

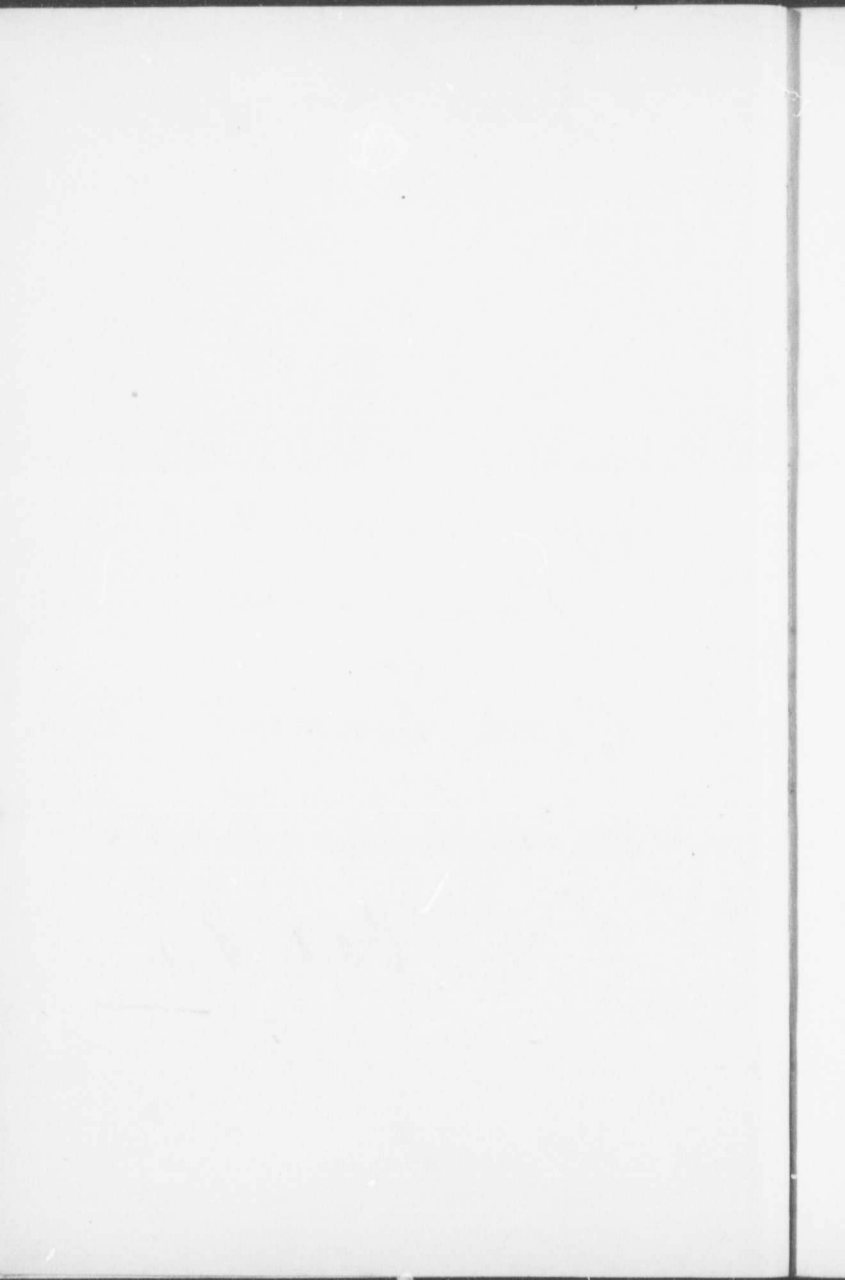
KINGSTON'S REVENGE



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A MASKED MAN HAD JUMPED THROUGH THE WINDOW,
SMASHING IN THE FRAMEWORK.

[See page 119.]

KINGSTON'S REVENGE

A Story of Bravery and Single-hearted
Endeavour

By

E. H. WALSHE

Author of 'Cedar Creek,' 'The Foster Brothers of Doon,' etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY J. FINNEMORE, R.I.

LONDON

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY

4 Bouverie Street and 65 St. Paul's Churchyard E.C.



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NOTE

THIS story originally appeared under the title of
"GOLDEN HILLS."



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KINGSTON'S REVENGE

A STORY
OF SINGLE-HEARTED ENDEAVOUR

Chapter I

OPENS THE GATE

A SLANT ray of weak January sunshine fell athwart a farmyard gate, between two poplars, which stood in a row of such lank sentinels, edging the avenue which curved away to the road. In the path of the sunbeam stood a child, looking between the broad bars of the gate. He could have opened it—for the fastening was a wooden latch within his reach—but his eyes were riveted on a huge watch-dog, lying in front of a kennel. The glistening black nose was laid on the strong, straight limbs, tawny reddish ears hung down on each side, and the bright brown eyes stared steadfastly at little Harry Burke. Once when his hand touched the latch, with a faint-hearted idea of entering, Hugo growled deeply, and Harry took back his fingers as if the bolt were red-hot.

"How'll I ever pass him at all at all?" said the little fellow, with a disconsolate face. "Sure 'twould be aisy for him to ate the likes of me intirely; I'm afeard I'll have to go home again, an', afther Miss Liney axin' me to the school, mother'll be vexed."

Hugo here raised his vast tan-coloured body, and walked to the limit of his chain, uttering a smothered grumble of affection. Harry recoiled to the shelter of the gate-posts at first, as he did not comprehend the beast's language, and had a lively fear that it might import some design against himself. But presently, peeping out, he saw that Miss Lina had come from the house, and was patting the head of the terrible dog, while she looked from the gate.

"Ah, Harry, I wondered whether you would come to-day," she said. "You will not be afraid of Hugo after a little while. He is not cross when he knows people."

So she opened the gate, and Harry entered, keeping as far from the dog as possible, and followed Miss Lina to a door in the outbuildings. It opened at the foot of a rickety staircase, leading to a long, low room under the rafters, which seemed to be a repository of lumber. Here, on chairs, Lina's scholars were assembled, a few poor children, looking cold in their thin and worn clothes, by whom Harry was greeted with a recognizing grin.

"Come and warm your hands for a moment," Miss Lina said to him as she arranged the sods of turf on the hearth into a bright blaze. "Rub them together; they are very cold, poor little fellow!"

Lina's two hours of teaching were nearly come to a close when the door below was heard to open stealthily; and presently, above the highest step of the stairs, was seen a boy's face, crowned with bright curly locks under his cap, his eyes sparkling mischievously.

"Hope the educational establishment goes on well, ma'am. Want any corporal punishment administered? I've the whip in first-rate order." He lashed it with a resounding report as he sprang into the room.

"Frank, dear——!"

"'Frank, dear' is not going away; it's of no use to tell him; he's longing to have at some of the naughty boys. This chap looks contumacious—eh, ma'am?" The whip pointed to Harry. Master Frank leaned against an aged cabinet, which creaked and trembled with his suppressed laughter at the dismayed faces of the scholars.

"You will really frighten some of them," Lina said, gently putting her hand on his arm; and if that hand had not touched him lovingly, and her eyes looked pleadingly into his, Frank's recklessness would have continued to make fun of their

terrors for some time longer. As it was, he only made choice of another line of teasing.

"Frank, I cannot teach them while you remain," Lina said, with the slightest tinge of peevishness in her voice; whereupon he rejoined wilfully that he should stay as long as he liked.

She was sorely tempted to a retort, but closed her mouth resolutely against the rising words of irritation. Frank mimicked the accent and slow speech of one scholar who was reading in a manner so ludicrous as to stir even Lina's lip with a quivering smile, despite her vexation. He saw it and was encouraged; he quite upset Harry's newly taught notions of the alphabet by misnaming all the letters, and put some frightful stitches into Mary Connell's work. Lina taking no notice of his tricks, after a little he bethought him of some other pursuit, and withdrew his mocking presence.

When the pattering feet of her scholars had gone likewise, the teacher sat with hands folded, and a saddened curve on her lips, reviewing her failures of heart-duty. She knew how easily Frank could upset her equanimity: it was her most vulnerable point; she heard his irritating laugh in the yard and Hugo's deep baying as he provoked the dog to bark at the barefooted children. "Oh, Frank, Frank, how you do tease me!"

Not the first time by many that she had made this exclamation; and no endurance seemed suffi-

cient to harden her against his petty powers of tormenting. Lina was of a nervous temperament, not very strong in health nor very elate in spirits : the boisterousness of his very mirth often overpowered her.

"I will not leave the room till I have quelled this irritated feeling," she said half aloud. "I must not permit myself to be so easily excited. I—a Christian ! what a miserable Christian !—made angry by a boy's play. Oh for an unruffled spirit !" Lina hid her face in her hands : it was serener when she raised it.

"There goes Saint Lina from all her good works !" Frank exclaimed as she emerged from the door. "A fig for the good works that don't help one to keep one's temper !" he added mischievously, observing the sudden flush that mounted to her forehead. Lina paused as if to speak. He held up his hand as though to ward off a blow, and retreated, laughing in his mocking way.

A calm, cold afternoon settled upon the world. Haze thickened from the broad sea like frozen breath, and hung over the low sun a reddening veil of vapour. The Golden Hill, so called from a tradition of extinct mines, was purple and violet, because of its much heather ; but the buildings on its lower slope—Lina's home—were ruddy with the westering gleams of day. A spur of the hill

was protection against the full sweep of the sea-wind.

Before Mr. Kingston's house was a wide bay, fringed with brown cliffs on the farther side, perforated with caves and deep inlets, into whose recesses the waves rolled thunderingly evermore. White patches of snow, which had fallen with the coming of the new year, and were still unmelted, diversified the faded fields.

Lina walked rapidly, in the face of this view, by a narrow road leading to the shore. In the curve of the bay was a fishing village of some two score straggling cottages, and a solitary pier stretching out into the blue water, at which a pilot-boat lay moored. On the beach the slow-coming tide washed over round pebbles, and drew them back again in its reflex, with a rolling sound like distant thunder.

A knot of boys, chief among whom was Frank, were looking at something intently. The object of curiosity was a stranded fish, a broad monster, more than half jaws, and having a bunch of thread-like filaments growing from its head. Frank recognized the creature as the fishing frog, which burrows in the sand with its birdlike claws, to lie in wait for prey, having its filaments floating above as baits. Frank felt proud of his knowledge, and of his audience, though only ragged boys; but, seeing Lina, he hailed her with a halloo.

"Where are you going to? Is it for a walk? Don't look cross if I say I'll go with you: it's your duty to welcome your brother with open arms. Let us come and see the Puffing Caves; they are in grand action to-day. Look, there's a jet!"

He pointed to a column of white vapour shooting some sixty feet into the air from behind a promontory at a little distance. "Do come, Lina. Brennan says they're magnificent to-day; the swell is right in from the south-west."

"I was walking to meet father and William."

"And I know they'll come by the shore road," Frank added eagerly. "They always prefer it; and father will be sure to remember that the caves are puffing to-day, and will want to see them. We can see the car pass from the cliff."

"But we could not stand in the cold, Frank. I think it is freezing already." Lina shivered.

"Here, take my comforter." He had it half-unwound before she could protest. "I am all in a glow. I ran down from the hill. Girls are so chilly, always. There's Laura has not stirred from the fire all day."

Lina scarcely heard his chattering as they walked along rapidly. A common anxiety engrossed her, one which had lain down and risen up with her for many a day, concerning her father's safety; for the times were perilous in Ireland; men's lives were of little value in the eyes of the lawless Riband

tribunal, which held the country under a reign of terror. The newspapers were filled with outrage and assassination, every week some new tales of murder blotting out the old with more horrifying details; and never did her father or brother spend a day from home but the hearts left behind were pained with anxiety.

Frank threw himself on the rock to listen to the reverberation of the surge rolling into deep caverns far beneath.

"Isn't it splendid? Just listen to the grand roar!"

They stood where the falling spray from the momentarily dissolving vapour pillar could not touch them. Onward came a great green wall of water, whitening at top, through every shade of aquamarine, into snowy foam; it swept majestically into the yawning caves; an explosion, and a white jet was forced upwards by the confined air thirty feet over the cliff; and when the surge reached the narrowest-mouthed and inmost of the caves the solid rock was shaken by the energy of its repulsion, and a column of fine white vapour was hurled aloft nearly seventy feet into the air.

Lina was always silent when much impressed: she had now no words to corroborate Frank's ecstasies. She looked on in a kind of fascination, till Frank proclaimed that the car was coming.

Lina met her father with a tight pressure of the

hand, which caused him to look at her particularly. His was a quiet, breezeless face; clear-cut, composed features, with a keen, steady eye beneath the bronzed forehead. You could have told that a heart of iron bravely beat under that broad breast. From his front pocket projected the shining muzzle of a revolver.

He walked over upon the cliff to look at the sea.

"I am glad you have returned so early, father. How did the court business get on?"

"The prisoners were committed for trial," he said. Then, after a slight pause, looking at his daughter's face, where anxiety was very legible, he added: "I am not afraid to do my duty, Lina; and you must not let your little heart be perturbed by possibilities, which are not probabilities. I trust in Providence."

Chapter II

BEFORE SUNRISE

IT was a few minutes past six in the morning when Mr. Kingston unlocked his study door, and entered. A fire had been laid ready for kindling ; with matches and paper he made it blaze up speedily. Falling flakes of snow sputtered into it, which had lost their way down the chimney. Moodily he sat and looked at the flame, leaning back in a leathern arm-chair the while, the candle guttering down at his elbow, because of a draught from the open office door. Gleams of the light flash back from the bright, long barrel of a rifle, lying in brackets over the mantelpiece. A shot-pouch and powder-horn are fitting pendants at either side. Between them hangs a peaceful water-colour view of the Lower Lake of Killarney, suggestive of some rich August sunset.

This room resembles its owner's mind, which is the case with many rooms which men adorn for themselves to live in. Not much of anything that is not practical and useful is here. Writing

materials are on the green cloth, and red-backed books stand in orderly ranks, promising no more interesting literature than accounts, and rent-rolls, and maps of townlands. An open blotting-sheet bears the impression chiefly of the firm, strong signature R. B. KINGSTON, in every variety of diagonal, as each autograph chanced to be printed down upon it. Yesterday's letters are here, under the weight of a bronzed greyhound couchant ; and one of them is, I suspect, the cause of Mr. Kingston's early rising this morning.

A very ill-written, ill-spelt document, on copy paper, with a drawing, more spirited than correct, of a blunderbuss at top, a skull and cross-bones at the end, the intermediate paragraph being as follows:—

Tak Notis if yew turn out John Carmody, or if yew witness agenst the Gradys at the Sizes that we are redly for yew and make yer Will and bye yer coffin for the Guns is redly and yu will share The fait of Smith so Be warned in Time.

CAPTEN MOONLITE,

Mr. Kingston examined it closely ; saw where the paper had been torn from a larger sheet, with symptoms of having been perhaps sewed into a book, once ; took a letter from a bundle labelled in a drawer, and compared both, selecting the same words in each, and noting the special forms of spelling peculiar to each. "No, no," he said

aloud, "not resemblance enough to found any charge. All these fellows write like the school-master that taught them ; it has no idiosyncrasy."

A tap came to the door: Mr. Kingston folded up the paper quietly. It might have been any friendly letter by the unembarrassed countenance which looked round and saw Lina entering, bearing a little tray.

"Father, I've made a cup of chocolate for you ; I feared you might not be well ; I heard you coming downstairs."

"Thank you, my daughter."

Lina was timid ; she felt as if she had intruded. When the chocolate had been five minutes neglected she found opportunity to observe: "It cools quickly, father ; I think you will say it is good when you try it."

He drank a cup absently, and bade her bring her books, or work, and sit with him ; which done, he took no further notice of her, but sat writing rapidly, covering sheet after sheet with his large, decisive handwriting.

By and by he said, speaking so suddenly that she started: "Could you find time to copy this? Your doing so will save William the trouble, and will oblige me."

She was glad to be able to do anything for him. Eight struck by the accurate office clock before she had ended, and closed the book marked

"Confidential Correspondence." Something connected with that copying had caused her eyes to fill and her face to colour as she bent over it.

"Father, if the people knew that you write for them in this way! But they don't; they think you hard and stern, father; they do not know your kind, kind heart." Lina's lips trembled, and she turned away her face.

"Look," said her father, showing another sheet. It was a letter, short and decided, to a bailiff residing near the farm occupied by John Carmody, informing him that, on a day named, the sub-sheriff would be at Ballymore, to evict various families for non-payment of rent. "This is the side of your father's character that the people see, Lina; you will allow that they have reason, seeing no farther, to think me severe. I cannot show disapprobation of Mr. Everest's proceedings openly, no matter what I may think of them. Indeed, Mr. Everest can hardly help himself; his estates are heavily encumbered and his expenses large."

"But if the tenants knew that it was not your fault——"

"Impossible; John Carmody imagines that if he could get speech of Mr. Everest he could prevail on him to remit all arrears. I bear the odium of everything."

"It is hard that you should, father!"

"Don't trouble your little head about it," he

said lightly: it was a favourite phrase with him. "Tell me, how gets on your school? Remember there are pens and copy-paper in the office whenever the pupils are sufficiently advanced. Thank you for this morning's work, Lina." And she felt sufficiently rewarded by one of her father's rare, bright smiles.

A little before noon, when the sun asserted itself in the hazy heavens as a spot of weak brightness, a countryman came up the avenue. A strongly built, black-browed Celt he was, with a slouch in his broad shoulders and a furtive look about his small eyes.

"Here's Carmody of Ballymore," said Mr. Short, the chief clerk, setting his spectacles up on his forehead. "He's a bad chap, and there's nothing for him but the turn-out. They say he's a sworn Ribandman—eh, Michael?" which, being addressed to a subordinate, received an immediate assent, after the manner of subordinates in general. "I don't like to have much to say to those Ribandmen, they're dangerous customers."

Mr. Kingston had seen the arrival of his visitor, and took down the shining rifle from its brackets with an odd smile on his face, and went into the outer office.

Chapter III

AN "INNOCENT"

"GOOD morning, Carmody," said Mr. Kingston, entering the office. "Sit down on the bench; I'll be ready for you in a few minutes. Short, you wanted to look at this," and he laid the rifle on the counter. "You observe it is a revolving barrel: fires four shots in succession as quickly as you can pull the trigger."

While Mr. Kingston explained the peculiarities of its construction Carmody's eyes never moved from the gun. It had some sort of fascination for him. Mr. Kingston noted the stealthy watch.

"I never missed a mark with it the score times I have used it," he said, raising it till the muzzle fronted Carmody's face, and the peasant's grey eyes could look into the dark bore. Mr. Kingston could mark the slightest wince on his part—perhaps from some unpleasant association of ideas.

"Not much heavier than a horse-pistol," declared the clerk Michael, weighing it in his hand. Mr. Short declined to touch it, asserting truthfully,

little peaceful man that he was, how firearms affected him with a cold thrill. Carmody examined it with interest, like one used to weapons of the kind.

"It's a fine gun," he pronounced; "the finest I ever see," he added, touching the glittering lock admiringly. "Not that I've any way of knowin' much about thim; but I'm sure it looks handsome anyhow."

"'Twould split a hair," chimed in Frank, who was writing at a desk. "I saw father hit a knot in a tree at ever so many paces off four times running."

Mr. Kingston stood with his back to the fire. Short was tolerably well versed in his master's ways, yet could not quite understand the reason for his exhibition of the new rifle at this juncture; and the still, grey face told nothing. The clerk mended a pen while he thought over the matter: when he raised his head and noted Carmody eyeing the gun, his understanding received light, and the old face puckered into a smile.

"Come into the study, Carmody." And the peasant strode in, after much preliminary scraping of his heavy-nailed shoes. "Sit down there." The gentleman took from a case four cartridges; he was going to load while he talked. "Well?"

Carmody never liked to meet the full gaze of those keen, powerful eyes; he had a bad consciousness about him, and twisted his glance away as

much as he could ; but even in his own despite it would revert to the firm, close lips of his interrogator.

"Why, sir"—he moved uneasily in his chair, as if he were a great cockchafer, pinned by the steel glance of Mr. Kingston—"I came to know about that little holdin' of mine—whether I am to be let keep it on—"

"Certainly not ; you know as well as I do that Mr. Everest will allow no defaulters on his farms. You came here for something more than just to hear a repetition of that, John Carmody."

The hand of the peasant closed more tightly, till the muscles stood out like whipcord on his sinewy wrist, over the bludgeon he held, as the gentleman turned to the table and took from under the greyhound weight a paper, which he opened and held before the other's eyes.

"You wanted not to be identified with this," Mr. Kingston said ; "for surely the man would not dare come to speak face to face with another man whom he had threatened to murder ! But it's not your writing, Carmody ; you were wiser than that. Now, mark me. The police know that you are a Ribandman, and you'll be found out yet, as surely as I speak to you. What will follow then you know as well as I can tell you. But if you give up your land quietly and decently, I'll try to get a passage to Quebec for you. I won't take any answer from

you now," as Carmody was about to speak, "for it is not well to decide in a hurry. Go home and ask the honest woman, your wife, whether it's better to stay here and starve, or go to Canada and begin a respectable life again. Good morning to you. The sheriff will be at your house on the twenty-seventh."

Carmody went out of the office in silence. But he could have strangled Hugo for growling after him: the beast's fine instinct knew the treadings of an enemy. Passing down the avenue, he merely thumped the gravel hard with his stick; but when on the road, as it turned off from the gates, he stood still and shook his fist savagely towards the house, muttering between his unshorn lips.

He was startled by a burst of discordant laughter close by.

"Ha! ha! Johnny, me boy, so yer mad with Kingston, are ye? Maybe I won't go up this minit to the great house an' tell Miss Liney, who always has a bit of bread for poor cracked Sally; an' what's more, a kind smile——"

"If ye do——" growled the man, raising his stick.

"That's brave! strike me, do!" She stood without wincing. The poor creature was dressed in faded rags of finery, and had no fewer than three bonnets on her head, which made her look somewhat tall. "Do break my head, and let out the life

that has always plagued me, an' I'll be thankful to ye!"

With a mischievous grin he knocked off her head-dress, and the tangled mass of bonnets hung round her neck by the strings.

This incensed the poor creature; she snatched up a stone and threw it after him, and as it passed wide of the mark he mocked at her futile rage. His own temper was the cooler for his success in rousing hers.

"Aye, laugh yer best, for ye'll come to a bad end, ye coward! An' I know what ye do of nights, when there's nobody but the white moon lookin' at ye: an' only that yer wife gives me a drink of milk a' times, an' let's poor Sally warm herself by the fire, I'd go to the station this minit and tell the Peelers, so I would."

"Tell what?" asked a man who suddenly appeared on the scene. Instantly the eldritch mischief disappeared from her face and gave room to a vacant expression.

"Did ye spake?" she inquired innocently, while she re-erected the pile of bonnets on her head. Her eyes grew cunning. "I know ye for all ye're in a frieze coat, Constable Nolan; it's a pity ye have a nose that's so aisy remimbered."

The discovered policeman had the wisdom to smile and say she was a "knowing one," which compliment pleased her.

"I could tell ye," she said in a whisper, putting her hand beside her lips—"I could tell ye stories of things that happens when everybody is asleep, except me an' the moon—things I see in the fields, marchin' an' rangin' about, an' that aren't fairies neither, but have guns like sojers."

"Do tell me," he said, a little too eagerly.

"Maybe I don't see 'em at all: people tells me they're all in my head; an' troth I feel very quare sometimes. I'll go up an' see Miss Liney."

"Stay a minute. I know where there's a nice new bonnet, with pink ribbons, an' green flowers inside. My wife has it at the barrack."

"Has she?" The woman's wild blue eyes had something of a steady ray in them for a moment. "Would I get it? 'Twould be handsome intirely on the top of these."

"So 'twould, true for you; an' if you show me where you see these sights—over on Slieve-more, maybe?"

But she had no idea of being questioned beyond what she thought proper to reveal, and became suddenly stupid.

"I'll go up and see Miss Liney," she repeated.

The baffled constable looked after her as she went along with her usual unsteady gait, singing a snatch of an old song. "A deep one," was his reflection, which she would have deemed a surpassing compliment, and perhaps, to deserve it, would

have showed him all the miserable shallows of her poor brain had he been a little more skilful.

Hugo never snarled at poor Sally: she was a licensed intruder, and in a few minutes sat by the kitchen fire, talking to the women servants, who in Ireland have a great respect for witless people. Sally had arts of ingratiating herself with her hosts all over the country, taught her by necessity in the course of her wandering life. She had, too, intervals of comparative sanity and calmness, during which nothing could exceed her kindness and readiness to help all who came in her way. Every wake and wedding in the parish had a place for the "poor innocent": she brought the latest gossip to all the farm-houses, and could sing ballads to no end. Just now she had passed Ben Malone, the handsome young pilot, at work caulking his boat under a shed, while he whistled "Colleen dhas crutheen na moe"; and she imparted this information to Nelly, the housemaid, in a very meaning manner, part of that damsel's occupation being the milking of cows; the result of which was the creation in Nelly of such an amiable state of mind that before Sally left next morning she had fresh trimmed her topmost bonnet with an old yellow ribbon of her own.

Lina had once tried to teach this poor woman how to knit stockings, knowing that the making of them might be a source of earning to her; but her broken memory could not retain the narrowings

and widenings necessary. Nevertheless, she had now completed a woollen pair for Mr. Kingston, and when Miss Liney came to the kitchen by and by she eagerly produced them. Marvellous hosen were they! Nelly grinned behind her apron and cook looked attentively into a drawer: no one dared laugh openly at Sally, who had been known to charge such offender like a tiger-cat. Miss Liney said that she would show them to her father and retreated precipitately. Mr. Kingston drew them on over his boots, very gravely.

"She has done her best, and I thank her," he said.

Sally was very proud of his coming to speak to her during the evening, and her affection for the family was thereby riveted. She would have scouted a payment in money for her effort, but the payment in kind words was invaluable.

Chapter IV

AFTER SUNSET

THE eviction took place at Ballymore, as decided upon. Houses were levelled, and families turned out on the roadside to seek shelter in the Union workhouse. The poor people built themselves sheds in the dry ditches, as covering from the keen February weather. They were bitter of soul against those whom they regarded as oppressors, and they were ripe for any revenge. And so the lawless Riband confederacy flourished among them.

One evening crazed Sally came in her wanderings to the edge of the cliffs, where "the white-toothed waves," as the Celt calls them in poet-phrase, ate away furrows into the solid stone, and had, in the course of ages, worn a wide channel between the mainland and a detached portion of cliff which reared its hard, black front against the west winds, being battered by them all winter-time and seamed with channels from spray showers. Now the salt waves only kissed its obdurate feet with a submissive

ripple, as if meekly seeking forgiveness for the outrages of wild nights past. An island farther out, distant perhaps two miles, was purple, lying on its own purple shadow right across the golden pavement of sunbeams reaching westwards. A lighthouse was the only building upon it, and suddenly the lantern was kindled in face of the glowing heavens, like the outflashing of a red star.

Gloriously, as if all the monarchs of earth were witnessing the pageant, the monarch of the skies passed to his rest, while the spectators were but rows of puffins, standing solemnly on the ledges of rock, and one woman on the summit of the cliff. She was sitting at the extreme verge, her hands clasping her knees and her eyes looking to the west. Mournfully fixed were those mindless eyes when the molten pearl of moonrise had begun already to gush over the horizon.

Not far off, and somewhat beneath her, was a natural arch of rock, bridging a tumultuous channel of frothing waters: vexed by hidden obstructions, they continually chafed—as many a temper of apparently causeless turbulence has the matter of disquiet in its depths of private life, and should not be rashly judged by those who see only the tempestuous surface. Abated by distance from this great height, the sound was like a breeze in the air, and under the black bridge shot broad, level bars of the last sunlight.

People had been gathering weeds on the rocks, it being low tide ; but which of them cared for the wealth of beauty in sky, air, and sea around them? Stifled with daily needs and daily cares, they heeded it no more than the browsing cattle. They piled the olive masses of weed into panniers ; and women toiled, barefooted, with long trails of whipcord, fuci, and bladdered leaves hanging from their burdens, up a steep ascent, which you or I would hesitate to attempt unloaded. There was no lack of light-heartedness, though their food was no better than potatoes boiled in sea-water for a relish, and their clothes were rags, and their huts not waterproof, their subsistence depending upon fields which had yielded chiefly corrupted crops last autumn. Yet could they dance and sing and be happy, after the fashion of the wild birds whose nests lie within sweep of the mower's scythe.

The crazed woman on the cliff-top saw none of their doings so far below. In a sort of trance, her brain was calmed by the witching hour. The weed-gatherers departed, having set fire to a pile, which should smoulder in pale smoke against the cliff-side till morning. And when the moon had fully risen, her fair, full face shorn of vapours, clear as argent on the horizon's ring, Sally clapped her hands triumphantly.

