as he looked round on the kindred of the intended bride. By this time Maureen had regained her senses and a bright flush suffused her wan cheek as she saw Fitzstephen still by her side. And there he remained most of the evening to the great surprise of Vara, who confessed to Noddy Kinshela, when at nightfall she met her at the door coming in, that, after all, there was

* Quoting a French proverb, which means, "every man to his taste."

more feeling in the quality than she thought there was. "Now there's Mr. Fitzstephen within," said she, pointing back over her shoulder, "an' I declare if Maureen was his own sister, in a manner, he could'nt have more feelin' for her."

"I'll go bail he couldn't," said Noddy, with emphasis, "and he wouldn't be the man I take him for if his heart and soul wasn't in her. Stand a one side, avourneen, till I get sight of her—ochone! the beauty of the world she was, isn't it pale and washy she is now! But still an' all, ma colleen dhas! it's well you're in it, at all!—God save your honor!" and she dropped a curtesy to Mr. Fitzstephen.

Noddy's appearance gave real satisfaction to Maureen, who motioned for her to sit down on the bed-foot. The old woman complied, after turning aside to wipe away her tears. She saw that Maureen was both weak and feverish, and she motioned to Mr. Fitzstephen that it was best for him to retire. Unwillingly he complied, but he saw that his presence in reality only agitated the poor patient, and he made it a duty to leave her.

"Noddy!" said he, "I am going now, and I give Maureen in charge to you. See that she does not talk too much during the night!" That grave sweet smile of his was full of meaning, and Noddy smiled, too, as she replied:

"Never fear, sir, never fear! we'll keep it all for another time!"

This implied preference roused Vara's ire: "Wisha,

then, Mr. Fitzstephen, do you think there's nobody here but *her* fit to mind the *gersha*? I'd have you to know that there's people to the fore that's sent for far an' near when there's sickness or anything that way! Give her in charge to Noddy Kinshela, inagh, our own colleen dhu!"

A few kind words of explanation from Fitzstephen, however, served to soothe the professional jealousy of the old woman, and this done he bent down and whispered "good night" to Maureen. The girl's eyes filled with tears as she held out her hand. Fitzstephen held it for a moment, while his lips moved as if in prayer.

"Here is something in exchange for your cross, Maureen!" said he, and he laid one hand gently on her forehead, while the other continued to hold hers; "my gift has a meaning which you will, I hope, understand, or if not—your friend here will explain it!—once more 'good night,' and keep as quiet as you can."

Randal and his sons, grateful for his attention to Maureen, although it was nothing more than she deserved from him, insisted on seeing him home. When they were gone, Maureen held up her right hand and on its fore finger sparkled a jewelled ring. Her own lustrous eyes rivalled its brightness as she glanced at Noddy.

Vara looked at the precious bauble with the eye of a *connoisseur*, then turned away with a grunt of doubtful meaning. "It's a purty ring," said

she, "but it's not worth a drop of Maureen's blood."

"And sure Mr. Fitzstephen knows that well," said Noddy, with glistening eyes; "and that's the reason why he gave her a *ring* instead of anything else."

Vara looked at her with eyes of wonder. "Ah, then, Noddy! isn't it a shame for you that's a sensible woman to be evenin' such foolish things to the girl!"

"Well! time will tell!" said Noddy, with a sagacious nod; "but I'll wager my ould red cloak agin your new blue one, that *that* very ring is the luckiest gift ever the child got. Don't you mind the dream you were tellin' me onst about your own ring, how it wouldn't fit Maureen? But whist! whist!" she quickly added, in an under tone, noticing the increasing flush on Maureen's cheek and the fiery lustre of her eyes; "not another word about it now. Go to sleep, darlin', an' your granny an' me 'ill sit by you. You're in need of rest, avourneen!"

When the girl's eyes did at length close in a feverish slumber, the two old women made themselves comfortable by the blazing hearth over that social cup of tea which they both loved so well. Vara spoke feelingly and with many tears of the death of Brian Kineely, whom she had loved as a son and always "laid out for Maureen."

"An' och! och! if he hadn't been taken away so suddenly, without priest or prayer," she added,

"I wouldn't think so bad of it. It's the only comfort we have that he never neglected his duty, poor fellow!"

"Do you know what, Vara!" said Noddy, in her solemn way, "I'm thinkin' it was a great bles-sin' he didn't live to see that ring on Maureen's finger."

"Well, maybe so, avourneen! maybe so! God is good, an' does everything for the best, but still an' all, I'm neart sorry for him to die the way he did, an' I know it'll be a sore crush to Maureen when she comes to hear of it! I'm sure and certain she thought more of him than she let on!"

"Don't think any such thing, then, aroon!" said Noddy; "she liked him, I know myself, but not well enough to be his wife. Somehow I never could bring myself to think that she'd marry any one hereabouts. I got notions in my head about her that I couldn't any ways account for, an' now you see it was a foresight I had all along."