" My bonny Lady Moon ! I'm waitin' for ye ; an' ye're comin', wid yer sweet, pale looks, up out of

the say to me, my darlin' ! " She sprang on her feet, and a long shadow fell behind her on the grass. And she talked to the moon, pouring forth wild fancies and imaginative ravings : she was excited ; surges were in her brain, as of a tide obedient to the planet.

" There's cracked Sall going on wid her vagaries ; I'm thinkin' she'll be over the cliff some night into the say," observed one of two men who were crossing the hill a short time afterwards. " She doesn't heed hersel' no mor'n it was the middle of the country, but dances an' sings away on the edge of nothin'."

The other man, who was John Carmody of Ballymore, stopped short and looked towards her.

" I tell you what, Tom Riley, that one knows more than she has a right to ; I hear the Peelers below said she gev 'em a hint ; an' if I thought she was a spy—" He clenched his fist as an expressive ending to the sentence. " She's wandherin' about continivally ; one doesn't know what she might not see or hear."

" Arrah, man," said Riley, who was his brother-in-law, and a good-natured young fellow in the main, " sure she's an innocent ; who'd mind the like of her? "

" She'd better take care what she's about, for all that," said Carmody, with a scowl. " She'd be aisy

given a push some night," he added, with an evil grin.

"The craythur!" said the other compassionately. "Let her alone; she's as harmless as a little bird, an' as witless too."

"Aye, is she? Wait a while," said Carmody. "Look here, Tom; when you get up to Ballymore, don't go into the house; yer mother'll be watchin' to keep ye from the meetin'. Stay at some of the neighbours till I call for ye about twelve."

The young man acquiesced, though apparently something connected with the advice was not palatable. "I wish I was done wid ye; I wish I was off to America," he said.

"A fine chance you have of gettin' there, too, when Kingston has taken everything we have in the wide world," rejoined Carmody. "You ought to have more of the spirit of a man in you."

So the tempter and his dupe passed on.

On nights when the moon was out, poor Sally often walked miles along the cliffs, talking to herself in a wild way; for like over-much wine was that strong, serene light on her brain. But this evening, before midnight, the sunset clouds crept higher, and soon intercepted the silver on their own dark bosoms; and, after some maudlin tears for the loss of the bonny moon, the crazed woman yielded to natural fatigue, and lay down in a recess of a cavern near the shaft of the deserted mines. She had often

slept in like places : a hayrick had been her weather-guard, or an empty cart her shelter from a shower ; for at her restless times she did not like to disturb people's houses by taking lodging for the night. Now she slept soundly, but, after an hour or so, had a dream of voices. She opened her eyes upon a dim light, which appeared to come from another part of the cave.

"It must be done before the assizes, anyhow," said a voice, which she recognized as Carmody's. "It's the only chance for the Gradys, poor boys ! for nothin' 'll frighten him from swearin' against them."

Sally's wits were collected in a moment ; she understood who was unnamed by the conspirators.

"Watch him through the windows ; there's often a light before they close the shutters," suggested another voice. "Often he goes out to take a little walk in the dark, too, afther the day's work."

Whispering consultations followed : they were drawing lots. Sally tried to creep nearer to the opening. In the effort to change her position, a pebble loosened from the rubbly side of the cave and bounded on the rocky floor.

"There's some one in the cave, some place."

This was contradicted by another, who had searched beforehand. But the crevice where Sally had lain to sleep was partly protected from observation by a jutting shoulder of rock.

"Anyhow, I'll look again; an' it's worse for themselves, whoever they are," said the first speaker, seizing the candle. Sally laid herself down noiselessly and closed her eyes. Nearer came the footstep of the searcher—nearer—the light flashed on her face. By some strange advent of common sense and power of immobility her eyes never moved!

"Just as I told you, Tom Riley," he said.

Sally never winced a feature: the man passed the candle close to her eyes, but not a muscle quivered; he listened with bent ear to her breathing—full, deep, like one in heavy slumber.

"The woman's fast asleep."

"Fox's sleep," rejoined another. "If I thought she was eavesdroppin', I'd sink her in the sea as I would a stone"; and he watched her face narrowly for the effect of the threat. Not a shadow of change; but secretly the poor woman's blood crept chill.

"I'll tell ye what, the only way to match her is to row her over to Mutton Island an' lave her there."

After a hurried consultation this was agreed to.

Sally counterfeited astonishment well when wakened with a rude shake, and raised herself, staring about bewilderedly.

"Oh, how surprised she is!" sneered Carmody. "She'll be more surprised to see her new lodgin's."

Resistance was of no avail; she was paddled

across to the rock over against which she had sat to watch the moon rise. To the land side the islet presented nothing but a steep succession of ledges, forming a lofty cliff ; on the other side it slanted to the sea's edge, and was grassy above high-water mark. Here she was left alone. Sheep were sometimes brought to browse on the islet, whence its name ; but it was deserted now.

Poor Sally broke out into loud lamentations, not altogether for herself, but also for the crime which was about to be committed. " Oh, Miss Liney achora, little ye know what's comin' to ye this night, an' the black plan they've laid in their wicked thought ; an' they put me off here fear I'd tell. The poor mather—he had always the kind word for me. Oh, if I had any way of gettin' off I'd bring him warnin'. An' thin I know I'm not very cute in meself, an' maybe I'd forget all about it. Oh, if I had any way of gettin' off ! They'd see me from the lantern, maybe, whin they're puttin' it out in the mornin'. A boat mightn't go by for the livelong day if the waves is fresh. Oh, Miss Liney ashore machree, to think I have the news that 'ud save him—only I can't bring it to him ! "

She sat down in shelter of a projecting rock, and swayed herself backwards and forwards, moaning grievously. Stars were shining brightly, and Jupiter reflected a pencil of light on the wavering waters ; the lighthouse burned on the dark island with a

fixed red gleam, the lantern being just visible over an intervening height of cliff. On this rock nothing lived but sea-birds and shellfish. Despite the cold, the crazed woman slept at last, till the grey February dawn lighted on her face and waked her stiffened limbs. She watched then for the extinguishing of the burners at sunrise ; and when sea and sky were in a glow of yellow mist, and the artificial star paled like its antitypes in the skies, she anxiously looked for a figure in the gallery of the lighthouse. But the keeper's glass only swept the sea-horizon, where a solitary sail was passing to America ; and poor Sally's waving apron to landward did not catch his attention.

The day on the rock passed not unhappily ; she had a child's capacity for simple amusement, and easily forgot circumstances, however adverse. Hunger only set her to searching for shellfish, which she ate, opening cockles with a stone. She knew also the edible seaweeds, and picked out a little pile of white corrigeen and purple dillisk, drying the latter in the sun ; made for herself a headdress of long brown leaves, wreathed together with the grape-like fucus, which she wore for some time, to the rejection of even the triple bonnets. Finally, she adorned the bonnets themselves with fantastic trimming of weeds, and so passed the hours almost as profitably as Miss Laura at Golden Hills, who put on and altered a ribbon fifteen times in

the course of the morning before the bows suited her fancy.

In the dusk of the evening poor Sally grew low-spirited again. Not that she had any clear sense of her position on this rock, imprisoned by the sea : she might be starved if rough weather continued long. She sang a mournful dirge for the absence of her friend the moon as night came on, dark and breezeless. Suddenly a distant sound of oars afar off came to her ear. Eagerly she listened, all her desire of leaving the islet returning strongly. Presently she could hear the plashing of the water ; she called loudly, and ran to the water's edge.

" You poor craythur, what brings you here ? " said the kindly voice of a fisherman. But she either could not or would not tell. As soon as she set foot on the mainland remembrance returned upon her like a flood. Away, away to Golden Hills to give warning.

But it was three miles distant : how should she ever be fleet enough ?

Chapter V

WAKING THE DEAD

WHEN Carmody was ejected from his farm, he and his family had gone to live with Mrs. Riley, his wife's mother, in a small cabin at Lissard Point. Sometimes he got a day's work for insignificant wages, as the supply of labour in the country was nearly double the demand: having to work at all, however, galled his proud, idle spirit. He was no comfortable housemate nowadays. But, for her daughter's sake, the widow bore with him—except in one matter; she could not endure to see him leading her son into lawless courses. Old enough to remember the turbulent years of a half-century ago, she knew what it all came to—disgrace and death. So far as her weak woman's watching could avail, she exerted every nerve to keep her son from the bad company that must ruin him.

All the day that Sally spent upon the islet Tom stayed at home, making a net with curious silent pertinacity. Some deep gloom seemed to have settled down upon him. At meals he spoke not,

and hardly ate, but worked at the net as if it were of vital importance. Carmody did not appear to care to question him; his mother's few words were repulsed. Towards sundown he went to a rock pool and bathed his face and hands; returning to the house, he put on his best grey riding-coat and a pair of shoes of some pounds weight, clamped and heeled with iron.

"Yer goin' to the wake, Tom?" observed his mother.

"The very thing," he answered. "Maybe I won't be home to-night at all. Don't be unaisy if I'm kep' at Morissy's."

"I'm always unaisy about ye of late, Tom; 'twon't be no new thing," said his poor old mother.

He went out without answering.

The scene of the wake was near Golden Hills. For some time before reaching it the sound of the Irish *keen* met his ears in fitful gusts, wailing wildly through the air. Tom Riley crossed himself once or twice, for the plaintive music struck his nerves with disagreeable suggestion of the dead. As he turned up the narrow byroad to the house he raised his voice in the *keen*, as all visitors were expected to do, and cried it as mournfully as if he had cared one farthing's worth for the corpse within.

The kitchen table had something lying upon it, covered with a white sheet; candles burned at the head and foot, seven in number; the prin-

cial mourner and nearest relatives sat beside in silence, except for an occasional wild wail.

Truthfully they grieved to all seeming, though the dead woman had been only a burden of decrepitude on her family for years. Bonds of blood are kept earnestly sacred, even amongst the poorest Irish; they think it mean to send a helpless relative to parish shelter, so long as a roof-tree remains to any of near kin. This cabin bore the aspect of deep poverty; the walls were chiefly of round beach stones; the ragged thatch was upheld by rafters of driftwood, through which rain dripped abundantly on wet nights. Yet, poor as was the household, its most valuable possession, the pig, had been sold on that day, in order to purchase tobacco and whisky for the night's regale, and thus do honour to the dead—as they esteem honour—at the cost of six months' privation.

Tom Riley walked through the cabin, and raised aside the white covering for an instant's look into the coffin, where the withered face, which had in its lifetime been querulous, was composed into marble stillness now.

"Mrs. Morissy, ma'am, the whole country's sorry for yer trouble," he said to the middle-aged daughter, sitting beside: "she was the dacent woman always, and has left dacent people behind her."

With this compliment, he retired among the rest

of the sympathizing friends assembled, who were smoking and drinking, amid many a suppressed laugh and jest. He had none of the mirth. He sat gloomily upon a pile of turf-sods, of which material most of the company's seats were constructed; the occasional giving way of an ill-built settee being only productive of pleasant excitement.

"There's Ansty Brennan's *keen*; I'd know it any distance," observed one of the women, who had a sleeping child on her knees. "She's the beautifullest keener in all the counthry side, far an' near."

Among cultivated circles, Ansty's voice would have been called a contralto of great richness and compass: women of strong character more generally have that class of voice than the soprano: here, they paid her the homage of being silent, with one consent, as the full, melodious notes floated into hearing. It was a fine work of art, nearly as expressive as natural sorrow would have made it. "Och wirrasthru! why did ye die?"

The woman came in, her handsome face and bold dark eyes framed, as it were, by the hood of her blue cloak, which she threw back presently.

"Isn't it a wondher she ain't married, an' sich a fortin as she has!" remarked a brown-faced, merry-eyed little woman, who sat beside a pedlar's pack near the fireplace, where a great blaze leaped up the wide chimney, and emitted a glow into the

air above. "They say she has for sartin ten pounds in money, besides an iligant bed an' a dresser of delf plates, to say nothin' of all the linen an' frieze she spun for herself. I was just sayin', my dear," she remarked, when the object of the conversation came up, "what bad taste the boys has to lave you as you are."

This was spoken in a confidential tone, loud enough to be heard by everybody. Ansty Brennan bridled.

"Maybe 'tisin't their fault, Mrs. Mack," she said haughtily.

If anything in the shape of woman was dreaded by the latter intrepid female, it was the vivacious little pedlar, who had now a reason for offence, in that she spied upon Miss Brennan's shoulders a gaily coloured worsted kerchief which had not been purchased from herself. Also there was the perennial grudge of old battles about prices: Miss Brennan was of a disposition so screwing that the pedlar declared it "fair ruination" to attempt selling to her; she generally at once proposed a reduction of 50 per cent. on the offered terms. From this a chronic spitefulness existed.

Having better game in view than a personal skirmish could procure her, the pedlar made her way down the room to a group at one side. "Misther Doyle, here's iligant side-combs, only thrupence a pair; an' Miss Liney at the big

house has mostly the same ov 'em in her hair; all the quollity wears 'em; Miss Carroll there wud like to thry 'em, I'll be bound, and they'll loop up her fine hair delightful. See, won't they?" and she fastened one at each side of the lady's strongly auburn locks. "An they're bran new," continued the pedlar; "I knows thim that has taste."

Of course the combs were purchased; and other gentlemen being piqued by Mr. Doyle's example, Mrs. Mack disposed of her stock on the spot, at a net profit of three-halfpence per pair. The pedlar would get rich at this rate. Soon afterwards, she was deep in negotiation about a lilac print, which she asserted roundly to be the best, purtiest, and genteelest ever sold by her.

"It's clear to be the handsomest colour; for look at all the little flowers out in the fields—blessin's on them—they're mostly lilac, barrin' thim that's blue an' yaller, of coorse."

"If you'd take the price in male, Mrs. Mack—but I couldn't give ye the money; I don't hardly ever get a ha'penny of my own."

"Take the price in male!" ejaculated the pedlar, beginning to fold up the piece. "If I was to take all the male that's offered me, I could set up a mill, a'most. No, Katty, me dear; sorra bit but I'm throubled to have to refuse yer father's daughter, to say nothin' of yer own self, that's as purty a girl as any in the barony; but it couldn't

be at all at all." With that she draped some folds of the print against the wall, and left it to make its own impression.

"I ax you now, Misther Riley, wud it be fair to take male for *that*?" pointing to it admiringly. "Sure the whole world knows it wouldn't!"

"Well, Mrs. Mack," said the fascinated damsel, when the pedlar returned from an expedition to the end of the cabin, "if ye'd take even a part of the price in male, maybe I could get a couple of shillin's."

"Is it a girl of the Careys to be widout money—*Moryah*?" and Mrs. Mack snapped her fingers. "Don't tell it to *me*, anyhow, Katty, honey. Sure it's only sevenpence ha'penny a yard—as chape as a rag."

"I can't take it, av it was only fippence, onless you're satisfied to have the male for part," said the pretty Kate Carey, rather firmly.

"Come hether, asthore": the pedlar beckoned mysteriously with her forefinger. "You an' me'll settle it between us; but mind you don't tell any one, for the life 'ud be pesthered out of me to be doin' the same all the counthry round. An' only for the ould friendship between me an' yer father, honest man—well, no matther, our young days are gone by for good an' all. How much money have ye, honey?"

"I have——" Kate's thoughts reverted to the

cracked mug on the top of the camp-bed where she and her sisters slept, and which was her bank of deposit: "I have, let me see—two shillins in shillins, an' a crooked sixpence, an' ninepence ha'penny in coppers, an' a farden."

The pedlar had these moneys summed together in a moment. "Sure ye have the whole price of it, all to fippence! an' to go an' ax me, a poor lone woman like me, to take the price in male! Katty Carey, I'd never expect the likes from you!"

With an injured air she walked over to her property, and smoothed the folds with her brown hand. "It would make a beauty of an Injee black," she soliloquized. "Male, indade!"

Katty, who had not intended to admit the amount of her coined treasure, which had taken months to accumulate to this point, and with the chief of which she wanted to buy a neckerchief, as an Easter gift to her father, felt as if really the pedlar had some reason to be offended, and was inclined to agree to her terms.

"That woman 'ud scrape moss off a flint," observed a neighbour complimentarily. "Not but it's a good calico, Katty. Husho-o." She began to lull her child, lying across her knees. "Little Art is very onquiet the night; I'll have to go home wid him, I'm afeard."

"Give him to me for a while," said good-natured Kate Carey; "you must be stiff wid him heavy in yer lap the whole night."

The hot, sleeping child was laid in her arms, which closed round him naturally and tenderly as woman's ever do round childhood.

"Now let me make the bargain for you about the cotton," said the grateful mother. "Wait awhile, till she's softened wid the cup of tay, an' I promise you 't isn't sevenpence ha'penny a yard you'll be givin' aither." Which was verified in the sequel.

"Did ye ever see anythin' blacker than Tom Riley's face, all this night?" whispered the pedlar to her nearest neighbour. "He's in wid the Black-boys, they say; an' one never knows what they're goin' to be afther."

"He didn't spake a word to Kate Carey the whole night," remarked the other; "an' people used to be mintionin' thim together."

"Arrah, Misther Riley, yer mighty dark in yerself this evenin'; wouldn't ye be timpted to make a present to anybody?"

"Not I: I haven't any coppers but one penny."

"Here's an iligant ballad for that, anyhow," said the pedlar, seizing the coin. "But sure yer a good debtor, Misther Riley."

He stood up, and made his way past her to the door, whence a black-browed man had glanced once or twice within. Riley joined this person, without speaking, and they walked away together into the night.

Chapter VI

A DEED OF DARKNESS

THIS evening of the wake happened to be two days before the assizes. Mr. Kingston intended to set off for the county town next morning, and Lina was busily employed in packing his clothes into his portmanteau.

"I think I will go and take a brisk walk to the top of the hill," he said; "I have not been out of doors to-day."

"It is late—quite dark," objected Lina.

He might not have heard her. He went downstairs, buttoned on an overcoat, and walked forth. Turning his face from the lighted windows, he looked towards the long grey fields, reaching upward to the heathery brow of the hill; and his lithe figure ran rapidly along the narrow rocky road winding among them.

The exercise exhilarated him; the very tips of his fingers felt a glow, and in his brain the dustiness of the day's work was clearing. The ascent became steeper, and his breath short; so he reined

himself in, and walked quietly. Nothing living on all the bleak hillside but himself, except a hare, which his feet startled, and which bounded away into the darkness on the other side of the fence, as if the county hounds had been after her.

When near the summit, he turned round, and saw far below lights twinkling where his house stood; lights in a few of the cottages on the beach, and the broad gleaming sea lying beyond, spread out to the brown Heads. Through a streak in the uniform grey clouds one bright star shed a line of tremulous silver upon the water. Crows flying overhead in the dark air made a muffled sound with their wings as they travelled to the rookeries of Golden Chase.

Now, as Mr. Kingston stood thus looking, a consciousness stole over him that he was not alone. Something human was near. He heard no stir; his sharpest senses could detect no presence; he held his very breathing; silence like the grave was on the hill. He smiled to himself for the folly of his impression and walked a few steps homewards.

Again! he had thought of business matters in the interval; but, as if he had been touched by some finger—as if he had been whispered to by some voice—came the conviction that he was not alone. No footfall—no twig snapping—no shadow—no echo—what childish nervousness is this? The

keen eyes could see nothing but the long dun slope of the hill, and the fence beside him, when he looked around. But he felt. It was inexplicable—indescribable. Spirit had consciousness of the presence of spirit, and prescience of something to come. Half involuntarily he called aloud, "Any one there?"

A blinding blaze—the cutting of a bullet through the air close to his head was the instant answer. Probably his sudden shout had saved his life, by causing the hand on the barrel to swerve for the merest fraction of a second. Without an instant's thought, he plunged over the fence on the side whence the shot came, and saw something running along, crouched under the shadow of the wall like an animal. Mr. Kingston's hand was in his waistcoat; he withdrew it and fired his revolver. A stifled moan seemed to be mixed with the report. Where he had seen the cowering creature he stumbled over something—a horse-pistol dropped in the drain; it was warm as he grasped it. But no further trace of any person could he see. He walked through the neighbouring fields, and examined the fences, as well as he could in the thickening darkness; he watched and listened; but nothing came to his ear, save the sob of the sea against the shore; nothing to his eye but the blotted heavens and earth.

When he reached home he admitted himself by

a pass-key through the office entrance. Bolting the door that he might be free from interruption, he struck a light and examined the pistol. The lock yet reeked with the powder which was to have killed him. The damp upon the handle was—blood. Faugh! his own fingers were stained with it. He supposed that the almost random shot from his revolver must have struck the hand of the assassin. That would be a clue.

For the first time the possible consequences of his own firing occurred to his mind; he might have had a life to answer for; and the heart which had never quickened its throb at the moment of danger did tremble to think of this. He made a resolve, which he afterwards fulfilled. The pistol was laid aside in a secret drawer; he went to his room to wash his hands, and occasioned the housemaid's conjecture that "Master has 'cut hisself."

He was unusually affectionate and bright that evening. Mrs. Kingston asked whether he had been firing while he was out. There had been a debate at the fireside as to certain sounds heard, one party maintaining that father's revolver had certainly been discharged.

"Yes, I did fire."

"Ah! I was sure of it; I'd know its noise among fifty pistols," exclaimed Frank triumphantly.

Frank was anxious to know whether anything

had been hit, but could not reiterate the question while his father was reading the newspaper so intently.

Tea was upon the table, when the door was suddenly burst open, and poor Sally appeared. She was a wild figure ; the bonnets, with their seaweed trimmings hanging limply down, had slid about her throat, and her scant yellow hair was frownsed with the rapidity of her running ; and there was something so alarming in the stare of her eyes that Lina and Laura stood up. But when her gaze met Mr. Kingston's a change came over her ; the startling demeanour grew humble and quiet.

"I ax yer pardon, ladies," she said, "an' I didn't want to frighten ye at all, only to spake to the mather a couple of words."

"My dear," said his wife, *sotto voce*, "are you not afraid to go with her? she is evidently mad." Mrs. Kingston held his coat for a moment ; but the face that smiled back at her removed her fear. "Pour out another cup of tea," he desired ; "it will be pleasantly cool when I return."

"And now, Sally, what do you want with me?" he asked, as he closed the study door. "You should have come in more quietly ; you alarmed the mistress and the young ladies."

"Because," said she, covering her eyes, with a shudder, "I had a sight before me the whole

night—I seen a bloody corpse lyin' in yer honour's room—an' it didn't go from forenent me till I laid eyes on yer honour in the parlour."

"Aye!" said Mr. Kingston meaningly; "and what put that into your head, Sally?"

"Oh, then, wild fancies I do have, sir; but oh, yer honour, don't be goin' out in the dark any more, nor be dhrivin' lonesome dhrives; an' keep the shutters up tight, yer honour, for I hear tell there's thim abroad that's sworn to have yer life!"

Mr. Kingston looked at her fixedly.

"You must tell me where you heard this, Sally," he said.

She was cowed by his gaze; her glance shifted uneasily. "They'd think no more ov heavin' me over the cliff, no more'n if I wor a pebble," she said, as though to herself. "I daren't—I daren't, sir, tell you anythin', only to take care of yerself; 'deed, I f'gets everythin' mostly; I donno, often, whether I'm tellin' thruth or some of my cracked dhramins, sir," she said.

Mr. Kingston mused a little. It would never do to threaten her with the law; he must try some other means.

"Sally," he said, "you might really save my life if you told me who to beware of."

"Maybe I could gather courage to-morrow, yer honour; only let me alone now, for I'm wake in meself afther the run I had over the cliff here.

Yer honour, Mither Kingston, if I'd do it for any one in the world, it's for Miss Liney's father ; but, sir, I'm often wandherin' in out-o'-the-way places, an' 'twould be aisy for them to put me down in a bog-hole unknownst, some night. I'm afeard, yer honour, I'm afeard."

The poor creature looked so ; she shivered visibly.

"Go into the kitchen and have some supper."

Mr. Kingston was buried in thought awhile ; and, going back to the parlour, said that he should not go away on the next day, as he had intended.

But early in the morning he went up the hill, with Hugo as companion. He soon found the place where the man had kneeled to take aim, and where heavy shoemarks were in the soft earth—he bent over these and took a drawing of the hob-nailed impression in his pocket-book. Hugo, who had been snuffing about, bayed when he came to dark spots under the next fence—for he had some of the bloodhound nature in him, tawny brute that he was—and speedily scented a continuance of such marks in the further field. Afterwards he was at fault. The wound had apparently been stanchd. With his stick Mr. Kingston stirred the mould over these marks and the footprints. He seemed to find tracks back again, as if the man had returned to search for his pistol in the night. But they were lost on the moory ground near

by, and in marshy soil where a spring wasted into a shallow pool.

Just as he was turning homewards something caught his eye among the stones of the rocky road. It was a bit of the wadding, half burnt. Opened out, it proved to be a fragment of a ballad about a shipwrecked sailor. Mr. Kingston flattened it carefully, and laid it by in his pocket-book.

Chapter VII

ON THE TRAIL

IN the course of the day a pedlar-woman came to the back door of Mr. Kingston's house, and was showing her wares to the servants. Her pack was spread out on the kitchen table, comprising a varied assortment of flaring handkerchiefs, cotton prints, vivid shawls, and marvellously cheap ribbons. On the ground reposed her basket, filled with the usual red-edged looking-glasses, large enough to mirror one's chin ; scarlet primers, adorned with the customary frontispiece of a female instructing a child, in proximity to a beehive ; pink papers of pins ; remarkable little pictures of saints in yellow glories ; and a streamer of ballads frothed over the edge. The owner of this tempting lot was, of course, the small brown-faced woman whom we met at the wake last evening. In daylight her brownness is seen to be composed of an infinity of minute freckles ; her black, bead-like eyes twinkled with mingled shrewdness and good humour in their setting of crow's-feet.

"Now take it, Nelly Fisher, an' ye niver ped fippence a yard for a betther article. Why, it's dog-chape; look at the matarial; hould it up atween you an' the light, honey." She pulled the girl to the doorway and shut her left eye knowingly: "If ye biled it an' baked it, the colour wud never loosen."

"I like it well enough," said Nelly, "all to the price"; and she walked to the fireplace carelessly, as if she did not lay much stress upon the purchase. "'Deed, an' now I look at it this way, the pATTERN'S a'most faded-lookin'."

"Faded-lookin'! arrah, what's come over yer eyes, asthore?" demanded the pedlar, setting her arms akimbo. "It's the bright colour that's in yer own cheeks when *himself* is by, that's just it! I wouldn't be the same young man the first day you puts that on you, Nelly Fisher!" Whereat the housemaid blushed, and drew near to the table again, averring that Mrs. Mack's tongue "wud coax a bird off a three, so it wud"; and that lady proceeded to tap the nail thus inserted, and fix it deeper.

"That I may be sellin' you the weddin' dress," said she—"if I wouldn't sooner give you this than any other calico in the lot; for pink's yer becomin' colour, Nelly, an' I'll uphold it before all the world."

None of the servants being inclined to controvert

this assertion, Mrs. Mack's momentary belligerence subsided into a smile of intense friendliness.

"I suppose I may as well take it, you sootherer," said the damsel.

"How many yards, honey?" inquired the pedlar, producing a yard measure. "All the quality takes twelve; an' as you're a tall, likely girl—"

"Oh, ten will do for me," was the reply.

"Very well, asthore. An' the linings, of coorse?" as she rapidly checked off the yards, pausing at the tenth. "Now, are you sure ten will do? Flounces becomes a tall figure; an' I know for sartin that Biddy Carey'll have 'em next Sunday, for I seed the gown at Mrs. Stitcher's makin'."

This was irresistible; and the twelve yards were cut off. "Threads, an' hooks an' eyes?" interrogated the pedlar. "An' a pennorth of whalebone. I ax yer pardon, sir, but I didn't observe yer honour," she said, dropping a low curtsy to Mr. Kingston. "I'm gettin' deaf an' ould, as we all must expect; an' sure 'tis nothin' to be ashamed of, neither. If yer honour or the missis wants a bit of linen now, rale home-spun, I've just the bit that wud make darlin' shirts for yerself or the young gintlemen. There's only little things in the basket, sir, that yer honour wouldn't be bothered wid." He was turning over the sheaf of

ballads, and picked out one, with a dim woodcut of a vessel standing on its head, in an alarming and highly unnatural manner.

"Do you sell many of these?"

"'Deed an' I do, sir, middlin'. The times is bad, an' money is scarce, an' I never gives nothin' on credit, which goes agin me in the way of thrade, sir." This was quite as much for Nelly's benefit as a reflection growing naturally out of the subject.

"Very good," was his remark. "Were you going about much this week back?"

"Barrin' Monday," said the pedlar, considering, while her chin rested on the yard-stick, "barrin' Monday, when I was in my bed with the rheumatic, an' had a pain in every bone of my body—an' I never knew I had so many bones before—I was on the road a-Tuesday an' Wednesday. I'll be reduced to an ass an' car at last, for in coorse 'tisin't younger I'll be gettin'—leastways, if I could afford it, which I can't." The shrewd eyes watched how the gentleman took this hint. But he merely said—

"I suppose you were at the wake last night?"

"'Deed an' I was, sir, an' more be token 'twas there I sould the last ballad I had like the one in yer honour's hand, to Tom Riley, of Lissard Point."

Suddenly Mr. Kingston had the knowledge he

sought. He tossed a penny on the table, and went out of the kitchen, with the words echoing after him: "Maybe the missis wud be wantin' the thrifle of fine linen I has?" She drew from her vast pocket a small bag, and dropped therein the penny, among many coins odorous of fish.

"Short," said Mr. Kingston, summoning his head clerk into the study, "what kind of a character does that young Riley, at Lissard Point, bear?"

"Very fair, sir; used to come here with his mother to pay the rent of their holding, regular, before the hard times." Mr. Short's highest idea of character was a punctual payment of the landlord's claims.

"A remarkably tall young fellow, with big feet?"

"Can't say about his feet, sir; but he *is* remarkable tall," said the clerk.

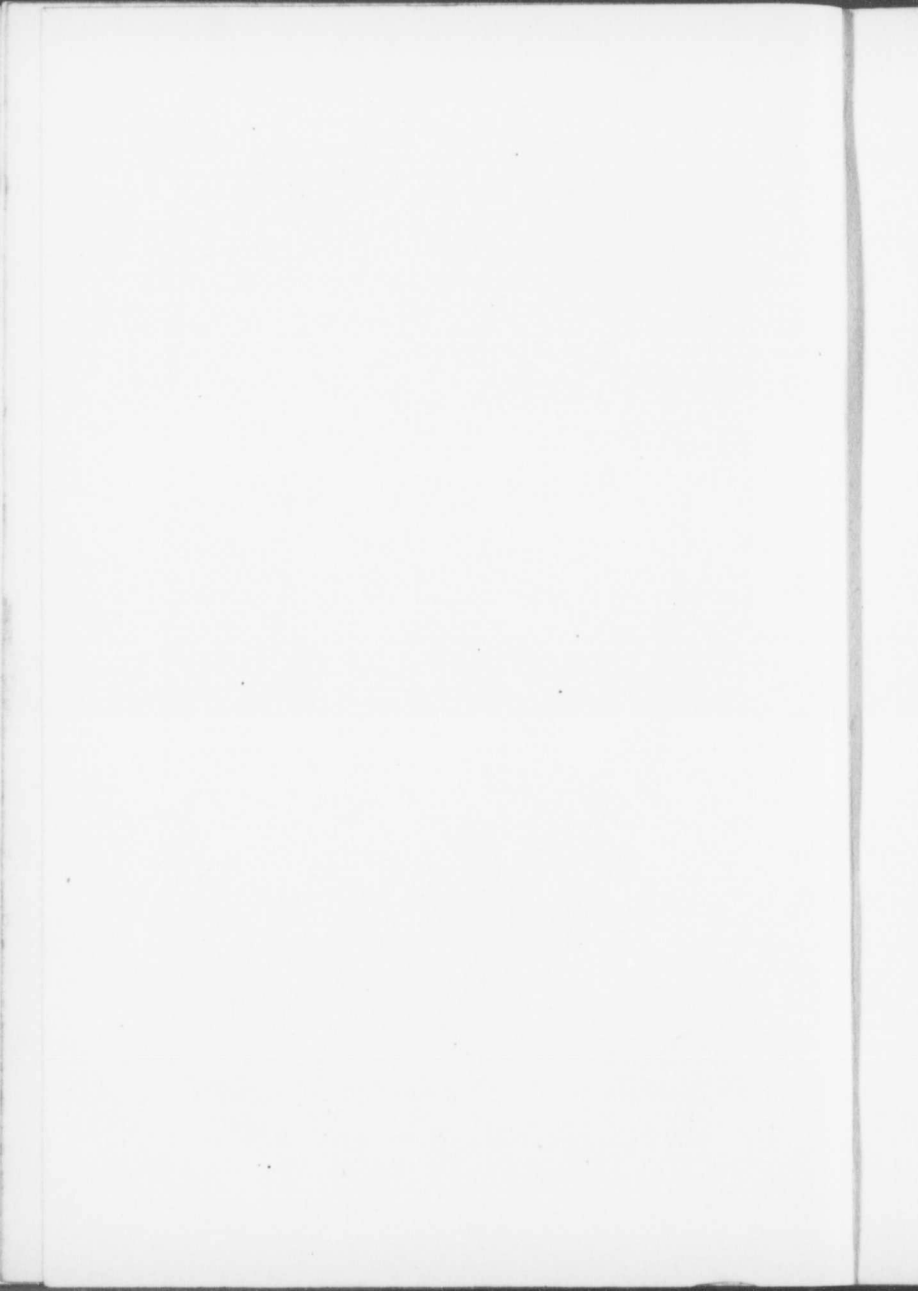
"You never happened to hear whether he had anything to do with the Ribandmen?"

"Well, sir, I know he's got a bad brother-in-law in John Carmody, who was turned out at Ballymore; and they're in one house since then."

Mr. Kingston put the ballad in the same secret drawer with the pistol, and the wadding, and the sketch of the footprint—all mute evidences of an attempted crime. He then wrote a letter, which



WITH A MISCHIEVOUS GRIN HE KNOCKED OFF HER HEADDRESS.



caused the next Report of the Bible Society to contain the following entry: "Thank-offering for an Escape, Twenty Pounds." And those of the family at Golden Hills who read reports, some months afterwards, on seeing this, wondered what the nature of the escape could be, and who was the donor.

When Mrs. Kingston went out for her usual afternoon drive, her husband walked beside the car as far as the village on the beach, where was a smith's forge, of course—this is the focus of every cluster of Irish cabins—and men were at work round the flaming fire, beating the glowing iron into useful shape, by a process analogous to that which many a human heart must undergo before it be tempered for its fit work. A horse waiting to be shod was tethered to a staple in the doorway, and seemed to snuff the heated air gratefully. Mr. Kingston spoke to the smith, and bade him send a workman up to Golden Hills immediately. Then, catching sight of crazed Sally at a little distance, he went towards her.

"Don't be afraid"—for he saw that she would have avoided the meeting—"I shall only ask you one question. Was not Tom Riley, of Lissard Point, one of those sworn to take my life?"

If she had answered nothing he would have seen enough in the sudden change of her face—the startled, incredulous look—to verify his words.

"Yes," Mr. Kingston said; "and Carmody, his brother-in-law, was another?"

"Yer honour"—the poor woman stumbled in her words, and could not speak aright, for this knowledge struck her as supernatural—"I dunno where yer honour found it out, but it's throe."

The trail of the criminal was becoming clearer.

All the external fastenings of the house were examined, and strong bars ordered for the ground-floor shutters. Lina looked into the drawing-room while the measurements were taking; heard part of a consultation respecting the relative value of bars horizontal and bars diagonal as fastenings; and went away with her poor little heart trembling. Her father evidently considered the house in danger. She heard them going from room to room below, remaining long at the hall door, trying the locks and bolts. She knew that her father had chosen the time of her mother's absence for the investigation, to spare her just such painful fear as Lina herself was feeling.

Was the fear not wrong? Should she not, as a Christian, have more trust, and reckon more securely on the care of her heavenly Father? Lina feared that she could not be His child, or she would not be so timid. The thought of His supremacy seemed to give her but little strength or comfort.

She opened a book upon her table, and the

page she looked at contained this cordial from stout old Richard Baxter :—

Now here I leave all self-pretence,
Take charge of what's Thine own ;
My life, my health, and my defence
Now lie on Thee alone.

What comfortable words ! “ Oh, surely,” thought Lina, looking up with a happy smile, as the realizing of the second line filled her heart, “ I belong to Jesus. What have I to fear? Life, health, all I have and am, have I given to Thee, my dear Saviour. And Thou hast given me Thine own precious self ! Lord, I believe ; help Thou mine unbelief. I will trust, and not be afraid : in God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.”

Tears of joy filled her eyes. For a little while she experienced the highest rapture on earth—she realized the oneness of her soul with Christ her Saviour ; and she feared nothing.

Chapter VIII

TRACKED TO THE LAIR

CONSTABLE NOLAN was in his garden, sauntering about the narrow walks—if a word so indolent as sauntering could ever be applied to that brisk official—picking up an odd weed, and looking admiringly at the yellow and lilac crocuses, which already shed light over the barren beds. He glanced along the road at either side of the station every few minutes—the chief part of his business in life being to keep a bright look-out—and was presently rewarded by seeing a jaunting-car coming. He knew the grey horse, and Mr. Kingston driving; he threw the weeds on a rubbish heap, outside the yard door, and went to meet the gentleman.

“ Good morning ! Cold weather ! Can you spare me a man to Castlebay ? ” were Mr. Kingston’s words, when the horse drew up. “ Just as well to have a guard, Nolan. ”

“ Aye, sir, of course ” ; and one of the privates was called to buckle on his belt and bring his firelock.

Mr. Kingston passed the reins to William as he stepped down from the car. "Constable, a word with you. There's a dangerous knot of fellows somewhere near Lissard Point," he said, when they had gone aside. "John Carmody is one—he that was evicted at Ballymore."

"I know, sir," said the constable, with a nod. "He's a real bad chap, only he's so 'cute we've no way of catchin' him. I watches that man as I used to watch Mary before we wor married; an' his 'cuteness is wonderful."

Nolan appeared to relish it, rather; and truly nothing struck him as so admirable as the outwitting of himself. "I was on patrol all last night, sir, an' if the country was dead, we couldn't see less than we did. Where them fellows has their meetin's, an' how they contrive to know every movement of ours, is amazin'."

"Keep your eye on Lissard Point, in any case," said Mr. Kingston. "There ought to be a police-station there."

"Sure enough, sir; the district's too large to be trustin' to this one," said the constable. "I'll watch Carmody, sir, never fear."

Lina had accompanied her father in the car; she was going to Castlebay to make some purchases. She sat with her brother William on one side, her father and the policeman on the other side.

"You need not be frightened at seeing the

policeman," said William, noticing her change of colour. "Most of the gentlemen drive about now with such an attendant. Mr. O'Brien wanted papa to do so long since."

"These are terrible times in Ireland, Willie," she said.

He got possession of her cold hand, and chafed it in his own: though gloves were between, Lina understood the kind pressure. With a little effort she said: "William, I am not afraid, when I remember that Jesus is our kind Saviour."

Her brother looked away to the long, straight road for a minute or two. An honest face was his, though in feature irregular and in colour sallow; the great grey eyes were sunk below black brows, and a dark dawning of moustache stained the long lip. He looked round at her again.

"If you are quite sure that He has saved your soul, I don't wonder that you are not afraid, Lina."

"Dear Willie! I *am* quite sure, at times. And oh, it is such happiness!" she added.

"Why doesn't it last always?" he inquired, with his eyes averted.

"I suppose because I look at myself, and not at my Saviour," she answered, after a pause.

"I never felt it," he said, after another silence. "I do not know the joy of feeling that I am redeemed. Let us pray that God will give it to me."

Both were silent for a long space. They were passing through a country of bogs, where the principal elevations were stacks of turf, and the principal depressions pools of black, stagnant water. But beyond the mountains rose, heaved against the blue sky in bare angular masses. White cottages dotted the slopes at distances, and the summits were purplish heather, with faint traces of snow lingering high in the cold solitudes.

Castlebay was a bathing-place in summer, and boasted of a superb strand, where the footing never played false and the waves were almost always gentle. Regiments might be manœuvred on that sheet of smooth, hard sand, when the tide left it bare; and when the great semicircle was filled with water, fringed at the edge by a triple cataract of tumbling surf, there was no finer expanse of land-locked sea on all the west coast.

But now whole ranges of houses were shut up; for it was the dead season, and the blinded windows seemed mourning the fact.

Wave House, the residence of Mrs. Orme, Mr. Kingston's aunt, looked less lugubrious than its fellows, owing to a consciousness of inhabitants. It was sheltered by the broad side of the church, and paid for its shelter by a mild inland view of fields, with only one or two deserted bathing-boxes to suggest the vicinage of ocean. Its name, therefore, which hinted such extreme intimacy with the

waters, was a misnomer bestowed only in accordance with local usage, and very undesignedly took in people who read advertisements each June, setting it forth as "an elegant furnished mansion, fit for a nobleman's or gentleman's family"; and who straightway pictured to themselves a residence overlooking breakers, which are refreshing objects in summer, when viewed from dry land. Mrs. Orme and her sister Jemima at such times took a trip to Dublin, till October emptied Castlebay again. Both remembered Mr. Kingston at an age when he found delight in gingerbread and candy, and when a stubborn sentence in *Horace* was the worst evil life contained.

"Now, my dear," said Mrs. Orme as he entered, "before I shake hands with you, take that odious thing out of your pocket, and put it with the muzzle away from me on the table next to the door."

Mr. Kingston laughed, and deposited his revolver as desired.

"Jemima, don't shake the table as you pass, and don't brush against it for your life," added the old lady to her sister, while she abstractedly shook hands, and permitted Lina to kiss her cheek. "Suppose it were to go off"—she looked at it apprehensively—"what would become of us?"

"As at present placed, my respected uncle's picture would be shot through the heart," said

Mr. Kingston, in the manner of one accustomed to these reflections on his firearms. Lina exchanged a very affectionate greeting with the other old lady, who also kissed William, when he entered with his rough, long step; and his feet were followed by Mrs. Orme with the same nervousness with which she had looked at the revolver.

"You are going to the assizes, Richard?" said the old lady.

"Yes. I shall take the coach this evening, unless something occurs to make it desirable I should stay till to-morrow," Mr. Kingston replied.

"In which case you will make our house your home," said the old lady a little pompously.

"Thank you, madam. I must be off now," he said, seizing his hat and gloves: "there's a meeting of magistrates at the court-house."

In the afternoon he saw Lina for a moment, to say that he should not be able to leave till the next day, and wished her also to remain.

The evenings at Mrs. Orme's house were uniform. Night after night, through the three hundred and sixty-five, did Jemima rise to make tea at the first stroke of eight, and Biddy, the maid, brought in the hissing urn before the last stroke. A large tortoise-shell cat, which had slept for an hour on Mrs. Orme's knees, was consigned to the servant's hands, that it might be laid on its own couch. This evening the deviation was that William was

employed as a cutter of bread and butter into the thinnest shavings—popularly supposed to be particularly palatable to ladies; and whereof, when prepared faultlessly, nobody partook but Lina, and she from self-sacrificing principles.

They were in the midst of the meal—Mrs. Orme concocting chocolate for herself out of a little silver kettle, and feeding a white cockatoo, whose stand had been brought near her for the purpose—when the maid entered with a message that “Misther Lance Brady” wished to see Mr. Kingston, who immediately went out, leaving his tea unfinished. A few minutes afterwards Lina, whose ears had a habit of watching her father, heard the hall door shut and steps receding on the frosty ground.

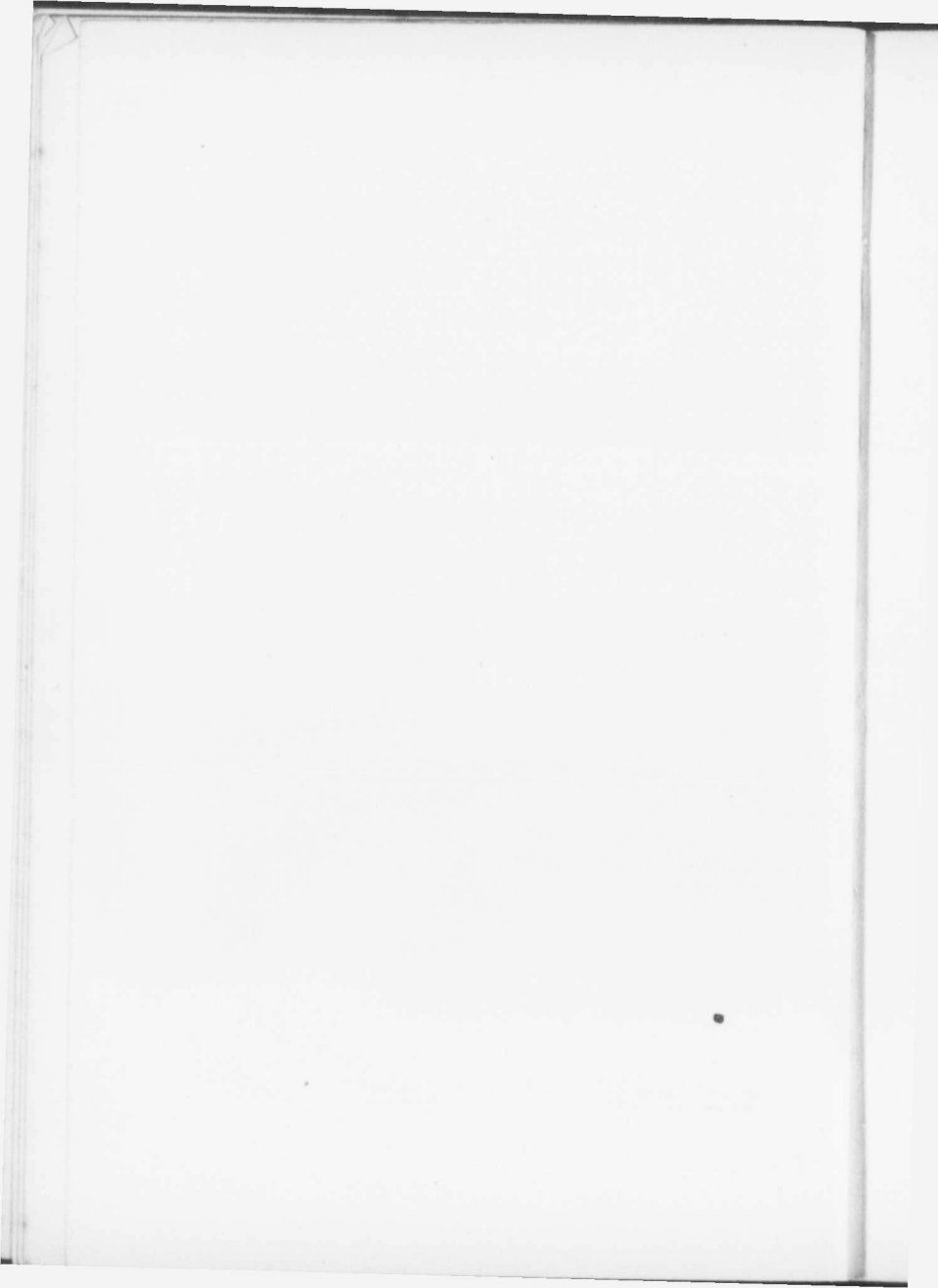
“Gone out this bitter night!” exclaimed Mrs. Orme, ringing for fresh coals. “Dear me, there’s no managing men. I hope he wrapped up well, and wore a comforter round his neck, and cork soles in his boots.”

Whereas Mr. Kingston, at that moment, was walking quickly on the road skirting the beach, with even his great-coat open; a pace or two behind him ran Lance Brady, his bailiff and outdoor factotum, who, endowed with shorter legs, could only keep his place by a series of jumps.

“I sarched all the entertainment for man an’ baste in the whole town, sir, an’ nobody answerin’ his likelihood was there at all at all. An’ ’twas



HE STAGGERED AGAINST THE WALL WITH HIS FACE WHITE
AND SHIVERING.



by an acciden', sir, that I see a little girl carryin' some plasters in her hand, out of Vize's shop, where they sells ointment an' the like, sir ; an' I axes her where she be goin', an' she tells me there be a sick man over in Westthrop's, wid a broken hand. Sure the foolishness of me not to remimber that the Westthrops is cousins of the Rileys."

"Well?" said Mr. Kingston.

"So I gives her a pennorth of peppermint, an' walks up wid her to the house; he's there sure enough, an' he's taken a sthrange fancy to lodgings in the stable, sir—he! he!" laughed the ugly face of the speaker.

"Did you see him?"

"Oh no, sir—I suppose he'd be five miles away out o' this before now, if I axed afther him at all. I just went in friendly, sir, and talked to the honest woman about the hard times, an' got a pinch of snuff from the old man, sir."

Mr. Kingston was taciturn after this; and Lance Brady was fain to content himself with watching the sparks struck from the flints in the causeway as his iron heels tramped over them.

After walking some distance the place was reached; and Mr. Kingston climbed the rickety ladder which led to the loft over the stable. Riley was lying among the hay of the loft, with his face to the wall, as the light approached. He either thought that the person coming was one

of the family, or he was half-asleep; for he did not move, though he moaned. Mr. Kingston asked—

“Does it pain you so much, Tom Riley?”

The man started upright, as if he had received a ball in his heart; and there was no strength in him. He staggered against the wall, with his face white and shivering.

Chapter IX

MR. KINGSTON'S MANNER OF REVENGE

RILEY'S face was a confession. The blank terror of his eyes, cowering beneath the steady gaze of Mr. Kingston, was as conclusive of his guilt as any evidence of accomplice. His wretched heart had played false, and turned betrayer through every line of his features. The colossal frame was unstrung by that consciousness; he was rather heaped against the wall than standing, in the misery of his fear.

"I have your pistol," said the gentleman in his low, still tones; "I have the remains of the wadding which you used; I have the print of your shoe"; and he glanced downwards at the huge foot, which was involuntarily drawn back. "No need for that: I took a drawing of it from the yellow clay of the bank where you stood to take aim."

The criminal answered nothing: his huge bone and sinew might have crushed the speaker; but never did pigmy tremble in the grasp of giant more than he cowered before his accuser.

"They chose you to attempt my life because you were young, therefore had no family ties; and they reckoned that your skill could not fail: you are reputed a good shot; I have heard of your bringing down a gull on the wing. Now, what will you give for your life?"

The wretched face quivered and grew still more ashen. The broken hand hung down pitiably in the disordered bandage, loosened by the aimless picking of his fingers in his fear. His blanched lips opened to speak, but uttered no sound. If Mr. Kingston had wanted revenge, these moments had been enough.

"I fired at you," said the gentleman, "and I thank God that the shot inflicted but temporary harm. If you had died that night, with the guilt of murder on your miserable soul—for it is not success, but intent, that makes an assassin—where would you be now, wretched man?"

The poor creature flung himself on his knees before him: "Oh, sir, sir, don't give me up to the Peelers, an' have me hanged! my poor ould mother, that never wished harm but blessin' to every one alive, wud be put in her grave by it! They made me do it, sir, an' I was dhrawn in the lot, an' had to do it——"

"No man is obliged to commit murder!" exclaimed Mr. Kingston sternly. These excuses were hardening his heart against the criminal. He was

silent for a few moments, looking down at the abject, crouching form and tear-dabbled face. "Who are they who forced you to attempt murder?"

Riley narrated the circumstances of the meeting at which the crime was planned, so far as he knew anything; but he was not one of the deeply initiated Ribandmen, and at the council the members met with disguised faces.

"We all dhrew the lot, sir, an' none knew which else of us got the fatal one, barrin' the captain; but if I didn't obey that paper, sir, I'd be shot meself like a dog, an' maybe they'd burn the house above my ould mother, an' there wouldn't be a spot in Ireland ground for the sole of my foot. An' oh, sir, sir, for the love an' honour——" he went on beseeching, adjuring.

Mr. Kingston said slowly, not as if prevailed upon by entreaty, but rather as a result of his previous resolution: "On one condition I will extend mercy to you."

The man burst out with thanks, and blessings, and promises. He grovelled at Mr. Kingston's feet, and kissed them. The latter turned away.

"You will remain at the house of my bailiff, Lance Brady, in the village, until the next ship leaves Galway for Quebec, when you will leave the country and never return."

The wretch would have dragged himself along the

earth from one shore of Ireland to the other if Mr. Kingston had so stipulated.

"Should you make the slightest attempt to escape, or to communicate with any one, before you embark, you shall be delivered up to the police and I will lodge informations. I spare you," continued the gentleman, "because I am willing to believe that you were, in the hands of others, as the pistol in your own hand—thoroughly an instrument, and nothing more; and also for the sake of your unfortunate soul, which I might have sent into eternal ruin on that night had not Providence mercifully interposed to save me from remorse and you from destruction."

More protestations, more tears, more grovelling gratitude. He crept down the ladder from the hayloft, and Lance Brady was summoned forth, who had meanwhile been jogging a child on his knee at the fireside, and cutting jokes for the elders. The bailiff received charge of his new lodger with characteristic imperturbability. Wherever the sentiment of wonder dwelt in his round head, it certainly had nothing to do with his eyebrows, which were too massive to be readily moved by anything short of an earthquake. This principle in his idiosyncrasy made him valuable, for he never required an explanation of anything. Mr. Kingston's orders were as the injunctions of an oracle—not to be inquired into nor reasoned upon, but blindly obeyed.

So Brady was a most attentive host. Knowing nothing of the cause of his patron's interest in this ungainly peasant, he yet might have known all, to judge by his air of subdued mystery. Riley feared him for it. The injured hand was some time in healing, for the broken bones had not been properly set ; and when he lay awake from pain, the night-light which his host burned in the neighbouring room—a new habit—seemed like a deputed watcher upon him. Lance walked out with him after dark upon the shore, when they talked of everything but what most possessed the thoughts of both. Mr. Brady suddenly became inhospitable, and no neighbour saw the interior of his kitchen while Riley was its inmate : which reserve stimulated curiosity to the utmost, as is commonly the case. The matrons of the “ street ” held many a gossip concerning it.

“ Good mornin' to ye, Misther Brady, sir,” said one of them, coming up to the gate of his little front enclosure and trying to raise the latch. Lance was leaning over the low pier, with his pipe in his mouth, and grinned as he saw the failure of her “ promiscuous ” effort to enter.

“ It's a new thing for ye to have the dure locked, Misther Brady,” said the lady reproachfully.

“ Aye, neighbour, but the pigs used to be comin' in, an' rootin' my bits of flowers ; an' ye know an old bachelor of my kind likes to have things tidy.”

"Well, give us a hand across the wall, will ye?" But the lady vaulted in with some agility herself, to the sore rending of her cotton gown, the superfluities of which, pinned up at the back, caught in a projecting nail. Lance grinned again with every yellow tooth to find his outwork thus carried, and retired on the defensive to the half-door of his house.

"My beautiful yellow gownd—oh wirrasthru! to think I should put it on this mornin', afther not wearin' it four weeks, lest the childer wud spoil it; an' 'twas bran' new next Aisther 'll be a twelve-month. Sure 'twas the onlucky hour that I wanted to borry the smoothin'-iron of Mrs. Brady. It's a wondher ye'd keep yer walls wid spikes in thim, a dacent man like ye," she said, turning sharply to Mr. Brady.

"I never axed any one to come in over the wall," he remarked. "Here's the iron, Mrs. Doherty, an' my mother's too busy to be talkin' to any one to-day."

"Fine stories," said the woman, tossing her head. "I hope yer mother's there at all, at all, yer keepin' her sich a sacret—'tisin't like yer father's son, Lance Brady. Only ye're past spakin' to, since ye wor med Kingston's head man in the place. Sure no honest woman could be days an' days 'athout spakin' to a mortal sowl; she might as well be a dumbie at wanst, so she might."

Lance smoked impassively. Mrs. Doherty endeavoured to glance through the kitchen window, but he had drawn the little white curtain. She could with pleasure have boxed his ears and pulled his red hair ; but neither operation being feasible, her wrath burst forth in words. And finally Mrs. Doherty left *viâ* the wall again, and retired within her own house, where an ebullition of sobs came to her relief ; and she expended the residue of the thunder-shower upon her youngest daughter, who had taken advantage of the maternal absence to masquerade in Mrs. Doherty's best Sunday cap, while her charge, the baby, squalled unheeded on the earthen floor.

Chapter X

THE SEED OF A GOOD THOUGHT

A FORTNIGHT after her last visit to Castlebay, Lina drove there again with William, to meet her father on his return.

The coach would not be due till evening ; meantime, there was shopping to be done. The establishments available for this purpose were neither choice nor numerous in Castlebay, for each aimed at selling everything, from tea and silks down to shaving-soap and bird-seed. The result was a rather crowded assortment of goods, with but slender selection in each species.

Lina had a plan to submit to Aunt Jemima, who was her frequent counsellor.

" I have often wished to be able to teach the poor girls about Golden Hills some work which could be sold. They are so miserable, most of them—those in the fishermen's cottages especially ; and so idle, except when they have weeding, or drying turf, or setting potatoes to employ them. Now, do you think I could ever teach them muslin embroidery? "

"I should say it was very possible," replied Aunt Jemima, "provided you knew it yourself in the first instance."

Lina smiled at her answer.