"Well, it's quare, sure enough," said Vara, "an' I suppose people'll be sayin' we've the best of good luck, but it's not *my* notion. I want to have nothin' to do with the quality—let *them* keep their place an' us ours. Still an' all—"

"Still an' all," said Noddy, with a smile, "you'll not be sorry to see our *colleen dhas* a lady, drest out in silks an' satins, an' ridin' in her own coach, with sarvants to wait upon her, an' everything fine and grand."

"Nonsense, woman!" said Vara, with more than her usual sharpness; "I'd rather see her trudgin' on shank's mare, an' drest as her mother was before her—she'll never be the same to us after it, but God's will be done!" she added, with edifying resignation.

Noddy was amused and yet somewhat nettled by Vara's contempt of honors and riches, but she knew by experience that there was no such thing as reasoning the old queen mother out of her whims, so she all at once discovered, or pretended to discover, that Maureen was stirring, and so put an end to a discussion which might soon become rather hot for her liking under present circumstances.

When Randal and the boys came back, Vara said she would go over to the wake, "for," said she, "Maureen is not so bad as to need more than one or two sittin' up with her, an' besides it's Noddy that has her in care." This proposal was willingly agreed to, and as the young men were going, all three started off in company, leaving the Admiral and Noddy to mind Maureen.

When once out of their father's hearing, Barney and Yeman both gave expression to a feeling of anger against Fitzstephen, whom they considered as the unlucky cause of Brian's death, Shan's disgrace, and Maureen's mishap. The only thing that saved him from their revenge was his love for Maureen, and hers for him. "If it wasn't for that," said Barney, "I'll go bail we'd soon bring his nobles to nine pence."

Not but I'd sooner see her married to Shan Driscoll, but still an' all, if she has a likin' for him, an' him for her, I'd sooner cut my right hand off than do him hurt or harm—on *her* account."

A fortnight from that night had only passed when Maureen was able to walk abroad, and it was only then that she was told of Brian Kineely's death. Her grief was so excessive, that those who loved her had cause to repent of having told her even then, for she was still far from being quite recovered. It was well for them that they had entrusted the sad tidings to Father Dominick, for nothing less than his pious exhortations could have reconciled her to life. She had loved Brian as a very dear brother, and his loss would, at any time, have grieved her to the heart, but now she accused herself, and not unjustly, of being accessory to his death. At first she refused all consolation, and said she would henceforward devote her life to the care of poor old More.

"Well! child!" said the priest, "I have no objection to that—you may marry old More instead of Mr. Fitzstephen, if you like—that is, if you think you cannot otherwise discharge your duty to her." There was a sly smile on the placid face of the worthy pastor that did not escape Maureen, and, with all her sorrow, she could not help smiling, too. But Randal, who was also present, soon settled the matter.

"Now don't be botherin' us, Maureen, honey,"

said he, half kindly, half gruffly, "with your odd notions. Sure Vara and myself are goin' to take More home, an' keep her as long as God leaves her with us. Mind your own business, achorra, an' leave More to us."

This was satisfactory even to Maureen, and helped considerably to lighten the load of her affliction. A week or so after, when she thought herself able to venture so far, she stole up, one clear, frosty evening, to visit Brian's grave, taking Nanno with her to show her the spot where he was laid. She need not have done so, for one of the first objects that met her eye on entering the churchyard was a pretty headstone inscribed in the Irish language with the name of Brian Kineely, his age and the date of his death, together with the usual prayer for the repose of his soul. There were not many such in the cemetery, and Maureen, in great surprise, asked Nanno who it was that had it erected.

"Wisha, then, who would it be but the gentleman—he got it up the week after poor Brian's death, an' everybody says it was very good of him to do it. But look here, Maureen! see the nice little bush that Shan Driscoll planted at the foot—there's no flowers on it now, but Shan says there'll be plenty on it in the summer, when he'll be ever so far away."

The mention of a name once so familiar, but for weeks long studiously kept from her ear, awoke some thrilling memories in Maureen's heart, and she

was softened to tears by this new trait of more than womanly tenderness in one so wild and reckless. Many a strange and undefinable emotion stirred her heart and made her pulses throb as she knelt by the grave of him who had loved her even unto death, for that he had died for her she was fully sensible. Prayers long and fervent ascended from her breast to the throne of mercy on his behalf, and there she might have knelt for hours had not a cry from Nanno made her start, and raising her eyes she saw Shan Driscoll standing motionless before her on the opposite side of the grave. His face was pale and sad, and the tears were in his eyes as he gazed on the altered lineaments of her who had been the innocent cause of all his misery. Starting to her feet the pale girl almost involuntarily extended her hand and Shan took it, but without any of his former fervor. His proud spirit was evidently crushed and subdued. The eyes of the two met, and then both glanced downwards on the brown heap between them.

"You're a happy man, Brian Kineely!" said Shan, mournfully, "and I wish I was in your place this day to have Maureen kneelin' at my grave. You're at rest, poor fellow! but I'm not—an' God knows when I will be."

"Shan, dear, don't be talkin' that way, an' lookin' so sorrowful, or you'll break my heart," said Maureen, with touching earnestness.

"No fear of that, Maureen!" replied Shan, very softly; "*my* sorrow sits light on *you*. It's thankful

I am, anyhow, to meet you here, for I couldn't meet you anywhere else. Don't take away your hand, Maureen! let me keep it as long as we're together, and that won't be long. It's a fittin' place for me to bid you a long farewell, with Brian Kineely's grave between us, an' no one listenin' but the dead—if *they* can hear!" Little Nanno had wandered away amongst the graves, lifting a wild and wailing air which came fitfully on the breeze, to the young man and maiden who stood with their right hands locked in each other across the sepulchral heap.

"Maureen!" said Shan, "they tell me you're goin' to be a lady—tell me one thing—is it for that you're marrying?"

"Oh, Shan! how can you ask me such a question!" said Maureen, passionately; "do you think the riches of the world would buy my heart, or that I'd marry a being if I didn't love him?"

"Then you do love Mr. Fitzstephen?"

Maureen did not answer, but her downcast eye and the tell-tale blush on her cheek were more than sufficient to extinguish the last gleam of hope which might have been lingering in Shan Driscoll's heart.

"Maureen!" said he, with a heavy sigh, and in a still lower voice than before, "Maureen! do you forgive me for bein' the cause of that wound you got?"

"From my heart I do, Shan! an' I hope you'll never say a word more about it—for the time to come we'll be like brother an' sister!"

A wild, bitter laugh was Shan's answer, and a flash of the old fire shot from his eyes. Maureen involuntarily shrank from his impassioned gaze and the sudden pressure of his hand on hers. On this he laughed again, but his look softened into sadness and the tears rushed to his eyes!

"So you're afeard of me, Maureen!—well, that same's hard enough—God knows whether any one will ever love you as I do—but still an' all, maybe you're right. I couldn't look at you very long an' keep my senses, so, after you're—" he paused, gasped for breath, and a deadly paleness overspread his fine, manly features, "when you're—gone from here, I'll be gone, too. I couldn't live where I'd be in danger of seein' you—the wife of another!" The last words he uttered with desperate energy, as though resolved to get them out at any cost. Just then the gate was heard to open, and Shan's quick eye caught the advancing form of Fitzstephen through the twilight gloom. Wringing Maureen's hand with convulsive energy, he said in a voice that was barely audible:

"Here he comes, Maureen! the happiest man on earth—he's comin' to look for his darlin'—oh Maureen! Maureen! pity me this night—but don't—don't—I never wanted your pity, an' I'll not have it now—forget me—that's all I ask!"

He was gone before Maureen could speak a word, and when Fitzstephen's well-known voice calling her made her heart thrill with pleasure, she was still un-

able to answer. But he saw her as she stood and his supporting arm was instantly around her. Tenderly chiding her imprudence in being out so late and she still so feeble, he was hurrying her away from that melancholy scene, but she told him little Nanno was somewhere in the churchyard. Fitzstephen called several times before the tiny bulk was seen creeping among the graves, and when they all left the churchyard she went on ahead down the road, crooning still the dirge-like song.

"What a strange child that is, Maurcen!" observed Fitzstephen, when he had wrapped Maureen in her heavy cloak; "and still there's something about her that makes me like her!"

"I am glad to hear it, sir——"

"Sir!" said Fitzstephen reproachfully, "is there still such a distance between us——"

"Well, somehow, I can't forget the distance!"

"Unkind that you are—I can hardly tell you how long it is since I forgot it—but why are you so glad that I have a liking for Nanno?"

"Because—oh! just because I like her myself—but how did you find me out up there?"

"Why, as soon as I came and found that you were out, I inquired, of course, which way you had gone, and I partly suspected what you were about. How do you like the head-stone?"

"How do I like it!—oh! Mr. Fitzstephen, you don't know how thankful I am to you for puttin' it up!—God reward you for all your goodness."

"And you'll reward me too, will you not?" said Fitzstephen softly.

"If it is in my power—but did you meet poor Shan?"

"No, where was he?"

Maureen said she had met him at Brian's grave, and gave a touching account of his altered bearing during the recent interview.

"I hope you're not sorry for giving him up," said Fitzstephen in a tremulous voice.

"Sorry!" repeated the girl, passionately, "you know well I'm not sorry for giving him up, but I'm sorry to see him take it so much to heart."

The exquisite tenderness of her tone made Fitzstephen's heart thrill, and it was some moments before he spoke again. "I'm sorry for him, too, Maureen!" he said at length; "very, very sorry, for no one knows so well as I the value of what he has lost."