"Oh, you would teach me all I want to learn."

"Gladly. And you have the same qualification as I have—that of being a little short-sighted."

"I did not know before that a defect could be anything but a *disqualification*," said Lina.

"In extremely fine work, short-sighted people have the advantage."

"My fingers are not slight enough, I am afraid," said Lina; "yours are so long and slender that mine look quite clumsy beside them."

"Don't talk nonsense, child! All fingers are suitable to do the work the mind has determined on. I should know that yours were not some of the idly beautiful hands which fashionable women cultivate; and so much the better for you. Laura's fingers are very pretty, but I would prefer that they were a little more useful."

"Oh, she is always working at something," said Lina; "you seldom see her idle."

"Yes; she does a good deal of selfish work, I believe," said Aunt Jemima, with a sort of grumble.

"She does much for me: makes my dresses fit becomingly, and trims my bonnets, for I am no great milliner," and Lina coloured a little, being

painfully conscious of her own defects. "Laura is very good-natured. But about the work, Aunt Jemima : I am thinking of beginning with Mary Connell, to try whether I could give her an idea of embroidery. She is my oldest and steadiest scholar. But it will be such a time before she does anything fit to be seen ! Even in hemming her stitches are so long."

"Of course, there will be discouragements," said Aunt Jemima. "There are in everything good. You will want great patience, and you will have many a disappointment, and you must not expect even gratitude always : but I hope you'll persevere through this, Lina. It's a sensible plan ; for money is mainly what they want to civilize them, and the habit of earning money by labour. Now, at the outset, you want muslin for them to spoil, and needles to break, and thread to tangle—where is the money for that?"

"Oh, I have been saving, with this in view. I have enough to begin with."

This conversation took place in the storeroom, whither Mrs. Orme had sent Aunt Jemima to make a pudding which Mr. Kingston liked, that it might be ready for his dinner when he should come. The batter made, they returned to the parlour.

"And this is your blue cashmere turned—what a good material it is !" observed Aunt Jemima, feeling it between her finger and thumb, and knowing

that some of Lina's saving arose from her pertinacious wearing of last year's gowns, when they could be made presentable. The old eyes looked at her niece's slender figure with the admiration of affection.

"So now, Aunt Jemima, put on your bonnet, and come with me to the shops. I want muslin, and all sorts of things."

"You will want patterns," said the old lady. "You must begin with the simplest—some easy trimming." She rummaged in an antique secretary, and produced a portfolio, full of scraps and sheets of paper, bearing devices drawn by a very inartistic pen. Lina looked through them, while her aunt went to Mrs. Orme to get leave for her excursion.

Mrs. Orme first wanted to be perfectly satisfied about that pudding, and Jemima was compelled to show her the stage at which it had arrived: then she rather thought there was a draught of air from the east window. Jemima having looked to this, and discovered that a bit of the listing nailed along the chinks had got caught in the sash, and having placed a footstool for Mrs. Orme's feet, and the newspaper and spectacles beside her, and seen that both the maids were within, and that the fire had no probability of going out, and being sure that the pudding would be producible at dinner-time, Mrs. Orme said she might spare her for half an hour.

While Lina looked through the portfolio, rapid

wheels drove to the hall door. She sprang to the window just in time to see her father jump off, holding an armful of wrappings: she opened the door, and his face looked pleased to recognize her; but after a minute's inquiries after those at home, he grew abstracted again, and presently drove away to the court-house.

This was a small, whitewashed edifice. A few constables from the neighbouring barracks, and a number of frieze-coated men, ragged boys, and slatternly women were gathered about the door—evidently the frothing over of a full house within. Something was going on which much interested the public mind of Castlebay; and that collective organ relieved itself at times by a shouting without apparent stimulus, and appeared devoid of partnership, though all of one accord.

This public did not regard the advent of Mr. Kingston with much favour, it seemed, for they scowled when that calm, fearless face was not looking. But he drove into their midst, alighted, and ran up the few steps, having first exchanged a word with the head constable on duty. An ominous silence fell over the crowd. One had come who could not be intimidated; and they had reckoned on and rejoiced in his absence.

William, who was sitting near the bench, saw his father's entrance with a throb of delight. Mr. Kingston shook hands with him, and one or two

other gentlemen ; then he addressed himself to the case before the court. But even his clearness and acumen could do little here. The evidence was defective ; the principal witnesses could not be found ; and the charge had to be dismissed.

Presently an acclamation issued from the room where justice was being dispensed, and spread into the street, gathering force as it rolled, and bursting into a score of fragmentary yells. After a few minutes a pale man was brought out between two policemen, who guarded him from the civilities of the crowd. Was it the prisoner, who had committed some crime, meriting the horror of the neighbourhood? No ; that other man in the blowsy red neckerchief, and with the intemperate face, who is foremost in shouting and threatening, stood in the dock a while ago ; the man guarded is merely the prosecutor—a Scripture-reader, who has dared to have recourse to the law against an assailant. For this assumption his fellow-countrymen would stone him, if they durst.

Mr. Kingston had delivered the decision of their worships, regretting that the evidence was not sufficient to empower them to commit the defendant for trial, as there could be little doubt of his guilt. One or two timid " worships " present thought he spoke too strongly, in the excited state of the populace ; but he cared chiefly for doing his duty. A purplish old gentleman next on the

bench pulled his skirt nervously; but Mr. Kingston, unheeding the hint, said precisely so much as he had intended to say, without abating a jot for any popular growling; and then, turning to his friend, begged pardon, and asked, had he wished to speak to him?

"I—I only thought you were going a little too far, Kingston," said his fellow-justice. "I agree with you in what you said about intimidation, and all that; but the people have such strong prejudices, it is as well not to shock them unnecessarily."

"Prejudice is a polite name for what breaks heads and houses," remarked Mr. Kingston. "Poor Meade is most unfairly treated, not so much from the feeling of the people as by order of their spiritual guides. He would not get a bit to eat in my neighbourhood but that my kitchen is open to him; nobody dare sell to him who dreads the altar curse: and is such intimidation to extend to us, Mr. O'Brien?"

"Oh, very unfair, very unfair, we must all acknowledge it," said the old magistrate; "but if the man took up some other calling not so obnoxious——"

"My dear sir, it is my belief that you and I are just as obnoxious, except that we have money and employment to give, and are of station sufficiently high to render it doubtful that a crusade

against our Protestantism would prosper. 'Hit him hard—he's got no friends': it is just the old schoolboy story."

"But, my dear fellow, allow me to say that you will draw more of the popular odium on yourself by patronizing this system of Bible-reading; and you are no favourite already, Kingston."

"I am aware of it"; and his teeth gleamed for an instant, though he did not smile. "But while I can do anything, the unoffending shall not be oppressed; and if this Irish nation were Protestant, O'Brien, it would be in a very different condition. I only uphold the Scripture-readers by doing them justice; and if tenfold more of the rabble's hatred were to be incurred, I hope that I should still act in accordance with justice."

Mr. O'Brien shook his grey head, as if he regarded his friend Kingston as rather quixotic. Cases of no importance succeeded, concerning strayed pigs, trespassing donkeys, and squabbling women; the two gentlemen conscientiously sat through them all, when the other magistrates dropped away to attend to their own concerns. Meanwhile, the poor Scripture-reader was going home to his cabin under an escort of policemen; and the late prisoner was swaggering in a public-house, whither he had been taken by sympathizing friends for a "jovial glass."

William had left the court-house, and gone with

Lina to the shops; standing by during the purchases, and feeling as unsuitable as gentlemen do feel under such circumstances. For, when a lord of the creation goes to buy, he commonly knows his own mind, and has but to name the objects for which he wishes to exchange his cash; but a lady's shopping!—the never-ending changing, and measuring, and examining, and taking down fresh pieces, and consultations!—I fear it proceeds from a very inaccurate sense of the value of minutes—that gold dust which may be welded into precious ingots by the conscientious labourer.

When they went back to Wave House, Mrs. Orme would have William to read aloud in the interval before dinner; and as she never could hear so well as when her gold-rimmed spectacles encircled her eyes, and were earnestly directed to the face of the reader, William was kept in a perpetual blush. For his ideas respecting his personal appearance were very low, and it seemed to him that those round, unwinking orbs were studying every feature. He was very hot under the scrutiny, and stole glances at the chimney clock to see whether five was at hand.

Meantime, Lina and her aunt Jemima sat at another table, and worked at the embroidery that was to be taught to the girls at Golden Hills. "I did not tell any one at home my scheme," said the former; "I feared discouragement."

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"It all depends on your perseverance whether the plan is successful or not," rejoined her aunt. "It is no light undertaking, and you must set to it with an earnest spirit."

Lina's heart sank a little to think of the dull eyes and hard, clumsy fingers she should have to teach; and she needed Aunt Jemima's next words.

"You see, my dear, all depends on the motive. If your motive is only what people call benevolence, why, as soon as the worry exceeds the benevolent feeling you will give it up. I am afraid that a great deal of the benevolence in the world is a kind of refined selfishness. People don't like to see suffering, and therefore they relieve it, in the way least troublesome to themselves—commonly by giving money. Now, you must have a durable motive—something that will stand wear and tear."

"I must have a durable motive?" Lina questioned.

"Let it be, that when the MASTER asks account of you at the last, you may hear the answer, 'Well done, good and faithful servant!' Oh, Lina, that is worth working for."

Aunt Jemima's thin face was radiant as she smiled. That motive had been hers, through a toilsome life; and so she could speak experimentally of its power to sustain and to actuate.

Mr. Kingston, after his manner, was impatient till dinner was over, and they drove away beneath

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a fair moonlight. He stopped at Lance Brady's cottage for a few moments. Entering the kitchen, the furtive face of the prisoner glanced at him humbly.

"I have engaged a berth for you in the ship 'Good Speed,' which sails in a week. Will you be ready then?"

He shut the door in the midst of incoherent thanksgivings.

Chapter XI

LANCE BRADY'S PEREGRINATIONS

ONE day, early in March, the ship "Good Speed" lay at the quays of an Irish western port, outward-bound. The blue-peter was flying from her masthead, and a yellow placard on her shrouds announced her destination to be Quebec.

The decks were crowded with emigrants; for in that year began the exodus from Ireland, stimulated by the Riband reign of terror, and by the newly developed potato blight. Country girls, in gaudy shawls and gay print cottons; aged women, in cloaks and hoods, chiefly dark blue, but sometimes scarlet; peasants, in long grey frieze riding-coats, corduroy shorts, worsted stockings, and shoes which might advantageously be used instead of rollers to macadamize a road, they were so heavy and iron-soled; a few sailors loosening the sails aloft, and on the quay a mixed multitude, who filled the air with lamentings as the cables were thrown off the post, and the vessel slowly moved. The wild Irish cry was raised. Those on shore

were joined by the emigrants in their passionate wailings. They beat their heads, they tore their hair, they were frantic with grief.

"An' there's not one to kean afther me," said Riley, "except my ould mother at home, among the hills."

"'Deed, an' ye needn't be sorry for that same," remarked Lance, who had looked on with philosophic indifference, champing a straw in his mouth; "for it's no such pleasant noise as that I'd like to swell it bigger. One would think we was all sailin' sthraight away to be drowned. Never mind; they'll get over it."

Which, indeed, was the case. Out of sight of the waving handkerchiefs, and out of hearing of the wail, most of the emigrants began to address themselves to present circumstances. One or two brisk contests took place respecting berths, and most animated objurgations among the women concerning tin-ware, which it was impossible to individualize.

"Arrah, sure, there's next to no difference at all betune the mugs," observed Lance to a mother of a family, who was in full tide of eloquence at another mother of a family; "an' it ill becomes ye to be fightin' like this, an' ye but half an hour from the fine ould Emerald Isle, the 'first jim of the say,' that y're biddin' good-bye to for ever."

Whereupon, the one, turning her eyes to the

receding coast, took up her former doleful wail : " Ohone, ohone, an' why did I ever lave ye, poor Ireland, the veins of my heart? "—which romantic appeal it would have been difficult to answer, seeing that her husband and herself had conspired to keep back a part of the rent justly payable to their landlord, and were even now escaping with it; and every furlong of additional blue between them and the shore augmented their security. But the other matron, not being so sensitive to patriotic emotion, caught at Lance's words.

" For ever ! Indeed, an' I'm sure I'm not, but goin' to come back like one of the quality meself; an' it's I that will dhrive in my carriage afore the doors of Biddy Doherty herself—so I will ! Honest man, I'd have ye attend to yer own business, if ye have any, an' lave this woman an' me to settle about the mug. 'Tisn't your mug, is it? "

Lance being unable to answer in the affirmative, shrugged his shoulders, and picked up another straw. The lady who was so moved at thoughts of exile, having recovered from her weakness by this time, the skirmish was renewed, till the children of both parties crying lustily for their dinners, the belligerents adjourned to the cooking-place, to join in the tumultuous atmosphere which perpetually eddied about that portion of the steerage.

Past the farthest headlands, and the winking

lights which came out at sundown like red stars, the Atlantic, broad and blue, stretched before the voyagers for many a thousand miles.

Lance left them in the pilot-boat; and so ended his surveillance of his lodger.

Lance was very busy all the next day. His work had run into arrears during his attendance on Riley: so he walked eight or nine miles in short lengths, and visited a variety of places, and collected various little matters of rent due to himself, out of tenements which he possessed; and wrote a good deal, after a mis-spelt fashion, in account-books he kept for his employer.

Towards nightfall he walked into Mrs. Doherty's cabin, and proved irresistible to the obduracy of that matron. He let his pockets be picked by the children of two oranges and some peppermint drops, and danced a horapipe to his own whistling, within the narrow limits of an open pair of tongs, for their amusement; in a word, re-established himself in his former popularity. Mr. Brady was, perhaps, the most popular man of his class in Castlebay: as an eligible match he was invited to every merry-making; and, despite his personal ugliness, the comeliest lass in the parish would have been proud of him as an admirer. But Lance was fancy-free. He provoked the match-making mothers of Castlebay, by the universality of his attentions to their daughters, and quietly went on

minding his own business so successfully that every year added to his desirableness as a son-in-law, while adding also certain crow's-feet to the corners of his eyes, and an incipient baldness to his crown.

Betimes next morning, as the earliest dawn reddened the east, Lance set off at a brisk pace for a twelve miles' walk to Golden Hills. The length of the road exhilarated him; his strong sinews liked the exertion before them. Larks rose from the fields, as the day advanced, into the sky, dappled with cloudlets like bits of foam afloat upon a sea. Lance paused at one field with a thorn hedge, under which were some sheep.

"An' there's a lamb, bless its little innocent face! if the ould wives spakes throe, it's a good sign to have it lookin' at me wid its pair of black eyes, an' it bein' the first lamb I seen this season. How beautiful the Lord makes all the young things! the way we wouldn't hurt them, the wee weak crathures, but wud love them, and care for 'em. Sure the wee shy chickens are the darlingest things alive, barrin' a little laughin' baby. Whisht! there's a pair of ravens: an' they're afther no good, I'll be bound. They're hunting somethin'."

The ravens were flying low, and croaking dismally: they made several erratic turnings, and presently settled down. Lance jumped over the roadside fence, and made his way to the spot; but several trenches had to be crossed before he

could reach the place where the birds had swooped, and where, under a bank, they were pecking at a dead hare. They cunningly measured the distance of the man, and stirred not for all his shouts and wavings of the stick, till he bethought himself of a stratagem, and stooping, presented it at them in the manner of a gun. They rose immediately. The hare had been dead only a few minutes, and its head was laid open by blows from the iron beak of the carrion-bird who had perched on it.

"The counthry must just be planted wid bushes here an' there, to give ye cover," remarked Lance, looking round on the bare hill, "or all these ravens must be shot. You poor little baste, a runnin' out in the hoarfrost this fine mornin', to look for yer breakfast of a sprig of dandeline or young sorrel, an' then to be took up so short, an' yer little pleasant life ended by them murtherin' birds. Well, sure a gentleman afther ye with his grey-hounds wud be as bad, an' ye'd be in pain longer." Lance tied the hare to the end of his stick, and walked on.

Mr. Lance Brady had yet farther to walk; but any amount of pedestrianism was to him agreeable. He went over to Lissard Point on business for his employer, which included a visit to Riley's mother.

The old woman, wiry, straight, and keen as a wild bird, looked at him suspiciously from her bright sunken eyes.

"Ye have a news of my son : tell it to me at once, whether it be good or bad. He sınd me a word before, not to be afeared, for he was all right?"

She said it interrogatively, and he could hear the knitting-needles in her fingers clicking together in her nervous trembling.

" Good news, ma'am, only good news. Your son is gone to America, safe an' sound."

She started up. " Safe an' sound ! Thanks be to God ! "

A sudden rain of tears from the old eyes, and a sudden clasping of the thin hands.

" Who did this? Who saved my son? "

Lance looked at her full, and pronounced Mr. Kingston's name.

" Are you quite sure of this? " she said, after a pause. Lance affirmed it again. " Then I will take care of him," the old woman said; and Lance smiled to himself at the puny power her care or help must be.

Chapter XII

NIGHT FEARS

“**Y**OU will certainly work yourself blind over that muslin,” predicted Laura one evening encouragingly. “My dear child, you have sat the entire afternoon over that wretched strip of edging.”

“Well,” said Lina, looking up—and the temporary rest made her eyes water, proving how closely they had been strained—“I am not so quick as I might be, and I am bound to work better than my pupils; so I must make up in perseverance what I want in handicraft.”

“You have improved, Lina; these leaves are very well worked.”

“Thank you; that is commendation, being from a judge.” She resumed, though daylight was failing. “I used to study books more than work, and now have to reverse the process. That is how neglects in education come up against us afterwards.”

“Yes, I remember one time that you fancied you

might become a great linguist, and pored over Alick's *Cæsar* with dishevelled locks, while Miss Pierce fancied you were practising embroidery. Now I warn you this is blind man's holiday; but I'll bring gentle force to bear."

Laura opened the piano, and began playing upon it. She had a fine, full touch, which could interpret bright dashing melodies vivaciously, and also linger lovingly among rich chords. Lina played but weakly. Her appreciation of the soul of music was intense, but she was incapacitated as an interpreter of it in notes, which are to its subtle essence as words to thoughts. Not always the greatest thinker is most fluent in language. Lina's fingers could not express fittingly what so deeply moved her. Seated at the window now, leaning against the sash, in moments of such idleness as are golden rest, she listened to airs suitable for the twilight—airs that glide along with the pensive-ness of the hour, and give it utterance—music that fills the heart like a lulling tide, and the chafings and restlessness of the day are calmed.

Mr. O'Brien happened to be staying in the house—a not unfrequent circumstance—and the gentlemen had just come in from Mr. Kingston's study. Rosie, the youngest child of the family, was sitting on a footstool, her chin on her father's knee, and her blue eyes intent about a story which Mr. O'Brien was telling, of some house lately attacked

by the Ribandmen. A very frightened expression was gathering in the little face, but nobody perceived it—Lina, because she was short-sighted, and her father, because he did not look at her. And so, when Lina had slipped back to the dusky drawing-room, poor little Rosie listened still; fascinated by the very terror of the tales they were relating, and by the animated gestures with which Mr. O'Brien shot and poniarded any number of assailants.

Laura did not herself care for the music of feeling, and had dashed into a series of brilliant pieces, such as were most effective in showing off her powers of execution, and causing people to say how well Miss Kingston played. She soon left for the lighted room, having no partiality for darkness; and a servant came to close the shutters, and bar them with the heavy bolts which had at first terrified Lina, but now were become matters of course.

Lina played the Evening Hymn softly, in the dark, and sang it to herself. Her voice was not strong; she could barely take the second in a duet with Laura, who had cultivated hers into a good soprano, and sang with a self-possession which made it seem much finer than it was. Lina fluttered so greatly on all occasions of exhibition, that her small voice was nigh smothered. Now the hymn soothed her. Her heart made music of the words.

She felt the necessity of directing her thoughts to God habitually ; of cultivating an intimate fellowship with the mind of her Saviour. She longed to be imbued with a likeness to that Divine Mind ; she longed to " abide in Him." Only by a frequent seeking of His presence could she attain a sense of nearness. Whenever she was alone she made a conscience of looking up to Him, and trying to transmute a time of solitude into a season of communion with her precious Saviour. Not always successful—oftentimes taught the sad lesson of her own powerlessness to rein in the wandering earth-bound thoughts ; still the habit strengthened her spiritual life, and helped her to the realization of " things unseen."

Mr. O'Brien had finished his tales of midnight attacks and disturbed times, and was seated at Laura's right hand, like a gallant old gentleman as he was, helping her with the urn, and talking pleasant badinage such as she liked. William attended on his mother, who sat near the fire in an easy-chair ; he made toast for her, and chocolate, for her constitutional nervousness rendered tea a forbidden luxury ; and she averred that no chocolate was so good as William's. He had hoped that Laura's chair was a screen to his proceedings, and that the vivacious old gentleman would not remark him. He was undeceived by Mr. O'Brien's observation—

"What a capital husband you will make!"

William flushed red, and secretly wished Mr. O'Brien's eyes had been otherwise engaged. He was not man enough yet, though twenty, to be insensible to the slightest breath of a sneer at himself; and a sneer he knew the remark was meant to be, though covered an instant after with the words: "I congratulate you on the exemplary conduct of your son, Mrs. Kingston."

"William is very kind indeed," she answered, looking at her boy lovingly; and the look made him not ashamed of his youthful strength being spent in helpfulness to that dear, gentle mother.

Laura laughed slightly, and coloured, in complacency to Mr. O'Brien's meaning. William looked taller than ever, as he presented his cup for fresh tea, with a slightly defiant face. "Those young fellows are so sensitive," thought the aggressor; "and just as if there was any fear of *his* being a milksop!" Lina read her brother best, and pressed his hand affectionately as she gave back his cup.

Going along the corridor to his own room by-and-by, and whistling as he went—which was somehow a fashion of his when walking in the dark—Frank thought he heard himself called. It was surely Rosie's voice, though it sounded half-smothered, as if from under bedclothes. She slept with Lina; Frank turned into the half-open door.

"Oh, Frankie, I'm frightened!" the little girl said, clasping her slender arms round his throat as he stooped. He could feel her heart beating fast as she strained him closely. "I'm afraid, Frankie; stay with me!"

"What frightened you? Did you see anything?" he inquired, rather nervously.

"Oh no; but perhaps men will come and attack our house, as Mr. O'Brien was saying. Oh, Frankie, what would I do?"

"Nonsense, Rosie! don't choke me," said the boy, a little roughly. "You'll catch cold with your arms bare. No Ribandmen would ever think of coming here, when they know what terrible guns we have. Why, we could shoot them all, Rosie!"

Which promised valour did not appear to give his poor little sister much comfort, though she fully believed in his ability to do so; she only said again, piteously: "Frankie, don't go away; let me feel your hand; stay with me."

Graciously did he leave her his hand, though he felt it an inconvenient position; but the sense of protectiveness was delicious, and he promised to remain a little while, if she would try and go to sleep very fast. Two or three times he tried to withdraw his hand, when the clasp seemed loosening, but immediately the fingers were tightened again. So he resigned himself to sit still; and

though he had slept on the drawing-room rug, nothing was farther than sleep from his eyes here. They did not even wink in the blank darkness. He heard the clock ticking loudly, and muffled voices through the closed doors below, and he soon got heartily tired. Still, on a fourth attempt to draw away his hand, Rosie clasped it.

"I don't believe you intend to go to sleep at all!" he exclaimed, in an injured tone.

"Indeed I am trying, Frankie; but I cannot." Every nerve of the excited child was too much awake. "I hope God will take care of us, and not let the wicked men with the black faces come near us," she whispered fearfully. "You are very kind to stay with me, Frankie." He was touched by her humble gratitude, and made up his mind to endure a little longer.

But the light of a candle came along the passage, carried by Lina.

"Poor Rosie! I will stay with her," she said at once. So Frank was released, and went to the dining-room to rig a ship which he had built, perfectly self-contented, and never reflecting that Lina might wish to be downstairs quite as much as himself, but rather pleased to think that she would probably not be able to read French with him that night as usual.

The little sister told Lina of her fears, and Lina reminded her of their guardian Father in heaven,

whose love ever encompasses His children, and repeated for her the beautiful 121st Psalm. She knew its value to her own heart when fears of like kind oppressed her: "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; He that keepeth thee will not slumber. The Lord is thy keeper; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. . . . The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; He shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore."

"If you could pray a little prayer, Lina," said the child, "I would like you to ask Jesus to be our very own keeper—to watch over us here at Golden Hills: do, dear Lina."

It was a thing which Lina had never done, to speak aloud in prayer before another soul; it seemed difficult, and yet her duty. She kneeled down, and earnestly pleaded the promises of the psalm; and Rosie said, when she had ended: "Now, surely He will preserve us, for He always keeps His word." The groundwork of faith comforted her, and she soon slept peacefully.

Lina had thus entered into a new bond of Christian example to her younger sister: such she felt this prayer to be, and that Rosie would expect her to act like one who drew near unto God, who had been with Jesus. Hasty words would seem strangely out of place from lips which had

addressed the Most High. The sense of responsibility as to the effect her life might have on those two impressible young lives, Frank and Rosie, became deeper. Oh that her Saviour might allot strength for a consistent walk and conversation as became a redeemed soul!

Arranging the pillows when she lay down to rest, something hard was felt under Rosie's head. It proved to be an open penknife, blunt with age and hard usage, being a cast-off possession of Frank's, but evidently meant as a weapon in case of attack. Poor little Rosie!

Long did Lina lie awake, thinking and listening. The sounds were such as the ivy leaves scratching against the panes, moved by an unquiet night air; the fowls crowing at intervals; a chirp from a drowsy house-martin in his mud nest beneath the window sill; and the soft breathing of the little sleeper beside her. Gradually the restless brain soothed, and Lina passed also into the region of dreams.

It seemed a very short time since her last waking thought, when Frank's voice roused her. Daylight streamed in through the windows.

"I hope I didn't wake you; but I couldn't help just opening the door, to say that I had got a beautiful bunch of shamrocks for both of you."

She remembered that this was the seventeenth of March—St. Patrick's Day. And at breakfast-

time Frank wore a vast bunch of shamrocks, roots, stems, and all, in the buttonhole of his* jacket. He had furnished his mother also with the national emblem, to be fixed in the brooch fastening her collar, and had attached a bunch to the side of Lina's garden bonnet. Finding the latter in the drawing-room by-and-by, he exacted the playing of " St. Patrick's Day " and " Garryowen " a great many times, dancing meanwhile with the animation and grace of a Pawnee Indian. How Laura's heart would have been pained for the carpet ! Indeed, it is doubtful whether the young gentleman would have ventured on such a *pas seul*, with all his intrepidity, had his eldest sister been in the house ; but Laura was just then taking a constitutional in the garden—which was a circumstance favourable to his national enthusiasm.

Chapter XIII

THE SEED OF A THOUGHT GERMINATING

LINA'S work-project was going forward. She had exaggerated no difficulty in planning it, and many started up of which she had not thought. Stupidity and awkwardness from the learners ; carelessness, to the loss and destruction of materials ; invincible idleness ; self-conceit at the slightest progress ; disinclination to take trouble about the work—all these would have quite disheartened her if she had not been strong in the one thought, too high to be altered—that she was pleasing her gracious Saviour by her patience. And she was encouraged also by the knowledge that this was an appointed duty.

Two years ago, when Lina, emancipated from regular school at seventeen, by the departure of a governess without successor, looked round her life for its purpose, as many a thoughtful girl looks, and sought for some object definitely marked out, she could perceive none.

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After a month's government of her own hours, she found vacuity aching beneath the petty indulgences of amusing books, and pretty useless works. She longed for a tangible pursuit, for something which should be means to a worthy end. Had she been living to-day she would have sought outside occupation, but as it was, she was little inclined to envy the stronger sex for their fixity of employment and reality of purpose. When her father would allow, she wrought hard at transcribing letters, checking accounts, or other office-work, simply because she delighted to be of use. The idea of helping her father and William was pleasant.

Laura was more of an egotist, and found it easier to bound her doings within the charmed circle of self-pleasing. She smiled as with superior wisdom at Lina's perturbation.

"Why, my dear, what can you expect to do? The world holds no heroines nowadays. There's no jail nearer than the county town or you might emulate Mrs. Fry; and the poor people are all Roman Catholics, else you might go about to the cottages, and have a Sunday School. I grant you that life is rather monotonous in this lonely country; but not so much for you, who have never been staying in a city, as for me. Yet I don't complain."

Laura had a secret spring of comfort in the prospect of her yearly invitation to Dublin. Mrs.

112 SEED OF THOUGHT GERMINATING

Aubrey, her father's sister, was a fashionable lady in the Irish metropolis, and liked to have her pretty niece with her for some months in the season ; and all Laura's year was sweetened by this sojourn in the animation of a city. With a view to it, she was industrious in the winter-time, practising all attractive accomplishments, living in anticipation.