They had now reached the Admiral's house where they found Mrs. Behan and Charlotte who had just driven out to see Maureen. It was strange to see the members of such a family—so proud of their lineage, still more than their position—lavishing the kindest attention on the young Claddagh girl who was so soon to be one of themselves. But the whole city was full of Maureen's praise—her heroic devotion to Fitzstephen was in every one's mouth, and the voice of public opinion levelled the distance between the strangely-mated pair. This, certainly,

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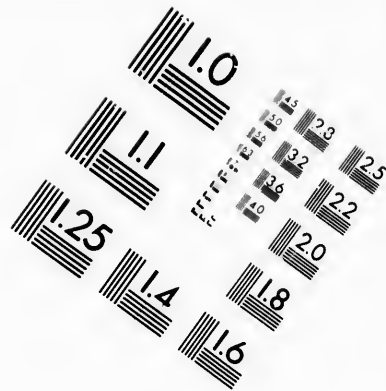
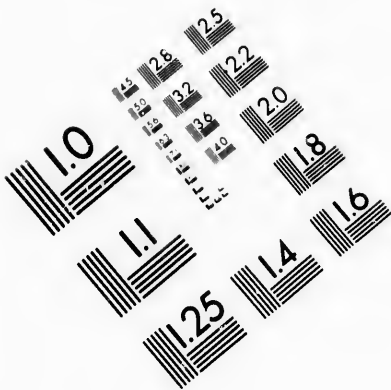
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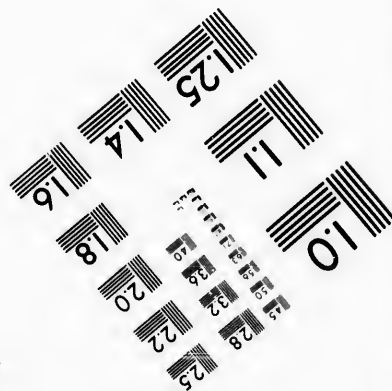
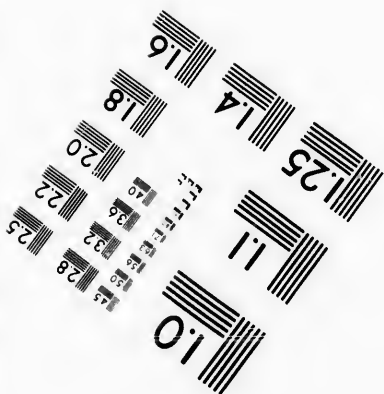
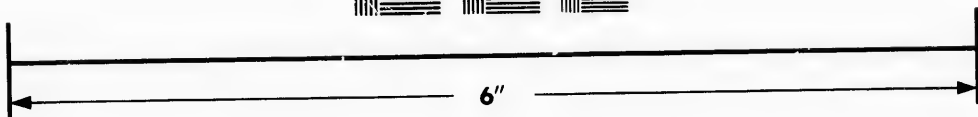
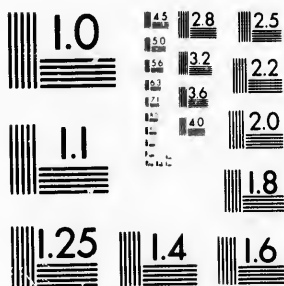
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had its weight with the whole family, but Mrs. Fitzstephen and Charlotte were influenced by the still higher motive of gratitude, and rightly considered with Fitzstephen himself that Maureen had dearly purchased his heart and hand. As for Margaret, she was inclined to laugh at the whole affair, her notions of the family dignity being much less strict than those of any other member of the family. It might be, too, that she had other reasons (which she chose to keep to herself) for giving Maureen a gracious reception. Still the ladies felt anything but comfortable in the society of Maureen's family, and their visit was, therefore, a short one.

CONCLUSION.

"Maureen!" said Fitzstephen, when they were about to leave the house, "where did that queer child hide herself a while ago? She disappeared soon after we left the churchyard?"

Maureen smiled and said no one minded where Nanno went. "She likes to come and go without any one heedin' her, an' I think she's out at all hours of the night—she loves lonesome places, and creeps about like a spirit through the dark silent night."

"There's something strange about that child," said Fitzstephen musingly; "did you ever see her?" addressing his sisters.

Neither of them had, at least they did not remem-

ber, whereupon Maureen reminded them of the Sunday on which they came to Mass to the friary chapel. Charlotte began then to have a faint recollection of the singular child, but Margaret's memory failed her completely. Still she had a curiosity to see the child, and nothing would serve her but some one should be sent to show her Shan Driscoll's domicile, that she might get a sight of the little creature whose strange ways and winning gentleness were the theme of many a tongue about the Claddagh.

"You'll come with me, Giles," she said to her brother, "and Maureen will show us the way."

"She shall do no such thing, Margaret," said Fitzstephen, nettled at the cavalier way in which she spoke of his intended bride. "She has been but too much exposed to the night air already this evening. However, I can be your guide as I happen to know Shan's house."

"Why, then, surely you won't go in there?" said Maureen, turning pale as she remembered the fetch which had glided between her and Shan; "I think you must be forgettin' what's past," she added in a low beseeching tone.

"Well, I confess I *was* forgetting," said Fitzstephen, fixing his eyes thoughtfully on the beautiful face that was overshadowed with fear at the bare possibility of danger to him.

"Perhaps it is as well for Barney or Yeman to go, and you, Charlotte, can go too—although I confess I don't understand this whim of yours."

"I don't want you to understand it," said Margaret playfully, "but come with me you must and shall. What is it you're afraid of may I ask?"

"Mr. Fitzstephen," said Barney, "there's no danger of your findin' Shan within, for I saw him goin' down past the Fair Green there awhile ago, an' I'll go bail he'll wander along shore till all hours of the night. It's a fashion he has these times."

This decided the matter, and Fitzstephen with his two sisters left the cottage. Maureen made a sign to Mrs. Behan and whispered to her as she lingered on the threshold behind the others: "What are you about, ma'am?"

"I'm going to tell him all—he knows part of it, an' I couldn't keep the secret much longer do as I would—even what I did tell eased my mind, and I find it wasn't so hard to do as I thought." Then raising her voice she said:

"Good night, pretty one! I hope you are not angry with me for robbing you of such good company?" Maureen only smiled and whispered. "God speed you—I'm glad you're going to do it at last—better late than never."

It was something altogether unaccountable that the vain and selfish young widow, the affianced bride of Captain Hamilton, should so far forget her ancient and honored lineage as to smile on the humble maiden whom her stately brother was about to introduce into their family. And yet it was not so very strange, all things considered, for Margaret

had never been remarkable for family pride. On the contrary, she had always laughed at her brother and sister for that loftiness of manner which she, in mirthful mood, used to call "the Fitzstephen airs." Had Hamilton been disposed to find fault with his brother-in-law elect for the ultra-plebeian match he was about to make, it would have altered Margaret's views considerably, but it so happened that the Captain, on the contrary, entirely approved of Fitzstephen's conduct in regard to Maureen, and had repeatedly told Margaret that no man of spirit would or could act otherwise. Far in the depth of Margaret Behan's heart there was another feeling that still more efficaciously pleaded for Maureen. Mrs. Fitzstephen and Charlotte were far more averse to the step Giles was taking, but with them gratitude for his preservation mastered all other feelings, and they were fain to persuade themselves that the singular alliance about to take place would leave no permanent stain on their escutcheon, inasmuch as it was a debt of gratitude lawfully due by the present head of the family.

Just as Fitzstephen and his sisters were leaving Randal's cottage, intending to have the carriage remain there till their return, who should come up but Aileen Rhua, asking at the door, in her cracked, wheezing voice, if the child was there.

"Wisha, then, she's not, Aileen," said Vara from within, whereupon the old woman became alarmed, and Maureen tried in vain to pacify her, reminding

her of how many times the little girl had been out much later than that.

"I know that," said Aileen, "to be sure I know it, but there's something tellin' me now that I'm not to have her long—boys, dear! won't you go an' look for her—maybe it's away to the rath she's taken—I'm sure them thievin' fairies!—Christ save us! what am I sayin'—I mean the good people, an' that's what they are, dear knows!—but I'm sure they have an eye on my weeny darlin'."

Although no one shared the old woman's fears, yet in order to relieve her anxiety, Randal and his sons hurried away in different directions to seek the child. The Fitzstephens, finding how matters stood, had returned to the house, and Margaret taking Maureen apart from the others, asked if she really thought any harm had befallen the child.

"Why, then, didn't I tell you, ma'am!" said Maureen, "that she has a fashin of ramblin' about in dark, lonesome places—don't be uneasy—see they're all watchin' you."

"Oh Maureen! if anything did happen her now of all times when I had my mind made up—"

"Never fear, ma'am! never fear—put your trust in God, an' you'll see she'll be here safe and sound in no time."

Aileen was sitting on a creepy stool near the fire, with her eyes fixed on the flickering blaze, her hands clasped on her knees, and she muttering to herself in a low, wailing tone, while her plaintive

moans made one's heart ache to hear them. A dreary, woe-begone picture she was of desolate old age in its feeble dotage, and Fitzstephen was moved even to tears as he looked on her.

"God help her!" he said to Vara, "how her heart is wrapped up in that helpless creature."

"Well! it's wonderful sure enough, sir," returned Vara, "especially as she's not a drop's blood to her."

"Not a drop's blood to her!" he repeated, in surprise; "why, I thought she was her grandchild."

"She's not then——"

"And, my God! who is she?"

"Oh! Nanno! Nanno!" moaned the half-conscious Aileen, "I know they'll take you from me— an' sure you're all I have, an' it's hard of them to do it when God sent you to me the way he did!"

"Who is the child?" repeated Fitzstephen, but Vara had got a sign from Maureen that closed her mouth. Mrs. Behan in great agitation, now pale, now red, was still endeavoring to appear composed, and the effort was more than she could bear. This Maureen saw and she whispered softly: "Come into my little room, ma'am dear, and lie down a minute."

They went in accordingly, but they had hardly entered the room when a joyful exclamation from Maureen drew the others all after them, and there on Maureen's bed lay Nanno Kenny fast asleep. The child had stolen in unobserved and lay down

as she had once or twice done before of an evening.

"Thank God!" murmured Margaret, but that was all she could say, while old Aileen, falling on her knees beside the bed, sobbed, and cried, and laughed by turns. Maureen bent down and kissed the pretty, although worn little face of the sleeping child.