From a child Lina had been seriously inclined—a lover of the Bible and a scrupulous observer of all means of grace. Many fits of religiousness had warmed and cooled. But the time came when her head-belief was quickened by the earnest assent of the heart. Mr. Brooke came to minister among a little band of converts at Lissard Point ; and he spoke words which touched her with new feelings. Vitality was infused into the dead form of her faith : the Divine Spirit was at His great work of regeneration, and “ old things became new.” Her life looked different. It was a trust from God, and, like His other talents, must bring usury to the Lender ; and the principle for laying it out to interest was, “ Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

Life now became earnest—not a playground, but a place of work which should endure for ever. Her own soul was to be educated for eternity : and for the rest, the words of another convert were her utterance, “ Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? ”

Nothing splendid, nothing large ; only to teach

a few utterly ignorant children somewhat concerning His name and His love. The pillars in the Lord's temple are but few ; the bits of stone and grains of sand filling unseen crevices are many, and their places of humble usefulness not despised by the Master.

Lina was led gradually to the formation of her little class. Her gentle mother objected at first, on the usual plea that the work was "wearing" ; which objection, as Lina enjoyed the chiefest blessing of good health, and her scholars were to be with her for only two hours daily, was afterwards withdrawn. And thus Lina became a teacher. After a while, when the new duty had fallen into the regular plan of her days, she liked what had been at first distasteful. And it proved beneficial to herself ; for there is no better moral discipline than the attempt to teach others.

One fine day, early in April, Lina was in her schoolroom as usual. Little Harry Burke was saying his lesson. He had much improved during the past three months, since we saw him at the gate looking apprehensively towards Hugo. The dog was quite friendly towards him now, and let him pass into the yard without further notice than the momentary raising of his sleepy eyelids, just to ascertain the in-comer.

While Lina looks and listens, a lady comes up the old stair ; and as the two benches are now

arranged back to the entrance, she is a minute in the room before any one sees her. A tall, slender woman, with fair hair, braided from her face: a pleasing, sensible face is that, denoting clearness and kindness. She comes forward.

"Dear Mrs. Brooke!" exclaimed Lina joyfully, "I am glad you have come; I feared it was getting too late to expect you," and the friends embraced warmly. Lina noticed a slight contusion on Mrs. Brooke's forehead, which had been lately bleeding. She had driven through a hamlet not far from Golden Hills, and had received a blow from a stone. "Oh, Mrs. Brooke, you must not venture to come by those roads alone in future. William would have gone for you with pleasure, if we had known that Mr. Brooke was absent. I hope it does not ache?"

The clergyman's wife thought little of the scratch; she was sure that it would frighten the stone-throwers, and make them refrain from such demonstrations in future. Lina suggested various applications of warm water, cold water, cold steel, etc., to keep off discoloration. Mrs. Brooke smiled them all away with the remark that she had already passed half an hour under a flatiron, administered by Mrs. Kingston.

Lina's work-class assembled, when the younger children went away. There were about a dozen girls, all of whom produced strips of muslin more

or less soiled and smoked, defaced curiously by their feats of needlework. It was a lesson calling for particular patience. Lina loved neatness, and could not readily bring herself to handle the discoloured muslin ; but it was necessary, if she would not continually give away fresh pieces. Her efforts to make the pupils appear with clean-washed hands and faces, and the perpetual evading of that wholesome regulation on frivolous pretexts, backed with much laughter, was another fertile source of chagrin. Mrs. Brooke discerned symptoms of improvement in the ill-used muslin, for which encouragement Lina was thankful.

"But I don't think any of you seem to do your best," Mrs. Brooke said, "your very best, as you are bound to do, in gratitude to Miss Lina. Would you not like to please her by working well?"

"'Deed, ma'am, an' it's our best we does ; but our fingers is more used to the knife, cutting *skillauns*" (slices of potato for planting) "than to the needle and thread ; that's how it is, yer honour, ma'am."

The speaker was a quick, fluent-voiced girl of fifteen, sister to Harry Burke. "Sure we'd do anythin' in life to please Miss Liney, 'cause we know 't isn't every lady 'ud give her time an' trouble to the likes of we ; but I'm in dhread some of us'll niver be workers the longest day we live, be rason our hands is so hard."

"Lina," said Mrs. Brooke, when the class was dismissed, "you must set them to teach each other; you cannot accomplish adequately the instruction of so many. You must have rules, and exact obedience to them firmly. Everybody is the better for being under laws which cannot be altered. Now, one essential rule should be strict cleanliness in the work."

"It is so difficult to be decided in the face of their entreaties. I have often threatened to take away the work when it has been brought to me soiled; and then——"

"Once doing would have been more effective than many times threatening. I would have you write out regulations for the work-class, and be guided by them unflinchingly—not by the feeling of the moment. It will increase your power of decision, dear Lina."

Then and there, upon a slate, they organized the rules, which William would copy upon a piece of cardboard, as he printed beautifully, Lina said.

"Have you thought what to do when their work is saleable? Little you know the piles of correspondence, the long account-books, that will then devolve upon you," Mrs. Brooke said cheerily, "the heavy cash-box, the Saturday payments——"

"Ah! it is long till that time," answered Lina, shaking her head.

"I don't think it is so far off: when the serious

difficulty of handling the fine needle is overcome, and the unused implement is familiar to the touch, they will learn quickly. The foundations of every building are laid underground in the darkness, and are rough, unsightly stones, Lina."

Lina pressed her friend's hand, with a smile, conveying her comprehension of the analogy.

"Papa says he will give me a bit of ground for a school-house, and let me have building materials from his quarry and kiln for the cost of the labour, whenever I have collected funds and found a school-mistress," she said, a slight flush mounting to her face, as is common where a heart-wish finds words. "But it is very far away; it is a very distant dream indeed." She rose to lay aside the books in the old bureau, which was as black from age as the deep, dark pools in the forests where the mahogany had grown a couple of lifetimes ago.

"I shall expect to see the school-house yet," said her friend; "it will be built if you persevere. But all your design is not bounded by this tangible result: you are seeking to do good that shall go with you into eternity, Lina; and you work under the present reward of your dear Saviour's approval."

"I feel insecure sometimes," she answered, with her face turned away.

"And I am sure your sense of insecurity proceeds from looking at self, instead of looking at Jesus," was the reply. "Remember that wondrous saying,

'As He is, so are we in this world.' As He stands before the Father, all-pure, all-lovely, so stand our souls in Him, though yet we tread this world."

Mrs. Brooke's words were pleasant to Lina, so good is it for the Lord's people to be mutual remembrancers of His loving-kindness, and to encourage one another in the way to the celestial city.

The party round the dinner-table that afternoon was small. Mr. Kingston had gone to Dublin on business and taken Laura for her visit to Mrs. Aubrey. Lina's mother was not well and stayed in her own room, with a crushing headache for company. Her daughter prepared a cup of strong coffee with sal volatile, and, after drinking it, Mrs. Kingston thought she could sleep. So she lay down ; Lina drew the curtains and went away softly.

She took her place at the foot of the table, whence she had a view of the lawn and part of the gravel drive. Happening to raise her eyes from her plate for a moment, she thought a face peered into the room, at the lowest window-pane to the right. Quickly it looked and was withdrawn ; she had an instant's unpleasant thrill at the feeling of being subject to furtive observation, at something disagreeable in the face, different from that of a common beggar. She rose and walked to the window ; but nothing was visible except a few

sheep browsing quietly on the lawn, and the old pony Dapple, hanging his head in meditative mood. But Hugo was barking loudly in the yard. Lina rang the bell, and when the servant appeared—

“Would you just see if there is a beggar in front of the house, and send him round to the kitchen.”

Lina listened for the doing of her errand, with ill-defined uneasiness. William looked at her inquiringly, and she was about to speak when an exclamation from the servant and the letting fly of the bolts startled them all. Rising in alarm, they were arrested by a crash in the room. A man, masked with crape, had jumped through the window, smashing in the framework. He was followed by others.

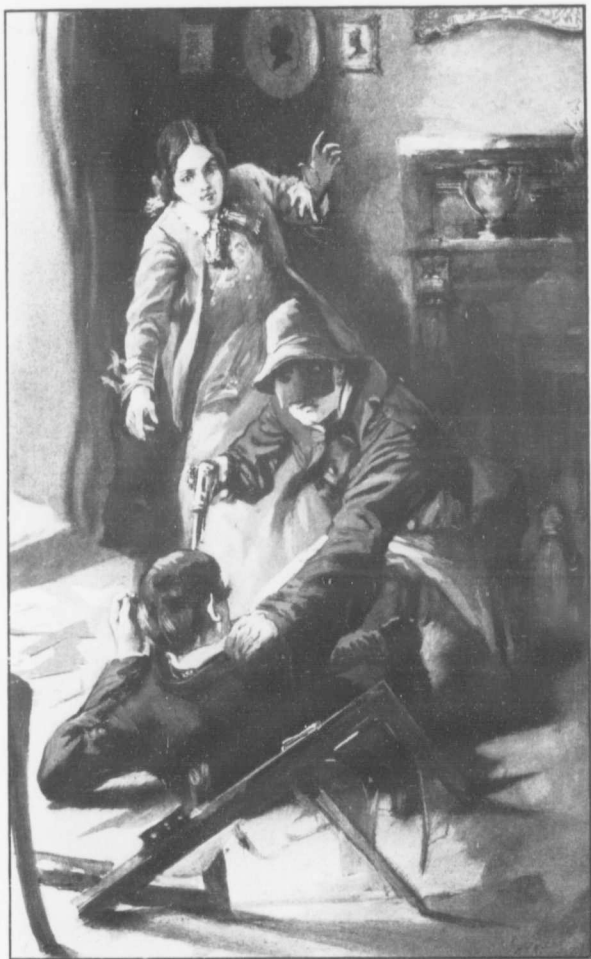
Chapter XIV

THE DARK VISITORS

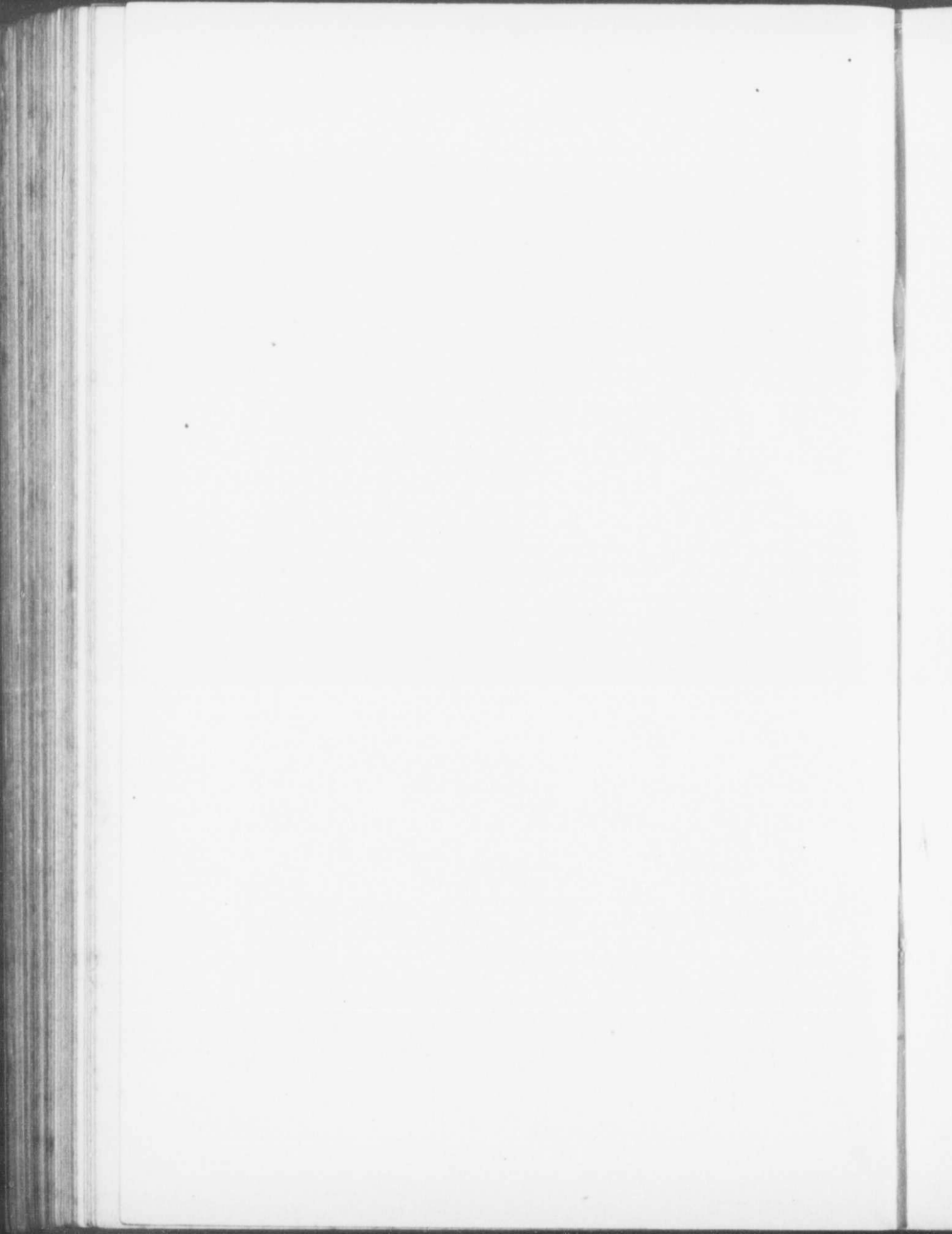
LINA felt faint, and instinctively caught the table to steady herself. For a few minutes there was a confusion of noise in her ears, and a dizzy whirling before her eyes. Her next clear sight beheld William borne to the ground by one of the armed men, who held a pistol to his forehead. Suddenly her senses cleared. With unnatural strength she sprang forward with a wild entreaty, and grasped the weapon so forcibly as to raise it off. The muzzle left a round red mark on her brother's forehead.

"We'll do him no harm, miss," said the man, whose knee was on William's breast—"no harm if he's quiet. We only want Kingston's guns, an' them we'll have, or somebody's life, whoever dare hinder us! And so, my young gentleman, you'd betther keep mighty aisy, or you'll feel a cowl'd bullet where 'tis aiser put than took away agin!" Lina shuddered. "Here! don't be frightenin' the lady, but give us yer word ye'll be quiet, an' that will do."

"Oh, do promise them, dear William, I implore



SHE SPRANG FORWARD WITH A WILD ENTREATY.



of you ; you can do nothing against so many !” She turned to the men, wringing her hands involuntarily, while her heart palpitated with fear. “ He will not give you any trouble—I know he will not,” she said.

But by a sudden effort William regained his feet, and almost disarmed the man bending over him. In a minute the sinewy athlete flung aside the youth’s hand, dislocated at the wrist by a violent wrench. “ You wouldn’t be quiet till I hurt ye,” he said, noticing the irrepressible spasm of pain which crossed William’s face. “ Marsh-mallows poultice ’ll reduce the swellin’ of that, an’ ye’ll be less headstrong in the future. Boys ”—to his companions—“ it’s time we did our business : come along.”

“ Oh, if father was at home,” exclaimed Frank, whose heart burned with indignation, “ you would not dare to do this !”

“ Ho !” said the leader, turning full upon him, “ the cockerel is crowing early. Maybe ye’d like to shoot me, little chap ?”

“ And I know who you are, for all your black face,” said Frank desperately.

The look of the other changed to savageness. “ If I thought you did,” he muttered through his clenched teeth, while his fingers pressed on the pistol till they were white, “ I’d make you hould yer tongue for ever !”

The boy recoiled.

"Frank, Frank!" besought Lina, in much alarm—"hush: are you mad?"

The Ribandman turned to the door with a scowl.

"Come along; we're losin' time. D'ye want the Peelers to be up to us?"

As soon as the armed men had passed through to the hall, little Rosie began to scream violently; terror had kept her nerves tense in their presence, but now shriek after shriek rang through the room. The poor child could not control herself.

"Oh, Rosie," said Lina, "you will rouse mamma, and then what should we do! If mamma sees those men she will die with fright. Dear Rosie, try to keep quiet!"

The little girl buried her face in the sofa cushions to stifle her cries. Lina poured water from a decanter and gave her to drink, and wetted her temples with it. Gradually the coolness restored the child.

"Lina, do you think they will kill us all?" she asked, sitting up with a very miserable countenance, but her dilated eyes less wild.

"No, darling, I feel sure God will preserve us. They only want father's firearms. You need not be so terrified. Let you and Frankie go into the drawing-room, where they will not be likely to come. And keep Frankie there," she added in a lower tone. The boy was leaning his head against

the mantelpiece, and here broke into a passionate fit of crying.

"Oh, Lina, if I was a man, they would not dare do it! I'm only a little boy! I've no strength at all! I wish—I wish I were a man!"

Rosie almost forgot her own terror in soothing his indignation: she brought him into the drawing-room at last, and shut the door. Lina then rushed upstairs to see whether her mother had awaked. To her inexpressible relief, Mrs. Brooke was there, and had succeeded in calming her to sleep again, when momentarily roused by Rosie's scream. All sounds had been dulled to her ear by the double folding-doors of the passage. She slept tranquilly and deeply.

"Oh, Mrs. Brooke, it would kill mamma to see those dreadful men!" whispered the girl's white lips, as she looked at that delicate face, with its pale, nervous outline. "What shall we do if they come up here?"

"I do not know," said Mrs. Brooke truly. "But perhaps they may be content with searching the lower rooms." Both listened in trepidation for the sounds downstairs. A hum of rough voices and footsteps, distant noises as of altercation, came to their preternaturally sharpened hearing.

"Dear Mrs. Brooke, what shall we do?" asked poor Lina again.

"My child! we can pray to God"; and Lina

almost instantly felt the tension of her heart relieved by reference to that Power which held the will of even these lawless men controlled. Mrs. Brooke uttered an audible petition for the special care of the heavenly Father. How heartfelt it was! Ah! there is nothing like a moment of danger for rousing the human soul to a sense of utter dependence upon the strength of God.

"Mrs. Brooke, I must go and see William—I must see what they are doing to William. Oh, Mrs. Brooke, pray—pray more to God!" Her own soul full of agonized entreaty, she hurried downstairs.

There were voices of men in the dining-room. They had been to the office; and the revolver rifle, on which they had counted as a chief prey, not being in its usual place, they had forced William on his knees, with a pistol to his head, and tried to make him swear about it. He said, calmly enough, "I have told you that my father took it with him to Dublin; and I will not swear." His indomitable eyes daunted them.

"I s'pose we may as well b'lieve him widout the oath, boys," said the man who seemed leader. Then they broke open drawers and presses, seeming to have a pleasure in the noise of the crashing woodwork. The iron safe was not thus to be managed; they found the keys in William's pockets, and ransacked through bundles of banknotes and parchments, not touching the money. A pair of

horse-pistols, and an old yeomanry sword—worn by a grandfather of Mr. Kingston at the time of the Volunteers in 1782—were all the weapons they could find; in the kitchen a rusty musket hung over the fireplace. The terrified women-servants had escaped by a back staircase to the garrets.

Lina could see through a chink of the dining-room door that the men were now eating and drinking; William stood by with his right hand in his trousers pockets, quietly looking on. Rude jokes were exchanged as the men helped one another from the dishes, and obliged the quivering butler to hand round the plates. The man obeyed, with his limbs failing for fear.

“Come, no more child’s play,” said the rough voice of the leader: “we’re not safe yet, boys. That window cut me, an’ it won’t stop bleeding,” he added, sopping his hands in the tablecloth. Lina stole back to the upper corridor, as they came out of the dining-room and tramped upstairs. Oh, if the noise should wake her mother! She went down to the gang on the lobby.

“My mother is ill, and the sight of you would greatly frighten her,” she said, forcing voice from her thickly beating heart. “She is asleep upstairs, and if you would not—”

A crackling laugh from him who had dislocated William’s wrist.

“Not so aisy come over as all that, miss! Every

room in this house we must sarch, for that's our ordhers."

"But, if you could come alone," pleaded Lina, "I will show you every room, and perhaps you would not waken mother."

"Hum! I don't care," he said, after a minute's pause. "Stay where ye are, boys, till I come back. My eyes are worth four pair of yers, any day. Come along then, my young missie. An' I can tell ye, at the same time, though I don't believe ye have a thrap, for yer looks is too honest for that; but, if it was a thing that ye had—I'd make no more ov shootin' the whole of yees, than I would of smoderin' a half-dozen wasps."

Just within the folding-doors of the corridor was the darkened room where Mrs. Kingston lay, happily still unconscious. Lina could not take her eyes from her mother's countenance while the masked man searched the room. His black face peered into wardrobes and drawers. Once the sleeper breathed a long sigh, and changed her posture slightly.

"She's sickly-lookin' enough: ye're all a pack of shammers, an' ye hid the guns. I'm a fool to be heedin' ye," he said, when he went into the passage again. He indemnified himself by stabbing the beds in the next room with a long knife which he carried.

"No luck, boys, except this ould rattle-thrap"; and he flung among them a rusty pistol of Frank's,

which had a broken lock : the boy had polished it as well as he could, and believed his room made warlike by its presence on the dressing-table.

" Never mind, we'll call some day that himself's at home ; an' ye may give him Captain Moonlight's compliments, that 't isn't for nothin' we'll come then ! "

At last the long, terrible hour was over. They were gone. Frank came out of the drawing-room with greater indignation than ever, though now he was tearless, and contemplated the damage done. The window-frame had been utterly shattered ; fragments of glass lay about in all directions, and the carpet had spots of a crimson deeper than its own.

William said little : with his left hand he helped to put up the shutters over the broken sash ; the right pained him sharply. But he did not speak of it ; he held complaints unmanly, where it was possible to refrain from them, and he had a fund of endurance in his nature. The nearest medical man was miles away, so he walked down to the cottages on the beach, where lived one or two old people, skilled in a primitive sort of surgery. Old Martin Brennan, a fisherman, ancestor of half the hamlet, replaced the dislocated bone with difficulty, for the swelling had already set in, and bathed it profusely in cold water.

" This ought to be powerin' on it now till ye go to bed, Masther Willum," he said. " The water is

the finest thing ever was put to a hurt—keeps it cool, an' aisy, an' comfortable, if 'twas ever so angry in itself. Half the docthors might shut shop, if people knew the health an' strength that's in cowl'd water.

“An' is it givin' me money ye'd be afther? Arrah, put up yer purse, now. Martin Brennan wud do as much for any stonebreaker be the roadside, or for the Lord Leftenant himself, without fee or reward. I'm surprised at ye for thinkin' of it, Masther Willum, that I knew since ye wor a baby.” The old man fairly turned his back upon him, and lit his pipe at the coals. “Go home wid ye now, keep yer arrum quiet, and give it plenty of the cowl'd water.”

Martin settled his long person in a straw chair on the hearthstone, and puffed enjoyably.

“You'll have no objection to a present of tobacco, at all events?” asked his patient.

Martin nodded: such recognition of his services he loved. His chief pleasure was to smoke himself into Moslem impassibility, at all convenient times and seasons. He sat motionless, inhaling the narcotic, till the only light in the room was a dull glow in the bowl of his pipe, and on the hearthstone; red sunset had faded over the low sea without, and the common glory of stars gathered in the sky.

Chapter XV

SOME CONSEQUENCES

NEXT afternoon the old fisherman put on his best pilot coat, and strolled up to Golden Hills. He was somewhat piqued to learn that young Mr. Kingston had gone to Castlebay, to see the surgeon about his dislocated wrist. "Deed an' he might have thrusted to my ould expayrience, that's mendin' bones these twenty year," he observed, seating himself in the broad chimney corner, and drawing out his pipe. He was mentally consoled by the reflection that William's fee of best cavendish would probably result from this journey.

"The missus 'll let me smoke—she always does—if you shut the door, Mary"; and while chopping his tobacco, he made many inquiries for the well-being of the family, and heard cook's description of the visit of the armed party.

"An' Miss Liney looks like a ghost this day, afther the fright; still, she tached her scholars just as usual."

"'Tisn't a trifle wud put *her* from doin' anythin'

that's good," observed the housemaid. Cook snorted; she did not approve of Bible lessons.

Martin sat gossiping till the dusk was drawing on. Cook was quilling a fresh cap in the window light, when some persons passing by obscured it. She rose with an exclamation, letting fall her thread and laces on the bricked floor. She had seen policemen with prisoners. They entered by the back door, travel-stained, and their feet marked with bog. The frieze-coated men's hands were clasped under their sleeves.

"I want to see the young lady," said Constable Nolan, when he had courteously saluted the maids, and bent a keen look on Martin in the recess, who turned chill as he saw the prisoners: he knew them well. "Ask her to come here; I won't detain her many minutes."

"Oh, Miss Liney," said cook, in a great fright, when she found her young mistress at work in her mother's room, and had called her into another, "there's the constable below with prisoners, an' he wants us to identify them; an' don't do it, Miss Liney achora, or we'll all be killed some night; don't pretend to know them."

Lina had grown very pale.

"We must speak the truth, Mary," she said, "in any case."

With a fast beating heart she went down to them. Cook was in grievous fear. Handcuffed as the

men were, she dared not meet their eyes fully, but stayed vacillating in the passage, going in and out of the pantry, according as curiosity or fear got the upper hand in her mind.

"Here be two fellers, ma'am, we caught to-day at Lissard Point; I'm thinking maybe they're some of the gang that paid you a visit yestherday: an' the more, as they had this we'pon of Mr. Kingston's in their possession." He produced Frank's rusty pistol. "It has the masher's letters on it." R.B.K. was graven on the handle. "You know that, ma'am?"

"Yes; it was taken from the house yesterday." Her eye met a glance from the foremost prisoner—a defiant glance, nearly related to a threat. Strange to say, she was rather nerved than frightened by it.

"Now, ma'am," said the constable. He had lighted a candle, and held it full in the face of the chief prisoner, who blinked his eyes, as was natural, before the sudden light. "We'll give ye a minute to recover yer weak sight," said the policeman, with an unsympathizing smile. "Now, ma'am, his eyes are open; look at him."

It required some little courage; but Lina scanned quietly the bold, reckless eyes and massive Celtic features, and said: "I never saw that man before, to the best of my knowledge."

The constable seemed disappointed and the

prisoner relieved. Neither could she identify the other man.

"They were disguised, I think with crape; but certainly the man who went to the upper rooms was about his height."

"Nelly Fisher," called the constable to the housemaid, "you had a good view of the Black-boys last evening: come and see can you identify these."

Nelly covered her face with her hands.

"I donno nothin' at all about it," she asseverated; "I never seen aither of thim before; I wouldn't look at 'em for a five-pound note out of yer hand." Nor could any persuasions alter her determination. "I won't look at 'em if you stood there till next week," she said, throwing her apron over her head.

"Well, we must see what young Mither Kingston himself will say," concluded Nolan. "March, boys. Maybe ye'd like a man left to guard the house, miss?"

Thinking that Mrs. Kingston might have a sense of security from such a guard, Lina accepted his offer; and Golden Hills was not without a police sentinel the whole summer thereafter.

William and Frank were able to identify one of the men, who was committed for trial.

"I get weary of this," the former said to Lina, as they sat in the study next day. "Wrestling

with the Riband conspiracy is like contending with the hydra. I hate these prosecutions and condemnations; yet the law must assert itself—must prove that it is strongest."

"I wish father would live in Dublin for a year," said Lina, "till the country is more quiet."

"He never would; he has such a firm idea of staying at the post of duty under all circumstances. Of course, to go away would be cowardly," said William, standing up and straightening his tall figure. "If I were a magistrate, I would not rest till I had extirpated this vile system, root and branch," he added hotly. "I can't imagine what all the justices in the country are about, to allow a set of lawless marauders to roam at their free will, robbing and murdering."

"It is really dreadful," said Lina sadly. "I can't bear to look at a newspaper, for there is sure to be some dreadful tale of bloodshed in it; and they seem to increase in number monthly."

"Direct this to Alick; it is the *Chronicle* that came to-day. I put it in my desk; I was quite afraid mamma would ask to see it."

Lina did not inquire particulars; but she knew that the "Agrarian Outrage" column must be unusually full, or unusually savage in its details. "Our unhappy country!" she said; "will it ever be like glorious England?"

Even then was the sharp scourge preparing which should greatly purify the land.

William was helpless, and peevish in consequence; Lina wrote for him, and excused his slight crossness on the score of his suffering and discomfort. Also she had an axiom that men cannot be so patient as women: sisters have to believe this, sometimes.