"Well! I'm really glad to see her safe," said Fitzstephen, laughing, "but I cannot at all understand how deeply some of you were affected by the temporary disappearance of the little creature." His eyes were on Margaret as he spoke, and Charlotte, too, fixed a scrutinizing glance on her sister's agitated countenance.

"She was all I had," whimpered Aileen, "couldn't you leave her to me as God sent her!"

"Don't be botherin' us with your foolery," cried Vara, as she seized the old woman by the shoulder; "come out to the kitchen an' let her take her sleep."

Maureen went over to Margaret and throwing her arm around her neck whispered something in her ear, whereupon the young widow stood up, and saying, "I'll do it, Maureen! with God's help—I deserve blame—and shame too—Giles! Charlotte, don't look at me so. I can't bear those piercing eyes—*don't* look at me if you want to hear——"

She stopped, approached the bed leaning on Maureen's arm, and when close beside the sleeping child

she paused, drew a long breath, glanced sideways at her brother then slowly articulated:

"Here lies the body of Charlotte Ellen Behan snatched by Shan Driscoll from a watery grave!" Mysterious as the words were they were very intelligible to Fitzstephen, who had for the last half hour been partly prepared for such a revelation. Charlotte, on the contrary, having no previous acquaintance with the occult portion of her sister's history, was altogether confounded and amazed.

"Merciful goodness!" she exclaimed, "what does this mean?—are not these the very words inscribed on poor Chatty's tomb?"

Margaret could not answer. The extraordinary effort she had made exhausted both her strength and courage, and, burying her face in her hands, she sank on her knees, murmuring: "Tell her, you Giles!—but not now!"

"Ha! ha!" laughed Aileen hoarsely, as Vara almost carried her out of the little room, "it's hard for them to part me and Nanno!"

That was a strange and startling revelation to the Fitzstephen family, and yet it was far from being unwelcome, for the spiritual character and the loving heart of the helpless child more than made amends for the deformity which had gradually come upon her in the long and painful sickness which had followed her immersion in the water. It was thought, too, that she might have been dashed by the waves against the boat-side when washed overboard.

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However that might be, little Chatty's infirmity made her only the dearer and more welcome to the family, and in proportion to their compassionate tenderness for her was their secret indignation against the unfeeling parent who, in her selfish fear of being disgraced, had so long neglected her, even after she had discovered her escape. Still they abstained from reproaching her who was already sufficiently humbled. Her great trouble was that, for some time at least, Captain Hamilton should be kept in ignorance of her culpable conduct. To this, however, neither Giles nor his mother would for a moment consent, and the former made it his business to lay the whole matter before the Captain. Fortunately his love was proof against the report of what he considered youthful indiscretion, and, although he was in his heart no little disappointed to find that his pretty Margaret had ever been capable of such criminal levity, still his honor was plighted and his love was strong enough, as I have said, to make him overlook what, at worst, was only folly.

Chatty was, for some days, like one in a dream, and received the caresses of the ladies and Mr. Fitzstephen with a timid, doubting air, that was not all shyness. When they were gone she would say to Maureen that she supposed it was like one of the dreams she used to have long, long ago. It was with difficulty that Maureen could get her persuaded that what she looked back on as dreams were really faint remembrances of her infant life in Arranmore.

It was long before even her mother could get her to speak freely in her presence. Indeed her grandmother was the first of the family who gained her confidence, and many a time Margaret chose to leave the room in a pout when the child, regretting her advances, took shelter with her mother and eyed her askance as one to be carefully avoided. But sober reflection always brought the conviction that the child had never had much cause to love her, and that her instinctive coldness was but the natural penalty of her heartless neglect.

When they came to remove Chatty from her aged friend, they found it impossible to separate them. Leave Aileen the child would not, and neither would the old woman leave the Claddagh. Threats and persuasions were alike useless, for, with the obstinacy of confirmed idiocy, she clung to her own fancies. Shan Driscoll, too, protested vehemently against her being taken from him, and on hearing this, Maureen joined in requesting that Chatty might be left with Aileen for the little time she had to live. This proposition was very agreeable to Margaret who was, after all, well pleased to have the child out of Hamilton's sight as long as possible—at least till the honeymoon was past and gone.

When, at length, the day arrived that saw Maureen Dhu the bride of Fitzstephen, it was not before the altar in her own chapel that the pride of the Claddagh was united to him who had so long, unknown to herself, held the thread of her destiny.

Fearing some outbreak on the part of poor Shan Driscoll, and anxious to spare his feelings as far as possible, Maureen requested that the ceremony might take place somewhere out of his vicinity. By a singular fancy on the part of Fitzstephen, it was in the chapel on Arran of the Saints that they were married with the consent of their respective pastors. Mrs. Fitzstephen was not present but her daughters were, and the bride elect was conveyed to the island by her father and brothers in the pretty Nora Creina, jauntily adorned for the occasion. And Vara was there, too, and when the bridegroom produced the ring, she snatched it from him, and handed him the heavy old-fashioned one which had done hymeneal duty in the family for more generations than Vara could count.