Chapter XVI

ABOUT NEEDLE AND THREAD

IN April and May Lina's pupils were few, all available hands being busy cutting potatoes and planting them. The fields were dotted with workers, turning up the brown soil and inserting the sliced tubers, which they hoped would be returned to them tenfold. Notwithstanding last year's failure, the people were confident that this coming crop must prosper; they staked all their hopes upon it; they stinted themselves at meals in order to have a sufficiency of "seed." And when the parish was planted throughout, the neighbours had a dance in the biggest barn that was to be obtained.

This chief spring work over, the fisher-girls reverted to their former idleness, except when high tides brought in wealth of weed, when they spent some amphibious days in collecting it.

"Mary, why have you not been to the work lately?" inquired Lina one day, when, in a walk by the shore, she met one of her vagrant pupils. The girl in question was sitting on a strip of sand

in the sun, piling up shells, in company with a knot of children. She rose to her feet.

"I have to go gatherin' barnochs [limpets] for the dinner, miss," was the reply, as she tucked her wild hair behind her ears, and looked sheepishly at her feet tracing marks in the dust.

"You have not that excuse to-day, Mary." The other grinned, as found out in a piece of cunning. "Your mother tells me that you have been sitting here, or idling about, all the morning. I wonder you don't like to learn the work. Think of the wages you might earn by-and-by."

"I couldn't be always at it," she replied, a little sulkily. "I'd want a bit of fun sometimes wid the other colleens: I couldn't be slavin' for ever."

"It is for your own benefit I speak," said Lina, feeling annoyed. "I take the trouble to teach you, in order that you may be better off. Will you come and learn to-morrow?" No answer. "Oh, Mary, I see you have torn up the strip of muslin I gave you—look here"; a crumpled bit had fallen from the girl's fingers unawares. Lina walked on without further speaking.

And the girl sat down again, thoroughly satisfied with her idleness, and tied her hair into tufts with the torn muslin; she stayed till she felt hungry, playing with the shells and some bits of broken delf, and singing stray tunes. In England she

would have been drilled into industry by a parish school, and would have excelled in samplers and stitching ; in Ireland her childhood's training had been idleness and sloth.

" I will never ask that girl again to be a worker," thought Lina, as she walked away rather hurt in spirit. " It is a thankless task to be teaching them. I hope I may be able to go on with it. If I saw a single spark of gratitude for the pains I have been taking——"

Ah, Lina ! such a poor reward ! Would this sustain you more than the remembrance of the Master's smile ? She was downcast, and without pleasant thoughts : she had been more than usually discouraged that day by the inattention of some whom she tried to teach. " I am sorry, almost, that I ever undertook such a task," she said to herself. But, looking up a minute afterwards, she saw another of her pupils sitting on a ledge of the rocks near her father's cabin, working busily. Lina's brow and heart cleared. Here was one grain of good done.

Mary Connell was much her best scholar. She was a short girl, somewhat deformed ; and, from her sedentary ways of life, and incapability of the harder manual labour, she was able to take more pains with her work than the others. Her poor unhealthy face brightened and blushed at the approach of " Miss Liney."

At first she had been a very unpromising pupil—soured in temper by the wretchedness of her home, where her strong brothers and sisters despised her weak, mis-shapen figure, and no allowance was made for the irritability of her ill health. Lina had often seen her sitting in the sunlight on a green bank beside her father's cabin, taking care of the youngest child—the only thing she seemed to care for in the world, because it was the only thing that smiled at her and trusted her. And now the deformed girl had found a new object of love in the person of her teacher, and a new interest in the desire to excel.

And Lina knew that if but one soul out of that class of scholars should be redeemed, through her exertions in teaching the truth, such gain to the kingdom of heaven would be far more than worth the toil of her whole lifetime.

She looked now at her pupil's work.

"Mary, this is very nice indeed; you are improving rapidly," she said, passing the muslin across her fingers. "It is also the cleanest you have done."

The girl coloured high with pleasure.

"I'm sure I'm heartily glad you likes it, Miss Liney. It don't come nateral to my hands to be always clane, yet awhile, miss; but I'll thry my best."

"If this is completed as well as you have begun,

I will send it for sale, Mary. I think it is good enough, almost."

This honourable distinction was delicious to the worker. Lina went on in her walk, feeling soothed at heart. Mary brought her the collar next afternoon, ready made up. Lina was surprised. "How did you get it done so quickly?"

"Oh, Miss, the mornin's is long an' light now, an' I gets up very airy," was the reply. "I thought ye'd like to send it soon, maybe."

Lina had procured the address of an English lady, who interested herself in obtaining sale for the work of the poor. But she was timid about writing, now that the time for action had arrived: she depreciated the work in her own mind; it looked coarse and incomplete. In good time she remembered one of Mrs. Brooke's rules for the promotion of moral strength: "Once resolved, always perform, unless the strongest reasons are adverse"; now, these doubts of hers were not reasons, but exaggerated apprehensions. So she went into her father's office, where he was studying some scientific book with knitted brows, as his manner was: he generally looked thus while reading, be the subject never so mild. It seemed to help him in concentration of thought.

Lina drew to herself a blotting-sheet and began to write. Place and date came glibly enough. But should she use the third person, or the proper

ego—I myself? Ten minutes were spent in trying to devise a note in the former cumbrous fashion ; and, when finished, it seemed stiff as a suit of mail. She threw it aside and resorted to her own natural words, simply stated her case, with a superfluity of conjunctions, and I fear with defective punctuation. And presently the important letter was directed. What would Miss Simson think of that strange writing? It was remarkably clear, but one would not conclude it to be a woman's: Lina dreaded the epithet "masculine." It only possessed the beauties of perfect distinctness and precision of form—qualities undervalued in the angular, feminine caligraphy of the age, yet which have been essential to many a success in life.

And Lina found herself, before she was aware, indulging in Alnaschar-like visions of future results—great moneys coming in, a flourishing school, improved cottages, civilized peasantry—all shut up, like the oak in the acorn, within that single, clumsy-looking letter, which was travelling among ten thousand others, sealed up in great sheepskin sacks, towards England.

Thrown into a dozen piles of chaos, yet emerging always in the right place ; sorted by fifty different hands, shovelled into sacks, which were again disgorged, the letter finally found its way into a carrier's pouch, and briskly stepped the bearer through the sunny streets of a county town, deliver-

ing his insignificant packets. Oh, heavily freighted were those paper trifles ! To this house bringing joy, or wealth, or pleasant words ; to the next crushed hopes, or bereavement, or blows of poverty ; putting in circulation the balm of life and its bitterness, nerving the muscles of the industrious, adding zest to the vapid existence of the idle : can any one imagine a state of society without a postman ?

This letter was brought in the apron of a neat servant-girl into a parlour fragrant with subtle odour of tea, where the breakfast table glistened whitely in a crimson room. Here was sitting a grey-haired lady, one of the honoured old maids of England, a woman with clear, energetic eye and prompt, benevolent thought, whose life was a commentary, stamping falseness on every word of those who assert that the single woman must necessarily be a weary, objectless being, isolated in interest and feeling—sinking, for very refuge, into slander and petty selfishness.

This lady gave her servant a pleasant smile as she deposited the letters on the table ; she thought it good to bestow upon inferiors some of the sunshine too often reserved only for equals and superiors, nor did she find that the condescension levelled social barriers one whit. She quickly opened and examined her letters, being evidently given to action more than to speculation. The

frank yet timid language of Lina pleased her. Of course, the work was inferior: Miss Simson shook her head over it. And as she was methodical, and never laded to-morrow with to-day's duty, she wrote a kindly letter by return of post; reciprocating Lina's stiff "Madam" with the more friendly "Dear Miss Kingston," and into her list of correspondents inserted the name and address.

So this letter travelled again with ten thousand others, and was filtered through post-offices, and slid from bags great to bags small and yet smaller, till Lina stood by its last receptacle, waiting till her father should unlock it, and trying to believe that she was to be disappointed.

"A letter for you, Lina—strange hand"; and he tossed it on the table.

Blessings on the punctual correspondent! He or she is helping to establish a great public virtue, and lessening a great private fault; adding a grain of stability to at least two characters, his own and the recipient's; sparing the smart of balked expectation, sometimes saving the pang of hope deferred.

The letter was rather long; but it contained clear directions, statements of the value of the work she might prepare for sale, suggestions as to her mode of teaching—it was just the valuable guide the recipient needed; practicality breathed in every sentence. Miss Simson promised payment at a certain rate for each collar so good as the

specimen forwarded. With a pleased flush on her face, Lina told her father about it.

"Very good! That is encouragement!" Mr. Kingston spoke commonly in such concentrated clauses; his thoughts seemed thus packed up also. He called his daughter back as she was leaving the study a minute afterwards.

"There are terrible times coming on the country next autumn," he said. "Thoughtful men see the certain tokens of famine and pestilence. Now, this district I regard as in a manner given into my hands, to save if I can. You will do no small share in this great work if you persevere as you have begun. I have not helped you much, for I wanted to see whether the stuff for endurance was in you; I think it is, my daughter. Your scheme will be the better for standing without crutches at first, and yourself the stronger for independence. Just go on, make these girls industrious if you can—give them money-getting power, producing power. Any help you want I shall freely and gladly give. We will work hand-in-hand, to try and save these poor people from the tempest that we see gathering—shall we not?"

He drew her near to him and kissed her. The tears came into Lina's eyes; he was not demonstrative, yet he had given her his confidence. Lina felt very happy, and went to the drawing-room with a radiant face.

"Mamma, I have had a letter from Miss Simson, and she will procure a sale for any work I send her."

"Indeed, dear?" returned her mother kindly. "But I don't know who Miss Simson is." For in her anxiety to bear the failure alone, if failure there should be, Lina had spoken of her effort to nobody. When she had explained, she was rather mortified at her mother's languid approval. Why are we for ever expecting other people to feel precisely as we do?

Thus particularly have I related Lina's trifling success, because it invigorated her for a long, strong effort—like a first prize to a schoolboy, or the first gold dust to the earliest Californian miner. Few natures can get on without a glimpse of what they are striving for, at times; this letter was such a glimpse to Lina, of wages possible to be earned by her scholars. She had not imagined that her father's eyes had watched her: his words of approbation remained precious in her memory. They had set her spirit in a glow of that white heat which tempers down into a steel resolve.

Chapter XVII

A CABIN INTERIOR

THE old woman at Lissard Point had said, in her gratitude, that she would take care of Mr. Kingston. One would think that that gentleman, in his position so much higher and wealthier, with all the protection of his magistracy about him, needed not the poor thing's guardianship; but there is an old fable concerning the material help which a mouse afforded to a lion.

She sat in the cabin one evening in early May, stirring a cradle with her foot, as is the wont of Irish grandmothers, upon whom, among the peasantry, the task of rearing the little ones devolves. The mother had gone out to dig potatoes from the pit for the supper of the family; presently she returned, and set down a heavy basket in the corner.

"I'm afeard the praties are gettin' bad in the pit," she remarked, while she quickened the fire with rapid fanning of her apron. "That'll be a purty story wid us, mother."

"The Lord's will, if it comes, Mary," said the old woman piously. "Sure we musn't quarrel wid His orderings, though I don't know, meself, what'll become of the people if the blackness continues."

"Or what'll become of ourself," rejoined the daughter, gloomily looking into the fire. "What's to be done with the childher? an' their father hardly ever doin' a stroke of work. He's gone entirely wid thim Black-boys."

The women were silent for some minutes; the younger rose up, washed a tubful of potatoes, and set them down to cook in a great pot. "Maybe it's only the frost on the top, and not the blight at all," said the elder woman.

The other handed her one of the tubers, instead of answering. When cut open with a knife, on the pale yellowish interior were several brown spots, truly of the dreaded disease. Mrs. Riley laid it down with a sigh.

"We must get Carmody to open up the pit to-morrow," she said, "an' spread them out; maybe 'twouldn't go further than the outside. It's queer that there wasn't a spot on them an' they growin'. We'd want to be settin' our praties soon, if that's the way wid much of them."

"The spring-tides are this week; I'll get a couple of the neighbours to help in gatherin' weed;

I hear Mr. Kingston says the salt is grand against the blight."

"I'm in dhread there's worse times comin' than people think," said the old woman. "They're all goin' on as if the blight couldn't ever come again. An' to my thinkin', all the blood that's been shed in the counthry these years back 'll bring down the punishment on us."

The daughter rocked herself to and fro, without reply. "It's a hard case to have John goin' on as he does," she said at last. "It's enough to break my heart." And the poor wife burst into sobs. "He has somethin' dreadful on his mind—if you heard his talk in his sleep—I *know* they're goin' to murder the masther at Golden Hills."

"What words does he say in his sleep, as ye mentioned?" said the old woman, ceasing her monotonous motion of the cradle, and her eyes almost glowing in the gathering dusk.

"Enough to show me what he's after," said the daughter, drying her eyes with the corner of her apron, and rising to throw cold water on the boiling potatoes.

"Mary," said her mother, after a pause, "whatever we do, John must be kept out of havin' hand in such wickedness as that. Watch him, wakin' and sleepin', as well as you can, an' it's hard if we don't find some way of hinderin' him. Whisht, here he's in, himself."

"Well, Shane," said his wife, using the Irish equivalent for his name, "how was the fishin' this night?"

He cast down a bundle of nets.

"Bad enough, of coorse: nothin' goes right wid us: only a couple of rock-fish taken."

He sat down in front of the fire with his brimless hat on. The women communicated with each other by a glance. The younger lifted the pot of potatoes as if it were a bauble for weight, drained away the boiling water, and replaced them on the hearth to steam. A shadow darkened the doorway.

"Why, then, Sally, is that yerself? Come in an' welcome," were the hospitable words spoken. "We're just goin' to the supper, an' there's no one in all the barony we'd sooner sit down with us than the very woman I'm spakin' to."

"Thank ye kindly, Mrs. Carmody." But she looked doubtfully at the man's figure before the fire.

"Never mind *him*," said the wife; "he's only dark in himself because the fishing was bad. Now, Sally, did ye bring me the charm ye promised, for the weenock to wear agin the fairies?"

The children dropped in from their various play-places; and presently the potatoes were poured out upon the bare table, without the intervention

of cloth or dish. Using neither knives nor forks, the family sat round and ate—for the most part in silence. There can be no conversation among people wholly uneducated; and even when a naturally strong and observant mind proves this rule by being the rare exception, his interlocutor must have some intellectual qualities himself to draw forth the latent power of mind into language. These people had lived much the same life from year to year, and expected so to live till old age: the monotony of past and present left few subjects that could be talked upon. Incident was seldom beyond the commonest. Christmas, Easter, St. John's Day in Midsummer, and Michaelmas in harvest, were the four landmarks of the year; and their seasons were the potato planting in May, herring shoals in July, potato digging in October, and the two great annual fairs at Castlebay, where the pig was bought and sold.

Such had been the routine repeated of the old woman's life. These later years were troublous, and disastrous events had broken that placid order.

Each person crossed himself when he had done eating. The children were all bundled into bed after a washing from the mother, during which Sally was quite happy, dandling the youngest on her lap and singing for it wild Irish ditties.

"I want you to get me some of thim herbs that

grows out on the hills, that's good for a cough an' a smoderin' about the heart. I do have it very bad sometimes," said the old woman.

"They must be gathered under the bonny Lady Moon," said Sally portentously. "The dewdrops must be on 'em."

"That'll be aisy for you to do, that's always out of nights. Of course, you sees many a thing nobody else ever see?"

"Maybe I do, an' maybe I don't," said Sally, looking cunning. "Mostly I runs away when any of them chaps wid the black faces comes across me. I'm afeard of the guns."

Carmody had gone away before this, and was smoking outside the house.

"The times is awful," said the old woman. "Nobody's sure of their life wid them Ribandmen goin' about."

Sally said nothing, but clapped her hands for the baby.

"Poor Miss Liney!" ejaculated the other.

"What for is she poor?" said Sally, looking up quickly. "She's the best lady in all Munster, so she is."

"An' why shouldn't I say she's poor, whin they have her father doomed?"

"Aye!" Sally stood upright, every faculty tensed at once; "I'll follow the Black-boys night an' day an' warn *him*, if I had to die for it!"

She laid down the child on the floor, and was going out of the cabin.

"Whisht ashore," said the old woman, laying hands on her. "Be sacret an' silent in yerself, or 'tis only harm we'll bring him to. He did a kindness by me an' mine that I'll never forget if I lived a hundher year ; an' he'll get a life for the life he gave, b'lieve me ! You'll be watchin' about the hills an' I'll be watchin' here, an' betune the two of us we might come to the knowledge o' somethin'. I vowed I'd take care of him, an' so I will, whatever I do."

Sally listened with bent brows, and signified her comprehension.

"The herbs I spoke of grows plenty on the west of Slieve-na-mon," said the elder woman as her daughter entered from the other room.

Chapter XVIII

WHAT THE LONG DAYS BROUGHT

THE midsummer drew on with velvet steps. June spread over the cliff-tops a mosaic of exquisite colouring: emerald moss, inlaid with clusters of the amethyst wild thyme, and the carnelian pimpernel, and the chrysolite crow's-foot, and a heath having ruby bells, with a score other flowerets, whose dyes have no rival among gems. Where a speck of soil had settled in any rock crevice, the birds of the air and arrant winds—Nature's seedsmen—had originated tufts of pink sea-thrift and spikes of wild lavender, which magnified the speck into a flower-knot. Pale green samphire was just beginning to show, in places where the salt spray often showered.

And lovelier weeds drifted in from ocean with the quieter tides of summer: crimson, and pink, and bright green, and golden, supplanting the uniform bronze of the winter waifs of algæ. Lina had a blank book in which she collected specimens, with much labour picking out their infinite ramifications and gumming down the fairy fronds.

One bright evening—there had been nearly a week's rain and twenty-four hours of passionate storm, succeeded by this day's perfect lull—she took a book down to the shore, and sat pleasantly in a nook which she had appropriated by naming it her "arm-chair." Terraces of rock ranged all around, above and below, and far under the deep beyond, piled in that grand disarray which only Nature's hand can render magnificent. At the back of them lay that prosaic necessity, a public road.

Lina had deluded herself with the idea that she should read. But only the vagrant, eddying breeze, fresh from its sport on the sea, and bringing in little gusts of spray, turned over the leaves of the open book—which book was Wordsworth. The poet would have forgiven the neglect, egotist though he was. He would have sat still and idle himself in such a scene, inhaling the surrounding beauty, receiving impressions from the greater Book, open to all the world and studied by the millionth fraction of its inhabitants. Thought cannot be fixed in presence of the ever-varying waves, which seem to reflect into the mind a portion of their own hues of change, and have a fascination to rivet the eyes withal, by their sweep and swell, by the expectancy of their sonorous dash. Lina believed herself thinking, when she was but floating idly on a current of waking dreams, buoyed up and down, into sunlight

and shade, just like the fragment of seaweed which she saw borne on the tide.

Hugo lay at her feet : suddenly he raised his head and listened ; he started up, shook off drowsiness, and bounded towards the road. Lina's fragment of seaweed was washed nearer—nearer. In a few minutes the dog returned and fawned upon her. She patted his head absently ; he thrust up his great damp nose with a loving whine. The weed floated nearer ; she gazed at it as though won by a spell. There ! it was thrown ashore.

And Lina was waked up thoroughly by a hand put upon hers.

“ Alick—dear Alick ! ”

The surprise was almost too much for her ; she rested heavily on his arm.

“ There, now, I shouldn't have done this ; I have frightened you,” said her brother.

“ How did you guess that I was here? ” she asked, recovering.

“ By Hugo's acting as pointer ; and I thought I would steal a march on you.”

“ And how is your dear old self? Your whiskers have grown so much ! ” She looked into his eyes. “ Darling Alick, I had no idea you would come to-day. Mamma will be so delighted ! ”

He was a handsome young fellow, with fair brown hair and blue eyes, and a complexion which he was at some pains to bronze. There was, however,

indecision about the features and a slightly sensuous lower lip ; the chin too retreating for firmness ; the eye too shallow for large common sense ; the head small and symmetrical.

"Come," he said, after a few minutes—"come away ; Orme is waiting for me."

"Who?"

"Philip Orme. Did you not know he was coming?"

"Yes ; but I forgot it for the moment." With womanly instinct Lina drew her bonnet straight, and smoothed back her hair.

"He is waiting with the car we hired in Castlebay. We saw the old ladies——"

"Stand still for a minute ; I want to have another good look at you, dear brother."

He laughed, but obeyed.

"Well, what do you see?"

"You have not grown."

"That is a discovery. Men don't grow after twenty, generally. Did you expect to find me one of the Anakim, like William, shot up suddenly, by virtue of Trinity College?"

"No"—laughing—"not quite. That was just the first thing it occurred to me to say. I can't tell what I expected to see ; but it is a pleasure to look at your face, Alick."

He pressed her arm with an affectionate smile. In the road, patiently walking up and down, waited

Mr. Philip Orme, his hand in his pocket ; he came to meet them with a grave, observant face. Alick uttered a flourishing introduction.

"You might give him your hand, Lina, since he is a far-away cousin," remarked Alick, when both bowed. "And now to make you good friends," he exclaimed, jumping on the car, "you shall walk up to Golden Hills together, while I drive on as *avant courier*. *Au revoir!*" And the horse trotted off.

Nothing could exceed the stiffness of that twenty minutes' walk. Lina tried to say several things, and each seemed more imbecile than the last, till she remarked how fine the weather had been.

"Yes!" he answered quietly, with a glance which reminded her of the wet week past: she laughed, but was yet more nervous at her mistake. He took the conversation into his own hands mercifully—told some incidents of their journey; and as this required her only to be a good listener, she looked at him once or twice to make acquaintance with his appearance. Not a handsome face, but a manly one: black hair, deep-set eyes of some dark colour; she could not see his forehead for the slouched travelling cap; a tall, strong figure.

In the dining-room she found Alick, discoursing volubly concerning a breakdown they had experienced to an admiring audience, consisting of his mother, lying back in her chair while she gazed at this dearest son, and Rosie and Frank, each imprison-

ing an arm and brimming over with laughter. Every word seemed winged with a witticism to their partial ears.

Philip Orme sat down, after Mr. Kingston had spoken to him, in the background. He perceived that his presence was soon nigh forgotten; he had never before been a cipher where Alick was a golden number. How their love magnified the young freshman! made a hero, an Admirable Crichton, out of a commonplace student! Beautiful alchemy of the affections! at times it works a true miracle; he who is esteemed genuine gold will strive to merit such estimation, while there is no surer way of transmuting a character into base metal than to treat it as such.

William had heard report of the new-comers, and entered presently. "How are you, old fellow?" The brothers' hands clasped with an iron grip, conveying the affection of an embrace without its pretension. "Oh, Will, I feel such a pigmy!" exclaimed Alick, covering his eyes and shrinking himself smaller. "I used to think myself quite a respectable height in Dublin: there was one fellow shorter than I, and you cannot think how inexpressibly I was obliged to him for the fact. I thought of presenting him with a testimonial—suppose a statuette of Tom Thumb; wouldn't that be a delicate insinuation of my obligations, eh, Lina?"

They laughed, of course; everything that Alick

could say was mirth-provoking in their present mood. He began to think himself quite a witty fellow, with a faint wonder that his *bons mots* were not thus appreciated elsewhere.

Golden Hills was a happy house that night. The recovered son was doubly precious to all. The father reverted to his own college days, and compared incident with incident, bringing up names which were now among the foremost men in Britain. Youth stirred in his heart while tracing the unencumbered days to which all men look back with interest and indulgence. Lina had not seen him so animated for months ; a depression had been shadowing over him during this lawless spring-time ; and as all prevailing moods are symbolled by a corresponding attitude, his attitude of thought now, in solitude, was a drooping bend with his chin on his chest. It seemed as if in heart he had succumbed to a burden of care ; and Lina had latterly watched the grey hair on his temples bleaching into whiteness. She was very glad of the new arrivals, for his sake.

The sweet, idle evening was prolonged to near midnight, hardly with consciousness that hours were passing by. And Philip Orme, being observant and a stranger in this family, was not long in perceiving the relative positions of its members and sounding something of their natures. Alick, the spoiled eldest, was born before experience had taught his parents judiciousness in their love ; and Mr. Orme knew

enough of his vacillating disposition to fear that he would cost that love many a pang. William, reserved, diffident, sensible, with a nobly set-on head, and a firm outline of feature, betokening uprightness even to bluntness. Lina, a pleasing face, with truthful, quiet manners, seeming to have much noiseless influence over the others. The mother, very pale and gentle, protected by her strong children.

Next day he saw still further among them.

Alick procured a holiday for Frank, who announced thereupon that he meant to go strawberry-gathering.

"I know there's lots of them in the Chase—oh, I know a hundred places where their little red juicy heads are hiding!" he exclaimed, bounding in the air enthusiastically, and turning a somersault on the grass in his descent. Some of the party had stepped out of doors from the breakfast-room to admire the magnificent view, spreading far to the south-west, of rocky islands and peaked headlands emerging from ocean mist.

Frank dashed into the house, and reappeared in two minutes with a wallet, which Lina recognized as an article at which she had seen him working painfully with needle and thread on the previous day. Its shape was truly remarkable, and strips of canvas, fastened with corking pins, held it round his body. But none might smile at it with impunity; he was vainer of his handiwork than a girl. People

are so apt to plume themselves upon doing things quite out of their line.

"Now let's have a party," proposed Frank, walking up to where Lina stood with Mr. Orme, "and have luncheon under the trees."

He was impetuous about it, of course; annoyed when Lina said that she for one could not go so early. "You must throw cold water on a fellow's fun! I never saw any one like you!" he exclaimed in his petulance. "You would rather teach those ragged brats than do anything I ask you."

"Frank!" she said reproachfully.

"Ah! you're vexed at having such a thing said before Mr. Orme—just as if it wasn't true!"

Mr. Orme listened attentively, his eyes bent upon the boy with an expression that embarrassed him. Lina coloured highly.

"She may be annoyed that a stranger should see her brother forgetting himself," he observed in a low tone.

"Well!" rejoined Frank, fidgeting; "but it's hard that she's always the one to object. I wish she wasn't so good altogether to the poor, and then she would have more time to give to Rosie and me."

The least grain of truth lurked in the last insinuation; for Lina, often tired after hours of teaching, was not inclined to keep company with her young brother's unweaned spirits. Frank marched off to

besiege his mother ; and his father, finding him thus congenially occupied, settled the subject by declaring that he himself wanted Alick for the entire day.

" I must just go by myself, and I can cut plenty of dandelions for my rabbits," concluded the young gentleman. So having endured a hug from Rosie, and promised her strings of strawberries when he returned, he set off at a springing pace, bounding with a stick he surnamed his alpenstock. " Hullo ! I forgot Hugo ! " and he ran back to the yard. " Like a walk, poor fellow ? Poor old boy ! down, sir, down ! " For the beast's great paws were on Frank's shoulders, and his hot tongue panting close to his ear.

Now, Lina was in the storeroom, whose wide windows looked into the yard ; and she saw Frank, with his empty wallet dangling at his side, loosening Hugo's chain. The rankling after his rudeness was still smarting her feelings ; she hesitated, with her hand on the wire lattice. " He deserves that I should not take the least care for him," she thought. " You ought to punish him," quoth some inner impulse, disguising itself as justice.

No, Lina ; the sister's influence over a brother is not to be thus retained. Her province is to persuade, not to punish. Frank heard a tapping at the window and looked round. He had already forgotten all about his saucy speeches.

"You were going without any luncheon; I suppose you will be out till dinner-time; will you take some bread and cheese?" She made a sandwich for him and wrapped it in soft paper.

"Bravo! Now give me a couple of crusts for Hugo, and we'll have a picnic of our own in the Chase. Eh, poor fellow?" His nose peered in at the window. "Thank you, Lina—I never would have thought of it, and of course should have come home half-starved."

"And, dear Frank, the next time you don't understand my reasons for refusing to do as you wish, don't be rude."

He looked at her for a moment, then put out his hands and grasped hers. Into his wayward, boyish heart that loving smile penetrated, when to a reproof it would have been flint.

Chapter XIX

ST. SYNAN'S BURIAL-GROUND

FRANK walked down the avenue with great sobriety, learning to think. Outside the lodge gates he came upon Philip Orme.

"I am going with you, if you like," said that gentleman.

Now, Frank had been recalling with shame his words which the stranger had heard; he felt sure they had lessened him in those grave eyes: he could not give assent with so much cordiality as under other circumstances.

"You know that I am a stranger," said Mr. Orme, seeing his thought well, but not caring to notice it; "I want a cicerone. I have never been so far west before, and am curious to become well acquainted with the country. I should like to take long walks frequently."

"So should I," interjected Frank eagerly. "And I know the roads for ten miles round. Suppose we do!"

"Very well. Whenever it can be done agree-

ably to all parties"—Frank winced slightly, and kicked an opportune pebble. "Now, to begin your office as guide. What is that woman doing?"