"To the sorra with your new-fangled bits o' jewelry," said she; "do you think we'd let you put any other wedding-ring on Maureen than the one that belongs to the family. Come now, Mr. Fitzstephen! none o' your black looks! if you don't like our ring you may go elsewhere for a wife—an' welcome too!"

This, of course, settled the matter, and the marriage went on without further interruption. By another obstinate whim of Vara's, Maureen was married in the approved Claddagh costume; yet her beauty was none the less conspicuous, and Fitzstephen himself was forced to admit that however annoying was the old woman's perverse fancy, no dress could have been chosen more admirably adapted to

show off the face and form of his youthful bride, whom Murillo or Velasquez would have chosen for a model of Spanish grace and beauty.

The Admiral's boat returned to the Claddagh without Maureen, and Vara cried the whole way back, nor were Randal's eyes dry, for, as they all agreed, "such a marriage as that was next to death, and Maureen was as good as lost to them. Sure I always tould you, Randal honey," said the old woman, "that no good would come of strangers hangin' that way about the Claddagh!—ochone! may the Lord rest your sowl, poor Brian Kineely! it's thankful I am that you didn't live to see this day!—as for Shan, he'll soon get over his trouble—his love was too hot to last long."

Vara's penetration was here entirely at fault. She little knew that his love for Maureen was entwined with the cords of his heart, and could only be torn thence when the cords were rent asunder and the heart ceased to beat.

When Fitzstephen presented his young wife to his mother a week after their marriage, Mrs. Fitzstephen received her kindly, and murmured as she kissed her cheek: "Now at least we have repaid Juan's debt to your family!—you thought me ungrateful, my child, but my ingratitude was only on the surface—you saved my son's life—your grandmother and her people saved another hardly less dear——"

"And there is still another debt, mother!" said

Margaret, coming forward; "you must not forget Maureen's tender care of my poor neglected Chatty!"

"Never mind," said Fitzstephen, as he led Maureen to a seat, "never mind counting her claims on us—we are willing to pay her all we owe! From my heart I thank you, mother, and you, too, my sisters, and Maureen shall thank you, too," he added with a smile, "when she learns to speak good English. We have much to teach her and she will be an apt scholar—will you not, Maureen?" he asked, in her own language.

"Yes," she replied, "if *you* will be my master;" and she looked up with so bright a smile that Fitzstephen had he not loved her before must have loved her then.

At this moment the door opened and in walked Noddy Kinshela, with the easiest and most confident air imaginable, like one who was very sure of a welcome. Maureen ran to shake hands with her old friend, who, after exchanging a kind greeting with the others, placed herself in front of the young bride and examined her costume with the closest attention, to the great amusement of all present.

"Well! glory be to God, ma colleen dhas you were!" said she; "sure enough dress does make all the difference in the world. Dear knows! I don't wonder at your good luck." Then turning to Mrs. Fitzstephen she said: "On account of your goodness to my colleen dhas here, Mrs. Fitzstephen, I'm going to tell you something that'll make your

heart glad. I often tould you I had a secret for you that would be better to you than gold or silver."

"My God! Noddy," cried the lady, in evident perturbation, "what is it?—anything about——"

"About Master Juan!—to be sure it is, dear—about himself an' no other. I suppose I may say it out here." Mrs. Fitzstephen nodded assent, and the old woman went on: "Do you know what took the Senor away from you that night that you seen him last?—I know you don't, so I'll tell you. Your father, God rest him! went to him in his room, and got in a terrible passion, and told him that you'd never marry any one if you didn't marry Mr. Fitzstephen, an', says he, if you dare to presume to marry her again my will, both you and she shall have my curse, day and night, and a word I'll never speak to either of you, and a shilling of my money you'll never handle. The poor young gentlemen told him he didn't care about his money, but he wouldn't for the world draw down a father's curse on Ellie, and if he'd only let him bid you farewell he would sail next day for Spain. But you know the dreadful passion that was in your father, Miss—— I mean, ma'am! and so he got as white as a sheet with the dint of anger, and he said no, that he couldn't or wouldn't allow it, but that if Juan wanted to save you from bein' turned out of doors with a father's curse he would leave the city that very night, and swear never to let you know anything about the way it happened."

"Merciful Heaven! and he did so, Noddy?"

"Did so! to be sure he did—what else *could* he do? Next day, you remember, he was gone, and nobody ever knew what became of him only myself."

"But, Noddy! Noddy! why did you not tell me all this when you saw me oppressed with sorrow and the most horrible fears as to what had become of Juan?"

"Well, to tell the truth, ma'am! I was so terrified myself at what I seen that night that I was afeard of my life to tell any one what I had overheard, for fear it would come to your father's ears—since your father's death I was always puttin' it off from one time to another, I can hardly tell you why. But there's another thing, ma'am, that I want to tell you. I seen Master Juan with my own eyes when he was here last. For years an' years I thought it was his fetch or his ghost, maybe, that raised the latch an' came in on the flure to me one moonlight night, when I was lyin' between sleepin' and wakin'. He came over and stood beside the bed, and took a long, long look at myself, an' then he gave a great sigh, an' turned away, and walked all around my little place, an' all about the coort outside, an' then he came in an' looked at me again, but sure the life an' sowl were near frightened out of myself, because I took him for a sperit, an' I couldn't open my lips at the time or move my tongue if I got all Ireland for it. So at last he

went away, an' to my dyin' hour I'll never forget the sorrowful look he had, or the heavy sigh he gave as he left the place. An' me lookin' at him all the time, an' hadn't power, you see, to speak to him! Many a long year after, when I found out from Vara Halliday how the Spaniards were saved an' this grand gentleman espaycially, and how he had been askin' for me, an' where I lived, an' every-thing like that, I knew it was no sperit I had seen but Master Juan's body and bones."

After hearing all this, Mrs. Fitzstephen retired to her own room and did not appear again till evening, when her face was as calm as usual, but ashy pale.

From that day forward Noddy Kinshela was never suffered to ask charity on the streets of Galway. She was regularly installed as a life-member of the Fitzstephen household to the great delight of Maureen, and also of her mother-in-law, who spent many a sadly-pleasant hour retracing with her the memories of by-gone days.

When St. John's Day came around again and the Claddagh men marched through Galway town, Fitzstephen again stood on the balcony, but the Admiral's daughter leaned on his arm attired with the elegant simplicity which became her dignified position as the wife of one of the first merchants in the city. Loud and long were the cheers that rose from the multitude as the Admiral stopped in front of the balcony, and it would be hard to describe the feelings with which the father and daughter regard-

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ed each other. As Maureen gracefully bent her head to the reiterated cheers of the fishermen, the eloquent blush and the beaming smile with which she looked on them plainly showed that the wife of Fitzstephen was still in heart the Admiral's daughter, in feeling identified with the bold and brave fishermen amongst whom she had grown to womanhood. But a deep shadow fell on her beautiful face, and the tears rushed to her eyes as she thought of Brian Kineely mouldering in the grave, and the dashing, light hearted, hot-headed Shan Driscoll far away and alone amongst the sea-beaten rocks of the Clare coast. The feeling was understood and appreciated by the Claddagh men, and they whispered to each other in a sorrowful tone the once-familiar names of the hapless rivals who had so long striven in vain for Maureen's love. Many of the by-standers caught up the mournful sounds, and repeated the names with audible comments. Even those who had led on the city-mob on that day twelve months, against the Claddagh-men were now loud in their lament for the missing champions, and the stout blacksmith who had dealt such heavy blows on that luckless night was heard to say with the tears in his eyes :

"Poor Brian Kineely! sound is your sleep this day! God rest your sowl in peace!—and sure its lonesome they look without Shan Driscoll—the bravest heart and the stoutest arm that ever reefed sail on Galway Bay!"

The following months of that summer were spent by Fitzstephen and his bride on Arranmore Island, and there in the seclusion of their home on the rocky shore, Maureen, under her husband's tuition, began her acquaintance with the mysteries of nature and the works of art. Surrounded by the desolate grandeur of that wild and remote region, she learned to read the history of her country in the mouldering monuments so profusely scattered around her, from the Cyclopean walls of the pagan fort to the elaborate finish of the Gothic arches and columns, fragments of mediæval churches and abbeys.

Margaret Behan had during the summer become the wife of Captain Hamilton and was gone with him to Malta. Mrs. Fitzstephen would not hear of keeping house alone with Charlotte, and her son and daughter-in-law were pleased to make part of her household. Nor was it long before Chatty took her place amongst them—her mother being written to on the subject, expressed herself quite willing to leave her there—"for the present," she said, but every one knew that that meant *in perpetuo*. Poor old Aileen had at last gone the way of all flesh, and Shan Driscoll left the village as already intimated.

The rage and mortification of the Hamptons may well be imagined when they saw Maureen O'Hara raised to the position so much desired, and so anxiously sought for Emily. And Noddy Kinshela took good care that their disappointment should not be forgotten by them, for, however she managed it, she very

often happened to be in a shop where the Hampton ladies were showing off, and although she could well have carried home her purchases, she made it a point to order them in an ostentatiously loud voice, "for Mrs. Giles Fitzstephen," glancing maliciously at the same time at the still imperious though chop-fallen Hamptons.

When the herring-fishery came round again, some twenty or thirty of the principal Claddagh men including the Admiral and his sons, took to trawling, and their ancient prejudices once overcome, so much more advantageous did they find the system, that in the course of a year or two nearly all the hookers had become trawlers, to the unbounded satisfaction of Fitzstephen. So entire was the change in this respect and so completely had the old system fallen into disuse that a modern ballad makes one of the Claddagh men sing:

"I'm a Claddagh boatman bold,
And humble is my calling,
From morn to night, from dark to light,
In Galway Bay I'm trawling."

THE END.