"Grinding a quern. Mrs. Burke," cried Frank, springing forward, prompted by the boy's love of desultory doings, "let me grind some; you must be tired. See, Mr. Orme, the corn is poured in here—into a hole in the upper stone—and we turn it round over the lower stone by this handle, and it comes out ground into flour."

Rather a confusion of "its"; but boys are commonly not lucid in description, and Mr. Orme was helped to comprehend by the substantial example before his eyes. It resembled a picture in a volume of antique customs. His classical memories were stirred; here was the handmill of Greece extant in Ireland of the nineteenth century; probably thus had Trojan housewives crushed corn for contemporaries of Hector; thus, in a Saxon homestead, had the immortal burnt loaves of King Alfred been prepared. Mr. Orme, being addicted to derivations, had speedily recalled the Gothic "quairn"—the rugged Welsh "cwyryn," signifying a quick whirling motion, whence he concluded the name of the implement to have come, and was pleased with his own shrewdness, when this point was mentally settled.

"Mrs. Burke grinds enough flour every morning to do for the day," said Frank, turning the quern

laboriously; "and enough on Saturday to do till Monday. Ah!" taking off his hand, "it is very tiring. How you can stay an hour grinding I don't know."

"It comes aisy, sir, when one *has* to do it," said the widow, with a smile and a curtsy. "Bless your heart, Master Frank, that ain't hard work compared with footin'^t turf or settin' praties."

Mr. Orme took the handle. "I'll pour in," said Frank. "And, Mrs. Burke, give me a bit of your bread to show this gentleman." It was of barley flour, very dark-looking, but sweet-tasted.

"I thought the people lived on potatoes," quoth Philip.

"So we would, sir, if they hadn't failed," said the woman; "but mine blackened in the pit, an' I only saved as much as planted my little garden. I hope there's no fear of the blight this year, yer honour?"

She turned a look of anxiety on the flourishing green ridges. "If it comes, sir, we'll be all ruined out an' out; we'll have to go to the workhouse, thim that can't starve. Isn't it a wondher, yer honour, that all the book learnin' don't help the gentry to find a cure for it?"

Mr. Orme talked a little to the poor woman, and declared his opinion that her potatoes looked

^t Ranging the freshly cut sods in little angular piles to dry.

very healthy—a fact which, thus confirmed, seemed to reassure her. Being a dweller in a city, Philip just knew a potato blossom from an artichoke.

The pedestrians took their way along the cliffs towards the village of Lissard Point. Frank said that they would return by the inland road, and then look for strawberries in the Chase; but, now, he wanted Mr. Orme to see the grand ocean views.

Winding its way through the fields, towards a low ruin at some little distance, they noted a humble procession of bare-headed people. "That is a funeral," said Frank, after a pause. "I wonder who is dead hereabouts. They are going to St. Synan's burying-ground. Suppose we come over there, Mr. Orme? I think you'd like to see the old cross and holy well."

They turned into the narrow byroad.

Now, some days previously, poor Meade, the Scripture-reader, had lost a little child from that sudden scourge of infancy, croup. He had secretly arranged for the burial this forenoon, hoping that it would escape the notice of his enemies. No carpenter in the neighbourhood dared make a coffin for him; so, with his own hands, he fashioned one rudely of drift timber; but it was as safe a custodian of the quiet little body therein as any coffin velvet-cased and silver-mounted. The mother walked beside, stricken with sorrow, sobbing under her heavy cloak a low miserable cry. What to

her was it that the poor little one had no expectation in his life, if he had lived, but hardship the sorest, toil unflavoured by comforts, an old age of pauperism, that he was taken from the evil to come? Grief lies deeper than reason with longest plummet can sound its recesses; and the more fathomless the love, the greater is the twin abyss of sorrow. This mother, now in the first bitterness of laying the precious dead out of her sight, had small comfort even in the belief that he was gone into a good land and a large, to Him who loved the children; and that the most glorious result of the longest life was his, without the heat and burden of the day.

Under an alder springing from the old masonry of St. Synan's Church—how alders love ancient ruins!—in an unnoticed place among long weeds, the Scripture-reader had dug his child's grave at early morning. But as the funeral now approached the churchyard, an ominous gathering of people was noticeable about the walls; the poor man's heart failed and wavered, in anticipation of a scene of reviling. The crowd scowled sullenly at the converts, yet they were permitted to pass the gate. When Mr. Brooke began to repeat the beautiful words which have fallen soothingly on many hearts of mourners, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth," some of the people, entering after him,

shrank back from the sound of the Protestant service: they swarmed upon the walls. The poor father much doubted whether their hostility would be confined to looks; and when he came to the place of the grave, it was found that the earth had been filled in, and flattened down. A shout of derision broke from the mob when they saw the momentary discomfiture of the converts.

"They carry their grudge to the grave," was Meade's remark, as he took a spade to open the ground afresh. Shouts grew angrier. "Right up against holy St. Synan's Church, to be berrin' a souper! Ye shan't do it, one foot of ye"; and off the walls came the crowd, collecting threateningly about the grave.

"Where'll ye give me to bury him in, the poor lamb? Show me any place—any place that ye'll lave him in peace. I chose what I thought none of ye could object to, bein' where there wasn't another grave; but sure I'll take any spot of earth ye give me, for I don't want to fight wid ye, boys; my holy Bible taught me somethin' better than that. Where will ye give me?"

"Outside—outside—ye may bury him in the field beyant; a souper shan't have a yard of the holy ground."

Mr. Brooke was speaking to one or two whom he knew to be ringleaders, appealing to them unsuccessfully.

"Will ye give me this place?" and Meade struck his spade into a vacant spot of soil.

"The O' Ryans' berrin'-ground—rest their souls! Never! We might expect them—for honest Catholics as they were—to walk in ghosts if we let a Protestant touch their coffin! No—we'll give you outside the whole counthry—any ditch ye like; an' good enough for ye!"

The mother rose up, and walked between the contenders; her tear-swollen face was pitiable. "Boys, don't ye be grudgin' us a little bit of earth to cover a poor weenoch, who never did harm to anybody, and who's in heaven this minit! Give us that place near the gate, where the big weeds are, an' may ye never feel the heart-scald that I have this day!" The poor woman's eyes rained down tears. The crowd was somewhat moved; but one fellow on the outskirts aimed a stone at her, which struck her face sharply. Instantly Philip Orme had seized him, and, after an instant's struggle, dragged him outside the gate, and hurled him to the ground. It was the man whom Meade had unsuccessfully prosecuted at the Quarter Sessions at Castlebay.

One might have expected that this act would cause a general blaze; but the pluck of the young gentleman was just suited to excite admiration from the mob; and not one of them but thought the fellow deserved such chastisement for his cowardly

conduct. The stone-throwing became less brisk as Mr. Orme looked round; two or three dropped missiles which they had gathered. Frank's presence contributed to this, for they knew his father's fearless upholding of the law. Men slunk away over the low walls quietly. It was quite a different thing to assault the converts or Mr. Brooke, who were gentle and friendless; but Mr. Orme looked dangerous, and had power within his reach. The crowd were cooled. The Scripture-reader began to dig in the weedy spot at the gateway, none hindering.

For the livelong night the father and his friends sat by the new-made mound, to prevent a dreaded insult—the coffin being torn up and cast out—no rare outrage to dead converts. A sorrowful vigil they kept under the bright stars in the soft June weather.

Chapter XX

WHAT CAME OF MR. KINGSTON'S REVENGE

THE summer assizes were approaching. Mr. Kingston received his subpoena to appear and give evidence against the prisoners whose trial had been postponed in spring.

It was a July noontide. John Carmody had been sitting idly for hours in his mother-in-law's cabin at Lissard Point. He had been in the night at a Riband meeting, the results of which much disquieted him. Hardened as he was in other forms of law-breaking, the crime now committed to his execution appalled him. Over the fire he sat, shivering at times, though the hot blaze of July sunshine was without : it seemed as if nothing would warm him. His gloomy eyes stared at the burning fuel; he kicked a sod into place occasionally, and trampled out live embers that fell away from the mass.

The keen-witted old woman, who was bustling about the house, noted and interpreted his more

than usual moodiness. Words and looks of his, since he had entered with the dawn, and refused to lie down, had given her a clue which she was not slow to unravel. She guessed what was the great crime in contemplation by the Riband confederacy in the neighbourhood.

Carmody's wife was weeding turnips for a farmer near by; she would not be home till evening. Any earning was important to the impoverished family now. His elder boys were breaking stones on a new line of road a mile away. But their father had always been idle and turbulent: his mother-in-law knew that it was not from distaste at his own position, in that his sturdy sinews were subsisting on the wife's labour, which made him "so dark entirely in himself," as she phrased it.

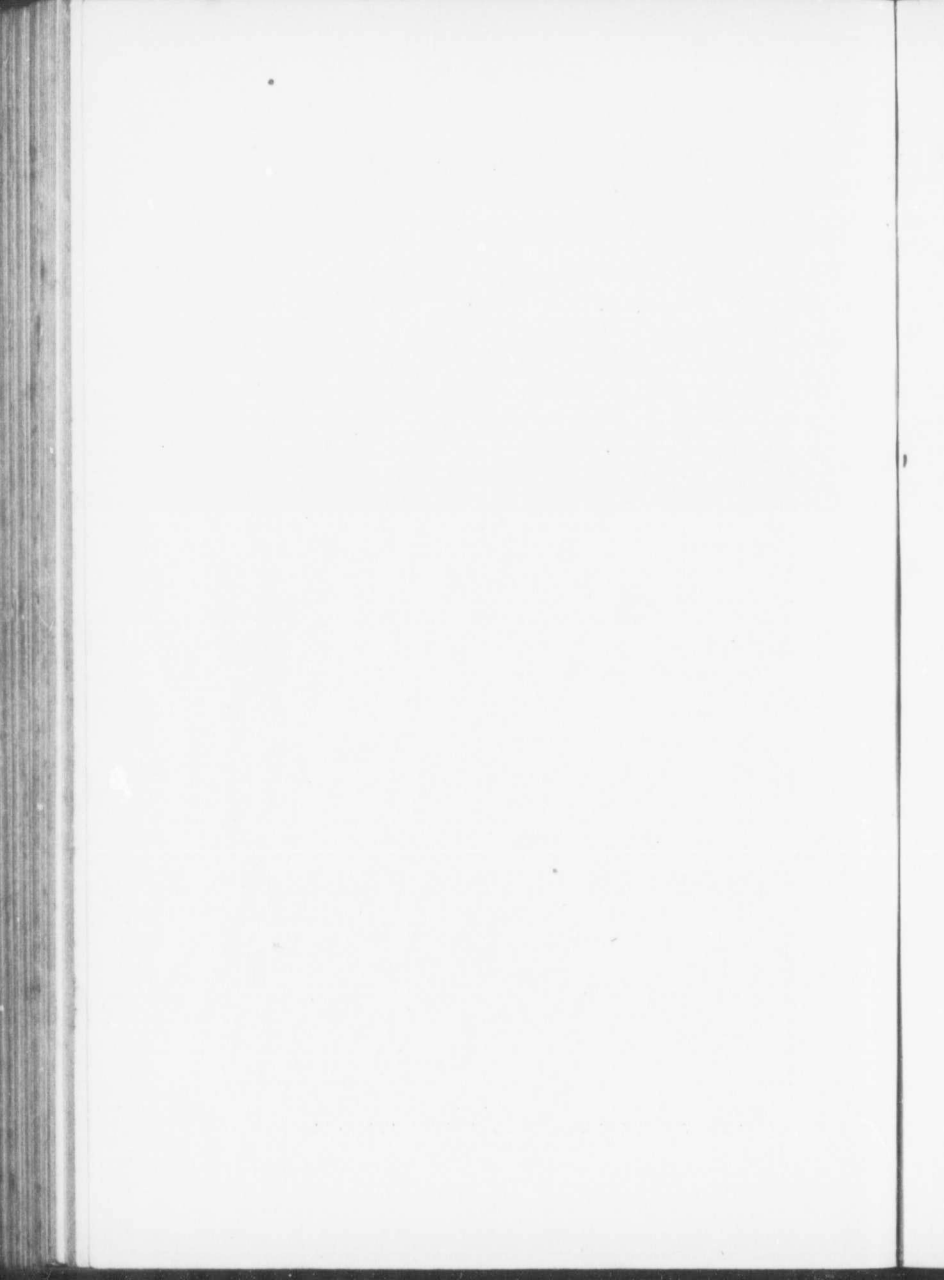
"Maureen," she said to the eldest girl, "run for a bucket of water to the well: it's time to put down the porridge for dinner."

"I won't be atin' dinner here," said the man, rising: "ye may stop my share out of it"; and, dashing his pipe into the chimney corner, he strode to the half-door, and leaned over it.

"'Deed an' ye might bring the water yerself, an' spare the poor wake little girl," remarked the old woman, with the customary dauntlessness of mothers-in-law: "what's the good of bein' six foot high, an' having the strength of a lion, when ye never do one pin's worth of use?"



"AN' WHERE ARE YE GOING, THAT YE'LL ATE NO DINNER,
JOHN CARMODY?"



To which he answered nothing. Maureen went on her errand, with the pail under her arm.

"An' where are ye goin', that ye'll ate no dinner, John Carmody?" Mrs. Riley asked presently. "'Tisn't to airn a penny some way, I'll be bound."

"If it isn't to airn, 'tis to pay a debt," he answered gloomily, without turning his head. "An' that without goold or silver aither, but a metal that's as good as any of 'em. Good-morrow, Scanlan."

Now the old woman pricked up her ears; for this was the most dangerous man in the county, one who was known as a principal Riband leader, but to whom the charge could never be brought home. His unpleasant voice accosted Carmody rather jovially.

"Are you ready? time's up, man: it's twelve, at any rate—look at the sun."

"Of coorse I'm ready: what a hurry ye're in—one wud think 'twas a party of pleasure we wor goin' to."

"Ye're afraid, I b'lieve," rejoined the other, with a retraction of the lips, which exposed his ugly yellow fangs to the root. "Here—let's light the pipe—who's inside?"

Carmody fetched him a live coal in the tongs. "Are ye very sure he's gone at all into Castlebay?" asked he.

"Sartin; he was watched airly enough this

mornin', an' he must be home to-night, just as we calc'lated," answered the other, between the whiffs of his pipe.

"Whisht! talk aisy—the walls have ears," said Carmody warningly.

"Oh, the ould woman's deaf, of coorse," said Scanlan, pressing down the tobacco into the bowl, and covering it with a tin cap.

"'Deed then she isn't, but wud hear a shot a mile off as well as yer own ears," observed her son-in-law. "Come over to the wall of the haggart,[†] an' there'll be no dhread of listeners."

Scanlan peered into the house. The old woman was blowing up the fire with her apron busily. "No fear of her," said he mentally.

After a muttered talking for some minutes, the men walked away down the road. Mrs. Riley, who had listened breathlessly to the colloquy, and, by virtue of her sharp senses, was able to detect some words of importance, watched them from behind the doorposts.

"Life for life, that's fair," said she audibly. "I wondher will my ould legs ever carry me as far as Castlebay. They must thry, at any rate. I didn't walk three miles these five year, barrin' to mass. There's four hours till he'll be comin', if they have the 'count right: wirra—wirra—but I'd never have it walked, an' to do my best."

[†] Cabbage-garden.

She looked out on the road : the men had left it, and were crossing the fields at some distance. No sign of Maureen returning from the well ; and the little fellow in the cradle could not be left alone. She waited feverishly for the appearance of the girl ; not a neighbour's house was within a quarter of a mile, or she might have carried the boy there. "What can be keepin' her, the lazy colleen?" thought the old woman ; "loitherin' by the way, I'll engage, to play jackstones, or some other nonsense. I wish I had her here for a minit." Johnny began to cry, and she stepped into the house to rock the cradle : but his wakefulness was past such appeasing, and he had to be set on the floor, and given a crust as a comforter. Still Maureen came not ; and the men were very far off on the fields, crossing the country rapidly.

"I'll be too late to warn him," she said, taking down her blue cloak from the peg. "An' he shan't be shot, if I had to wear my feet from under me. There you are, indeed"—apostrophizing the girl Maureen, who had just entered—"afther delayin' twice as long as you need. Mind Johnny, now, for I'm goin' out, an' mind the house too, an' don't let the stirabout burn."

The girl was rather astonished at the mild reception her fault met with from her usually demonstrative grandmother. But a fearful interest had taken possession of the latter's heart, which swallowed up

all minor considerations, and seemed to strengthen her aged limbs. Knowing all the short ways across the country, she struck out her path directly; and with the blue cloak over her head, covering all features but the necessary sight, she went as quickly as she could in the track of the men, avoiding houses and people, and managing marvellously to get over walls and ditches. She did not come in fair sight of the men for a couple of miles; and then caution was necessary, to conceal herself from their observation.

At last, in the midst of the boggy flat previously described, Carmody and his companion struck across to the straight road, at a place where a few stunted bushes grew. The spot had been selected because it was lonely; and here the two roads coming from Castlebay met for a mile before a second parting to follow the shore, and skirt the hills. The old woman saw them uprooting a furze-bush, and knew that it was to be placed as a stoppage for the car, which should drive along a few hours later, that there might be fuller opportunity for deadly aim at the occupants. She saw them cutting holes in other bushes fringing the road, for sight, and knew that they would fix a forked branch under each, as a gun-rest. The work would be well done; every precaution would be taken to insure success. The artificers sat down on a bank of peats, and lit their pipes peacefully.

“ I'll tell you what, Scanlan, if we don't do it first fire, we're dead men ourselves. I was describin' to you the rifle I seen in his office, that wud fire four shots as fast as you could pull the trigger —'twas the natest gun ever I see; an' he has it always with him on the car.”

“ Bathershin ! he showed it to frighten ye, an' ye wor frightened, John Carmody. I'd back ould Blazer for the slow an' sure ” : he rested his brawny hand on the dark polished stock of a musket beside him.

Chapter XXI

“JUST!”

THE old woman flew towards the shore along which the road curved to Castlebay. Already her feeble strength was nigh exhausted, and her feet seemed as if they would fail. But sooner than let that dark deed be done, for which she had seen the dreadful preparations, she would have died in giving warning.

When the shore was reached, she was yet eight miles, by the road, from Castlebay; and the time was going—going fearfully fast—the time lessening, that she had for saving him. A canoe was lying on the strand ready for sea. Three miles would be saved to her feet, if she could be rowed across the curve of the bay to the side of the peninsula which separated the inlet from that where the town was situate. A fisherman leisurely pushed the canoe into the water, whistling the while: his nets, and lines, and lobster-pots, were piled on the beach; embers of fire smoked in a broken tin can; and his provisions, a bag containing brown bread and dried fish, lay on the sand.

“Honest man, if ye wanted to do a kind action, that ye’d be rewarded for hereafter, ye’d row me over to the Point yondher !”

His weather-beaten face looked down at the little withered woman curiously.

“Three miles, an’ lose the tide for the fishin’ ! How aisy ’tis wid ye, ma’am ! whew !”

“I tell ye ’tis a matther of life an’ death, an’ a sowl will lie at yer dure if ye don’t !” she exclaimed vehemently. “Here’s me cloak for payment. I haven’t any money, they’re poor times wid everybody; but I’ll pray for ye all the days of my life.”

“Mick Foley ! come here, I say, an’ give us a hand wid the canoe. Here’s an ould woman in a terrible fix, as has a matther of life an’ death dependin’ on her. What do you say to puttin’ her across to the Point ?”

“It’s thru for me, that it *is* a matther of life an’ death,” repeated the old woman eagerly; “an’ none but you two can help me to rache the place in time. An’ if ye don’t—why, there’s a life gone, an’ I put it on ye the blame of it.”

She had sat down quietly, from pure exhaustion; and the composure of the action had more effect upon the men than even her vehemence.

“Come along,” said Foley: “maybe ’twouldn’t be right to neglect sich a sign”; and they pushed the canoe afloat. “Jem”—to a lad on the strand

—"mind the nets, an' we'll be back in no time."

Soon the light boat, made only of tarred canvas on a deal framework of open laths, was flying along under the sinews of four powerful arms.

"'Tis a quare story," said one to the other—"anythin' to do wid the 'sizes, ma'am?"

"Just the very thing," she answered; for truly the crime she was hastening to prevent had its origin chiefly in the necessity of destroying a principal witness against some captured Ribandmen. Mr. Kingston was about to give evidence concerning an armed party who had attacked a house where he happened to be passing a night, and which evidence would probably transport the criminals for life. Hence the resolve of their fellow-conspirators that it should never be delivered.

Lying in the bow of the canoe, the old woman had perfect rest, and felt that her progress was more rapid than it could be afoot. But the ancient proverb would not be balked of fulfilment, "More haste, worse speed"; and a slight snap was heard from one of the oars.

Foley shipped it with a growl, and was obliged to suspend his share of the rowing while he straightened it with splints cut from the handle, and cord twisted round. Necessarily, this retarded progress, and, striking out seawards, the waves were rougher, and appeared to sport with the light canoe

as if it could not be serious in the intention of urging on.

“We’re killin’ slow here,” said the first fisherman; “tide an’ breeze against us; but whin we get into the lee of the Point, ’twill be different. We’ll do our best for you, ma’am.”

But the tossing seemed very long to the eager old woman, who, now that the first feeling of restfulness was over, sat up and watched the passing of the land anxiously. “I’d go betther on my feet, an’ quicker,” she said at one time.

“No, you wouldn’t, beggin’ yer pardon, ma’am,” said Foley; “ye wouldn’t be come past the houses yet, if ye wor thrustin’ to yer ould legs.” He was in no good humour, as he was obliged to handle his fragile oar very delicately, and give strokes to the waves gentle as a lady’s, when his arm was yearning in strength to strain mightily. But at last they grated the canoe on the sand of a little cove: the old woman scrambled over the side into the shallow water, and was far towards the road as they pushed off again.

“I wondher what ails her; sure ’twas mighty queer she wouldn’t tell us, for all the hints we gev; I’m sorry I didn’t ax her downright.”

“So yer might; an’ it’s my opinion ye’d have the axin for yer pains: that’s a little body knows how to keep herself to herself,” the other replied. “I’ve a notion her face is beknown to me, some-

how: the grass doesn't grow undher her feet, anyhow; look how far she is already!"

"I know I wish my oar wasn't broke," Foley grumbled; "an' not even to have the satisfaction of knowin' what for, afther all."

Mrs. Riley was haunted by a fear lest the car might have passed by the road while she was crossing in the boat, for the time seemed greatly longer to her perceptions than it was in reality. Coming to where two children were sailing slips of deal in a ditch full of cress, she questioned them. "Plenty of cars passed by," was the answer from the tallest of the red-haired urchins, as he uprooted some of the weeds tangling in the path of his embryo ship.

"But a jaunting-car, with gentlemen on it, an' a Peeler an' a gun," she persisted. "Did ye see the likes of that?"

"Ye mane Kingston of Goolden Hills—black Kingston," said Red-head; "no, he didn't go by that I see; an' if he did that same, what do ye want wid him?"

Not choosing to reply to this query, a bunch of the wet weed was flung after her by the urchin, but missed. She walked on and on; but at the two-mile stone from Castlebay sat down, utterly wearied out.

"What'll I do if he went by the other road? Nothin' can save him. He'll walk into the thrap like a bird into a snare. An' I'll be killed when I go

home by the Black-boys, for thinkin' to give warnin'. Ohone, ohone, I used to think nothin' of my twenty mile in a mornin' to a fair; an' this day I've no more strength in me than a sparrow." She drew the cloak over her head, and rocked herself to and fro.

A countrywoman going by, carrying her shoes and stockings in her hand, and a basket on her back under her cloak, looked compassionately on her that sat by the roadside. After passing a little way, her kind heart prompted her to return. "Is it anythin' that's throublin' yer mind, my poor woman, that yer sittin' there so lonesome-like?"

"If I could get into Castlebay, my heart would be light," she answered, looking up quickly. "But I can't walk another step, and there's not a cart goin' into the town that wud give me a lift."

"No, sure, this hour of day they're all comin' on from the market; but maybe there's one that wud turn back a mile for the honour of goodness, if they worn't in a hurry. If I had my own little ass an' car—only 'tis dhrawin turf to-day—I wouldn't be long settin' you in safe an' sound. Here's Pat Delany, that has a good face an' a good heart to the back of it, an' is used to doin' kind turns; Pat, give this honest woman a lift."

"Wid all the welcome in life," said pleasant-looking Pat, jerking his rope reins, and jumping from the shaft to the ground.

"But it's back to the town she wants to go"; and Pat shook his head. Mrs. Riley spoke eagerly.

"You axed me, ma'am, whether I had anythin' on my mind; an' sure it's I that have the sore an' the sorry thing this day. I must see a person in Castlebay before three o'clock, and if I don't, it's a matter of life an' death wid him."

"Arrah, come up here; why didn't ye tell us that before? Sure it must be close upon three now"; and he raised the little woman in his powerful arms, and set her down on some hay. "I'll lighten the load meself by runnin'"; and so he actually did, for nigh half a mile; when, his breath failing, he jumped on the shaft again, and flogged his beast with the surplus rope end into a lumbering gallop. The smoke of the town soon appeared over the rising grounds; the church tower was visible; people came out of scattered cottages to see who made such noisy speed past the doors.

"Now lave me here, honest man, an' all the blessings above be on ye for yer kindness," said Mrs. Riley, nearly throwing herself off the cart at the junction of the road with the shore. Before Pat had fairly stopped his horse, she was some yards in advance towards the west end, where was Mrs. Orme's house. Arrived there, she was informed by the maid, who, being comfortable in person, was slow to attend the door-bell, that Mr. Kingston had left ten minutes before.

“He didn’t go by the lower road,” said the old woman, “for I’m come off it this minit—the lower road, I mane; an’ I walked twelve mile since the mornin’ to tell him a thing, an’ if I don’t find him I don’t know what I’ll do.”

“Maybe he’s in the village; he has often to call for parcels at the shops, when they don’t send them in time. There’s that man of his, Lance Brady, slopin’ about down there, an’ he’ll tell you.”

The buxom maid shut the door on Mrs. Riley: what was the visible anxiety of the poor old woman to the well-fed and comfortably housed Mary Ann?

Lance was walking round certain fields of his, where he had men employed; he was a small-holder of various pieces of ground, and had a sort of pleasure in possessing acres in various places, instead of one continuous farm, which might give occasion to the belief that Lance was rich, that Lance was “a sthrong man”—which, in the vernacular, signifies a long purse. He had been with his employer till the latter started for home, and then sauntered down to his labourers. Munching a blade of grass—Lance deemed this cheaper and almost as gratifying as tobacco-chewing—he looked on during the mowing of the meadow, his back towards Mrs. Orme’s house. One of the labourers remarked, “There’s a woman callin’ ye yondher, Misther Brady.”

Sauntering towards her at first—for that he cared

not to walk faster—the vehemence of her gestures made him finally run towards her. "Where's the master—your master?—if you let him go home to-night, he's a dead man. Stop him, however you do it!"

Lance never ran so fast in his life as down the byroad leading through Seaview Place to the shore; and as he emerged from the houses, he saw Mr. Kingston's car, coming from the village, just sweep round the angle of the turn to Golden Hills.

Now for it! Lance ran, unbuttoning his coat and loosening his neckcloth to give himself wider breath: when he reached the junction of roads, the car had disappeared behind houses at some distance. He knew the speed of the spirited grey horse, and strained every sinew to the utmost.

It happened that Pat Delany, after gazing sufficiently long at the back of his late passenger, turned to go homewards; jogging along in his usual easy fashion, and by no means thinking of any of the rules of the road—even the simplest, of keeping to his own side. But what Irish peasant could ever be brought to comprehend, or at least to act upon, any rule of the kind? At present Pat's absorbing reflections rendered him blind to anything but a direct obstacle; and so it came to pass that a knot of carts, equally negligently conducted, jammed the road; and Pat, in the rear, seemed deaf to all shoutings. Mr. Kingston's

servant stood up in his seat, and scolded volubly in the Irish tongue; being gifted with the irascible temper of drivers in general, he could have found it in his heart to assault unconscious Pat but for fear of results, as he was small of stature and Delany a Colossus, also because of the wholesome constraint of his master's eye. Before the obstruction could be removed, Lance Brady's signals and shouts were transmitted by somebody on the road, and the car stopped.

“ A word with you, sir,” he said, coming up panting and breathless. Mr. Kingston, seeing unusual significance in his looks, got down and walked away a few yards for private speech.

“ Thank you,” he merely said, when Lance's brief communication was made; and, stepping on the car again, took the reins himself, drove gently for a little distance, as a hint to his servant, who had a propensity for furious coachmanship, and turned towards Castlebay by another road.

“ Father, are you not going home this evening? ” asked Frank.

“ No, my son; I have changed my mind. Will you not like a Sunday at Castlebay? ”

All the evening Mr. Kingston sat in the dining-room at Wave House, thinking deeply. He would have neither lights nor companionship, but lay in the arm-chair motionless, as if a sound sleep were upon every faculty, hardly changing his position

twice. This thorough repose was his habit when brooding much on any subject. His cool courage was not quailing, but a sensation crept over him of being a hunted man.

A new threatening notice lay in his pocket-book, received a few posts back. He was even compelled to watch the letters that went to his wife, for she had received one missive of this nature, which terribly alarmed her. But he would not be frightened from his determination. On Monday he would go to the county town, and remain for the assize week. Deeply grateful he felt to Divine Providence for his second preservation from the assassin's hand. He would be more secretive and circumspect in his future movements. He had a momentary thought of leaving Golden Hills, and fixing his residence in Dublin; but the nature of his business would render such absence wellnigh impracticable.

"No!" he said aloud, winding up his reverie, as he struck one hand upon another firmly; "I must remain here and brave it out. There is no chance in men's affairs: God ordains all, and I believe it is not His will that I should die thus."

Mr. Kingston rang the bell for lights, and wrote half a score of business letters, inclusive of a short note to his wife, intimating his absence, without the real explanation.

Chapter XXII

OCEAN-CAVES AND THEIR INMATES

THE men on the bog had waited and watched, crouching behind the bushes when any one came in sight ; overhearing many a careless colloquy between the country people who passed by from the market, without a suspicion that the thick furze was covert to men bent on murder. Evening wore apace ; in the clefts of the hills gathered mist ; the sun grew broad and red as it neared the ocean line.

The hour when they expected the appearance of the victim had long passed. "Ginerally he's as punctual as the sun," remarked Scanlan, peering from his hiding-place ; "I don't know what can be keepin' him late to-day ; but he'll be along byne-by, there's no fear " : and with that comfortable persuasion he perched himself on the turf bank, a pipe in his mouth, to joke with the passers-by.

Carmody experienced a sensible feeling of relief from the lapse of time. He hoped, as he crouched

in the corner of a shelter of peats they had built—for he was not hardened enough to appear in public view, like his companion—that something might detain Mr. Kingston at Castlebay. The man with the projecting teeth, having burnt out his pipe, and seeing the day waning, grew savage.

“He’s always so particular about bein’ in church at Lissard Point of Sundays, that he’s sure to be home of a Saturday night, whatever he might be any other day. Whisht! there’s a black speck on the road away; I declare I believe it’s him at last.”

Steadfastly he gazed, and even his hardened face changed colour. Nothing approached on all the line of road but that one car, rapidly drawing nearer. He pulled the furze shrub into its place as an obstacle; and, creeping into ambush behind the bank, cocked his gun, and placed it on the rest.

Carmody’s eyes were blinded, as if flashes of lightning passed across them; his teeth almost chattered, his ears were drumming. Had he dared he would have run away: but he feared his desperate companion more than he feared the crime; and he knew the revenge of which Ribandmen were capable. The other, looking at his ashen and shivering face, derided him with a sneer, revealing all his yellow fangs. “Who wud ever think sich a chicken heart was in yer long body, Shane Dhu?”¹

¹ Black John.

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But something 'in the advancing car attracted his gaze intently. "There's more on it than I counted for—four men an' the dhriver, an' I don't see the child; yet it's the very car, for I know the step of the grey horse."

His doubts were soon justified. The villain turned deadly white, as he saw the men jump off the car at a few hundred yards' distance, and firelocks gleam from under their greatcoats. "We're betrayed!" he exclaimed in a hoarse whisper; "the Peelers is on us."

Carmody threw away his gun and dodged along in the ditch out of sight. The other remained irresolute for an instant, whether to discharge his loaded weapon on the advancing party or to take his chance of concealment. The four policemen had thrown themselves into the bog at either side of the road; and there was no cover, no species of concealment on all the marshy plain, except isolated peat-stacks. He laid himself down flat in the ditch, in the water, where the grass and weeds were long and the bank high: policemen passed close to him: he heard them find the blunderbuss and musket within a short distance of each other: and the four dispersed to seek the men whose grasp had left the stocks yet warm. He hoped revengefully that they might find Carmody. He raised himself and endeavoured to creep along to the safer shelter of a turf stack

a hundred yards off ; the move was unfortunate ; he was noticed ; and now there was nothing but sheer speed to save him. It did save him, for he was a rapid runner ; and as he came to the far side of the turf mound, a bog hole yawned before him deep and black. Without an instant's thought he leaped into it.

Immediately after his pursuers appeared, and were at fault.

"He came round here, surely—I saw him with my own eyes," said one.

"There's no more a sign of him than if the airth swallowed him up," said another. They even clambered to the top of the peat stack. "Maybe it's in the water he is," said a quick-witted policeman, throwing down a sod into the cavity. Two or three others followed, and the concealed Ribandman was struck ; but his presence of mind did not forsake him. Silent and motionless, hidden from view by the overhanging banks and deep darkness of the pit, with just so much of his face above the water, at intervals, as enabled him to breathe, he would not have uttered an exclamation for a shower of stones.

They left the spot with many expressions of surprise at his disappearance. He could hear, by the voices at a distance, that his companion in crime was captured ; and he was savagely glad of it. He raised himself partly out of the water by

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getting on submerged ledges of turf at the side ; but, to his dismay, heard the policemen drawing nigh again.

" I'd fire into the hole," said one. " Better than have the fellow escape."

They seemed to be considering the proposition. His blood ran chill. The gathering darkness was suddenly illuminated by a flash. He had dived just in time, and rose breathless in the smoke. It was only a blank cartridge, which had revealed the black, slimy, precipitous sides of the cavity for an instant. The Ribandman was safe. He clambered out when the footsteps had died away and the total silence assured him that he was alone.

He could hear the car driving rapidly on the road at some distance. " An' I'm glad I haven't yer comfortable wristbands on," soliloquized he, as he shook his dripping coat. " An' I dunno who in the world towld on us this time: there'll be pathrols over the counthry byne-by, anyhow. I'd best make myself scarce."

In pursuance of which resolution he struck across the bog towards the shore. Arrived at the cliffs, he walked along the edge in the apparent heedlessness of deep thought, but avoided, as by instinct, every sudden rocky inlet with which that coast line abounds, until he came to a cleft which contained a precipitous narrow path leading down

to a strip of shingly beach. Here a canoe lay stranded ; the man put his shoulder to it, and shoved it down a natural inclined plane of rock into the water.

A pair of oars lay along in a crevice of the sandstone ledges close by. He fitted pegs for rowlocks into holes on the gunwale. " The water laves no track, at all events," said he to himself. A few strokes pushed him far on the creek ; broad and bright beyond spread the moon reflections, scintillating as if the ocean were living—pulsing in every drop beneath that radiance. Far towards the west, the lighthouse stared with steady red gleam.

The Ribandman did not care to stay long under the revealing moonbeams ; he pushed close to the coast, and kept at the foot of the high, dark battlements of cliff, passing many a black cleft into the land, where the waters plashed deeply. Presently the canoe entered such a gully—a miniature Norwegian fiord—whose depth wound inward a mile. Wherever else the sea might be calm, here the tide always chafed in its narrow prison, and flew up angrily against the face of the unmoved primitive rock. A keen eye might discern, this night of strong lights and glooms, a spot blacker than the surrounding blackness, in the base of the towering cliff at one side. It was a cave.

The entrance was very low—a flattened arch,

formed by the curving of the strata. Scanlan crouched as the canoe shot within into utter darkness—darkness that might be cloven, so solid it seemed. The splash of waters against the invisible sides suggested fathomless depth and resounding height. The Ribandman whistled ; the sound was prolonged, and reverberated from afar. There was no answer when the echoing had died away. Sullen silence closed around again, broken but by that sobbing splash of the deep, dark water.

“ They’re mighty careful intirely,” he grumbled : he rowed cautiously a few rods onwards, and whistled again.

A light flashed from the interior ; but it seemed almost overwhelmed with the pressure of the superincumbent darkness ; it revealed only a few yards of the furrowed side of the cavern, damp and glistening with reddish slime. Scanlan stood up—always a perilous action in these cockleshell canoes, which are mere tarred canvas drawn over lath framework, and have neither keel nor rudder ; he guided it towards the gleam which fell across the water. In a few seconds he was alongside a ledge, on which he stepped. The canoe floated in water fifty feet to bottom ; above arched the black rock for other eighty feet ; beyond stretched the cavern, hundreds of yards into the heart of the land.

The cave he entered was a lateral inlet from the

main one. The tide did not often rise so high as to fill it, save during winter storms from the north-west; then, indeed, the flooring to the farthest crevice was a sheet of snowy foam, which dashed ever and anon mightily aloft to the iron-bound summit, wearing deeper furrows in the solid rock. Before men had discovered the place, it was a haunt of seals, who still reared their young in the black recesses farther in.

Scanlan turned a point of rock, and came in presence of a fire kindled there, the smoke of which hung in masses on high, curling away into the undistinguishable arches above. A man was lying down, his feet towards the burning embers. He who held the light whispered in Irish, "The captin's asleep." Both lighted their pipes, and smoked in silence; their communication having been a shake of Scanlan's head, conveying the failure of the assassination plot.

Captain Moonlight was an outlaw. Government had offered large rewards for his apprehension and conviction; more than once had he seen the proclamation, which was affixed outside every police-station in the county, and, safe in his disguise as a peasant woman, smiled an evil smile within the folds of his ample blue cloak. He was just the character for this life of evasion and defiance of the law. Turbulent, unprincipled, ambitious in his own way, full of plots, daring in action, with a

score of subordinates like-minded, he kept a whole district, the greater part of a populous county, subject to a reign of terror which might remind one of the German *Vehm-gericht*—the secret tribunal of Westphalia in the Middle Ages. Blows struck in the dark are always the more terrible, and impossible to be avoided.

Scanlan dried himself by the driftwood fire, until the leader awoke. He raised himself on his elbow, and asked in Irish—

“Have you fulfilled the order?”—which meant, the secret command of the Riband tribunal for Mr. Kingston’s assassination.

“No; the Peelers¹ came down upon us, an’ took Carmody prisoner.”

The captain sat up, bent his keen eyes on the Ribandman, and then examined him closely concerning all the circumstances. Scanlan was a little uneasy under the scrutiny; for this man was penetrating in thought, prompt and decisive in conclusion; and there was a corner of his subordinate’s heart wherein brooded something that could not bear inspection, the bare idea of which would have awakened instant and terrific retribution.

“It’s my opinion that treachery, and nothin’ else, was the manes of doing it; an’ Carmody

¹ The rural police are thus universally named by the peasantry, because Sir Robert Peel was the originator of the parliamentary enactment organizing the force.

won't be the boy to refuse the Queen's pardon, an' tell all he can."

The leader brooded for some minutes with his eyes on the smouldering wood, consisting of joints of some vessel battered to pieces by a savage storm, rusty nails here and there sticking in it. Presently he rose and buttoned his coat, kicked the fire asunder, and said, "We'll lave this: get the canoe, boys."

So they launched on the black waters again; the leader at the bow end holding a flaming piece of timber, which helped them to keep clear of the sides, on which the swell would have shattered their frail bark. He cast it into the sea when they had passed the mouth; it sank with a hiss and sputter, as the flame perished, and it was washed ashore next day, charred and blackened, to awaken speculations concerning a possible burnt ship.

They came to the afore-mentioned creek, which Scanlan had left an hour previously. "You land here," said the captain to the third man; "keep yer eyes an' ears wide awake, an' bring any news of importance to Kennedy at Lissard."

Scanlan pushed off again. The moon had sunk behind the spur of the Golden Hill as they passed by. Half an hour's vigorous rowing brought them abreast of the highest cliff on that line of coast. Smooth, round, and black, it rose above them; a

deep narrow strait severed it from an equally lofty islet, which was inhabited by multitudes of seagulls and puffins. The men pulled up the canoe upon an inclined plane of rock, into a cleft sheltered from observation, and crept along the narrow ledge cautiously.

It wound upward, on the face of the cliff. Well might the climbers be cautious, for in some places it was no broader than a foot, and then sheer into the water, without a chance of safety for any but the strongest swimmer. They entered a small dark aperture, crouching. Soon they had to go on all-fours, and presently, to drag themselves along, snail-like. They emerged on the other side of the island: before them spread the broad plain of sea.

Succession of ledges above for fifty feet ; succession of ledges below for a hundred. "I defy all the Peelers in Munsther to find us here," said Scanlan exultingly. They struck a light and smoked: their conference was long ; at the end they lay down and slept in the opening of the tunnel, which was sufficiently capacious.

Chapter XXIII

AN IRISH SCHOOL-HOUSE

ANY one who is acquainted with the social state of Ireland, prior to the famine, will know that incidents like those I have narrated were no uncommon episodes in the lives of country gentlemen. Few but could tell of some hair-breadth escapes ; for murderous attacks were the ordinary result of any attempt to exercise the rights of a landowner. Those were fearful times, when peaceful country houses were fortified as in an enemy's land, and weapons were the common requirement of a gentleman taking a ride ; when many counties in Ireland had their score of recent murders, crying a voiceless cry for vengeance on criminals whom the law was powerless to discover.

At the period of my story the clouds of judgment were lowering over the land. In the preceding autumn the mysterious potato blight had destroyed thousands of acres of the staple food of the masses : a partial famine had been the result. Nevertheless, the spring-time saw great breadths of the country

sown with the fated crop. The people were full of hope that this year at least might bring exemption from the blight, and forgot the ruin attendant on such baseless hope before. It was blindness.

Yet now, in the height of the summer, all the potato-fields were green and flourishing : a healthier crop had never been seen in the memory of the oldest inhabitant. But the wise among the people waited with apprehension for the elapsing of July.

Concerning these things was the conversation of the little party from Golden Hills, as they walked to church on the day after the events narrated in the preceding chapters. Mr. Kingston having kept the car at Castlebay, they had no means of driving. Lina, Alick, and Mr. Orme were the church-goers.

Calm and bright was the morning : a slight easterly breeze swept the vault of heaven bare of clouds, which were piled out at sea in grand grey masses, awaiting the surely coming west wind to spread their vast vaporous pinions, and sail over the land till the strength of the hills wrested rain from them. Glorious west wind ! which bestows upon poor Ireland her solitary distinction—investing her with the green ribbon of surpassing verdure and giving her the name of “the emerald isle.”

At Lissard Point was the school-house where the converts and other Protestants of the district met

for worship. A hamlet nestled on the beach—some dozen cabins, a few cottages inhabited by coast-guards, and a great chapel presiding over all. As they passed this building at noon it was overflowing with the crowd attending mass : numbers kneeled in the space around : so that the tinkling of the little bell reached the farthest worshipper, he was satisfied. Many of the poor people had brought smooth stones to kneel upon—a primitive style of hassock, necessary when the ground is covered with rough gravel. The gathering was rich in colour ; the graceful dark blue cloaks of the peasant women, with a foam of snowy caps a-top, diversified by occasional scarlet mantles, the bare heads of the men, children's faces here and there, all glinted upon by the sunlight, formed a picturesque mass of *chiaro-oscuro*.

The school-house was a common cabin—earthen floor beneath, a step down from the road ; blackened rafters above—as veritable an open-worked roof as any vaulted cathedral—through which the sods were visible which lined the thatch. A chimney yawned at one end, in which a small turf fire smouldered to ashes ; an errant breeze from the open door sometimes eddied the white particles about, till a thoughtful inmate built up a few peats as a protective fender. Near this was spread a coarse piece of matting before a few rush chairs for the " quality."

Desk and pulpit was an old wooden press, short

enough for Mr. Brooke to rest his books on. The rest of the house was filled with benches for the congregation, which had chiefly assembled when the Golden Hills people appeared. They were all poor persons : three or four coastguards, in their neat blue coats and gilt buttons, were given precedence of front places for their respectable appearance. But the background concealed many miserably clad men and women ; the converts were an oppressed race, and their lives were hard. Those who had a mind to leave the Roman Catholic Church must be prepared to suffer the loss of all things. It was verily a preferring of the next world to this : it was the Bible purchased with a sacrifice of all the common sweeteners of life—love, friendliness, comforts. How many of *us* would be willing to pay the same price?

During the service the door was left open, for the sake of additional light and ventilation ; and the surge of the sea, breaking on the pebbles of the strand a few yards away, sounded solemnly in the pauses of each prayer. Nor was it discord when the few worshippers sang a hymn : and Lina listened to most of the sermon with her eyes on the same blue waters, fluctuating with a thousand sparklings beneath the sunlight.

Mr. Brooke preached shortly and simply—altogether of Christ and His work for the sinner, and of His sufficiency as a stay in the trials of this

troublesome world. The poor hearers needed some cordial for the week of persecution past, and the week of persecution to come : they had no force of position, nor any great strength of will, to bear up against the many daily insults offered them. The looking continually unto their Master, Christ, must be their only comfort ; and Mr. Brooke believed that to set Him forth was the end of all a preacher's duty.

He addressed them in Irish at the close, making plain to old ears his English meaning. Lina was pleased to find that she could comprehend more of this part of the service than usual ; her toil over the Celtic grammar and dictionary would not be altogether fruitless.

After service the congregation chiefly stayed to form classes of a Sunday School. Mrs. Brooke and Lina had a few pleasant words together while the arrangements were being made. Mr. Orme said he would wish to help, if they accepted volunteers ; and half a dozen men were sent with him to one corner of the apartment.

Lina had all the girls and some of the smaller boys. Among so many all she could do was to plant the seed of a text in their memories, which might by and by spring up and bear fruit. The children could repeat several, like parrots chattering over syllables unmeaning ; but she wanted them also to comprehend, and she found that memory lay nearer

the surface than understanding. She had their earnest attention, poor little beings ! To them she was a creature from an unattainable height above them : her warm neat dress, and pretty rose-coloured ribbons, and kind smiling face were admirable to them as a picture.

Alick went to saunter about the beach. He had no sympathy with such work as his sister and friend were engaged in ; he rather wondered at their taste ; for his part he found church quite long enough, without tacking on to it an hour's schooling. The real reason of his distaste he knew not. No 'spiritual vitality being in his own nature, there could be no heat nor light in his life ; no love for the precious Saviour being existent in his heart, he did not seek to do the things that please Him. So he spent a tedious hour half asleep on the rocks under the sunshine, his tartan cap drawn over his face. Some of Alick's half-waking reflections were not the most gratifying.

When he met the others at the school-house door an old man passed them, and turned back to look. He was crouching on a stick, and seemed lame, but vigorous for his apparent years.

"Ye wouldn't be so lively in yerselves if yesther-day's work was done !" he muttered. He had the countenance of Scanlan ; but, then, the Ribandman was tall and red-headed, while this man was bent and grey.

Chapter XXIV

THE LAST OF CAPTAIN MOONLIGHT

THE old man went into a cabin on the beach, slowly and with sore stumbling. Two policemen happened to be just passing by, returning from the chapel to Constable Nolan's station, and the sexagenarian's infirmities were redoubled at the sight. He sat down on a bench within the door, and his breath gradually returned. After looking round, and perceiving but one other person in the room, he made some tokens with his hands.

The other, standing on the hearth, eyed him narrowly while returning the signals, and then rubbed his face and smiled. "Well done!" said he; "it's a cute fellow wud know ye undher that grey hair."

"Don't I do it middlin' dacent, now?" rejoined the new-comer, not relaxing his attitude, weighed down with years. "*Chierna!* Mary herself wouldn't find me out, less I gev her a hint wid my eye."

"What's the news?"

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"The very thing I came to ax yerself, under ordhers."

"Couldn't be worse news, then. The barony's proclaimed, an' more Peelers 'll be here to-morrow or next day ; an' my hand to you they'll hunt every hole an' corner. A station's to be in Jem Cassidy's house yondher ; an' I'm thinkin' they an' we won't agree to be sich near neighbours."

"'Twouldn't do to have 'em inspectin' the distillin' aither," said the old man.

"We must shift our quarters funder off," the other responded. "But it's hard a man can't live an aisy, quiet life like his forefathers."

The spirit of which pathetic remark seemed to communicate itself to his auditor.

"The counthry's gettin' too hot for us ; I wish I was in America meself."

"I hear there's fifty pound more added to the price of the captain," observed the other after a pause. "He ought to take lave of absence for a while."

Did a strange gleam kindle in the old man's eye when he heard this, or was it a reflected flash of the firelight?

When near home, the party returning to Golden Hills were passed by this old man, walking at a rapid pace. Not far from Nolan's constabulary station he turned into a field containing an ancient Danish rath ; here, in shelter of the high circular

banks, he took off the grey hair disguising him, shook away the crouch from his shoulders and the limp from his gait, and stood erect—a powerful, broad-backed, red-headed fellow—the primitive Scanlan.

Accustomed as Constable Nolan was to suppress his emotions, and to place implicit reliance on those good servants, his own keen, far-seeing eyes, yet he wellnigh disbelieved their testimony when they showed him this man walking deliberately towards the police barracks. Such a voluntary entrance into the lion's jaw seemed incredible. Nolan put down the whimpering son who had been taking a jaunt on his shoulder, and he stood without the gate as Scanlan came up.

"I claim that reward," said the Ribandman, laying his finger on the proclamation, which was pasted on a board and hung on the gate-post. "I'll show you where he is."

"Come inside," said the constable; "I want to have a little conversation with you," and he walked after him into the barrack kitchen.

This manner of reception somewhat daunted the informer; but he did not think that any evidence existed to connect him with the foiled attempt on Mr. Kingston's life. He kept on a bold front. Suddenly his wrists were grasped from behind and he was handcuffed.

"Well, gintlemen," said he, with an attempt at



SUDDENLY HIS WRISTS WERE GRASPED FROM BEHIND AND HE WAS HANDCUFFED.



a smile, "yer tratin' me very rough altogether, when I came of my own free will to bring ye information : 'tis a dhrroll way to give encouragement, anyhow."

The bird being now limed, the constable spoke him smoothly. This handcuffing was a necessary and usual precaution ; he might be none the worse for it.

"There's a pardon in the proclamation as well," observed the prisoner sullenly.

"Aye," rejoined the constable, "but you must earn it first. When we have Captain Moonlight by the arm we'll talk to you about that."

A plan was astutely laid to ensnare the Riband leader. He must be lured from his rock fastness ; Scanlan must be temporarily set free for the purpose : but until absolute immunity was secured to him personally for all former transgressions, he would not undertake the perilous enterprise. Such guarantee, so far as the terms of the proclamation went, was obtained from the nearest magistrate.

It was truly a service of no slight danger to go a traitor to that man's stronghold. Well might Scanlan's pale lips quiver as he climbed the steep ascent, and knew that below waited armed men to capture his unsuspecting chief. Whatever false message he had contrived, soon he reappeared outside the aperture ; and, the outlaw following him, both descended the narrow footpath, and were in a few minutes at the water's edge.

"Where's the canoe? You needn't have drawn it ashore for such a short while," said he.

As he spoke Nolan sprang upon him from his concealment. In an instant he was hurled off into the sea; fierce rage glared in the baited man's eyes; he seemed possessed by unnatural strength; he wrestled clear of his assailants; he grasped the informer, and dragged him over the edge. With a heavy splash, both sank deeply; and both rose, still struggling desperately—the one for life, the other for revenge. They were knotted together in an iron grasp. Scanlan was wreathed round by those powerful arms; again they sank; the water frothed and bubbled above them; Scanlan rose alone.

Breathless and dripping, he scrambled on the rock where Nolan had been dragged ashore already by his subordinates. All watched the water; but the eddies died away where last the Riband captain had gone down, and unruffled spread the strait in its deep shadow of cliffs.

"He dives like an otter," said one; "he'll rise at the back of the island, or in some other contrary place where we've no chance of him. The cunnin' old fox!"

"There! there!" exclaimed the voices of the observers, as at a considerable distance a black head rose to the surface.

"I'm afeard that's only a seal," said the head

constable; "but any way we'll chase it." Long before they reached the spot, however, the head had dived again.

"He'll rise next time in a cave. We might as well be huntin' a bird o' the air or a fish of the say, for all the chance we have," said a sub-constable ill-humouredly. "The blow he gev me across the eyes is flashin' sparks still." Perhaps the constable was to be excused for some vexation under the circumstances.

They waited and watched to no purpose. After much beating about, and being misled by floating objects at times, they were fain to put to shore again. Scanlan's treachery had failed.

And, knowing the fierce and relentless spirit of the man whom he had deceived, he was miserable till safely transferred to the jail in the assize town. He feared what was not impossible—an attack on the police barracks, in the strong-room of which he was confined. As the grand jury were yet sitting, their last business was the finding true bills of indictment against Terence Scanlan for conspiracy to murder. Carmody turned approver, and his depositions had the effect of materially injuring the Riband confederacy in the district. The chief members being captured, that lawless organization was, as it were, deprived of its teeth and claws. Thenceforward it languished.

Captain Moonlight appeared no more in the

neighbourhood, but transferred his abilities to a distant province, where the police were not so active. From the storm of opprobrium with which he was visited Carmody and his family took refuge on some uncleared land in Canada West. If he had been merely a murderer, he would have received sympathy, for at that period the prejudices of the peasantry were all with the law-breakers; but his dereliction from the duty of agrarian outrage was unpardonable, and his guilt as informer was of a dye blacker than the most atrocious criminality.

Scanlan was sentenced to transportation for twenty-one years; but, in consideration of his services, it was afterwards commuted. Mr. Kingston was present in court, and heard, with immovable countenance, the evidence revealing the jeopardy of his own life. No copies of the papers reporting the trial were suffered to reach Golden Hills; he would not by a feather-weight augment the anxiety of his wife and Lina.

But after these months of danger his hair was notably greyer, and his aspect sterner; the line across the clear brow was stamped deeper and harder. Fearless as his nature was, he had suffered; and suffering had this frequent result: he was led to think more of "the things that are unseen." Human weakness leaned towards Divine strength. What a deep, holy joy would have filled Lina's heart, had she known that her own practical home

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Christianity was also silently influencing her beloved father's soul! Ah, how mighty is "the logic of the life"! To see her patient, where once she would have been petulant, calmly cheerful in her trust of God, where many causes of anxiety and despondence were around her—these were tacit teachings from child to parent.

Chapter XXV

THE CLOUD SMALL AS A MAN'S HAND

THE potato crop was luxuriant in the middle of July 1846. Fields of the earlier sorts were covered with pale yellow and lilac blossoms, crowning the abundant leafage. The heart of the people revived as they looked abroad, though many remembered that in the preceding year the blight was not developed till the beginning of September. But the improvident Celtic nature, quick to impressions of the present time, and heedless of experience, had almost forgotten past calamities in hopeful anticipations.

Some districts were, in a measure, exempt during 1845 from the famine which was all but universal in the subsequent year. Those upon the seashore seemed to have a partial immunity. The horrors to which I have alluded were only matters of hearsay in the neighbourhood of Golden Hills. Either something in the saline atmosphere was adverse to the influence of the blight, or the seaweed, generally used as dressing for the land, communicated some

stronger vitality to the crop than it had elsewhere, and enabled it better to resist the death-stroke of disease.

The people had risked their all upon the coming harvest. Life or death was the terrible stake at issue. Government had, in the preceding autumn, sent over a commission of chemists to examine the nature of this mysterious blight. Professors Lindley and Playfair had seen, smelled, handled, and analysed the diseased tuber, but all their wisdom failed to discover the cause, or to suggest a remedy. From science there was nothing to hope.

The heretofore unknown Indian corn became an ordinary food for tens of thousands, while they waited the coming crop. During one season the price rose from nine to twenty pounds per ton. The sagacious Sir Robert Peel had enabled the nation to meet the spring of this year by a large importation of this American cereal. Also a store of biscuit had been kept in reserve by the relief committees.

In an awful pause of expectancy, all men waited for the event; watched the skies, which had never been more favourable; watched the green earth, which had never seemed more promising.

Lina noticed that her father frequently walked among his potato-fields, and examined the ridges. He would return with spirits elated, and tell of the

healthiness of the plant, rubbing his hands pleasantly, as his manner was. But, in despondent moods, he would talk thus to Mr. Orme—

“It is not as the failure of any other crop would be in any other country. It is as it would be if every crop failed simultaneously in England. The potato-ridge is the Irish peasant's sole subsistence, sole wealth. He never buys food; he eats it out of the ground.”

“Therefore the potato would seem to contribute in keeping him semi-barbarous,” observed Mr. Orme.

“I don't know that any nation ever arrived at a high civilization whose staple food was not a cereal,” said Mr. Kingston reflectively. “The processes of preparing grain for use are calculated to develop the faculties of the man, bodily and mental.”

Philip found a flaw in the theory. “The North American Indians have elaborate preparation of their corn,” he said, “yet they are savages.”

“The exception proves the rule. But, undoubtedly, the facility with which the Irish peasant obtained a sufficiency of food is a cause of his slow civilization. There was no need for industry—no occasion for forethought. The simplest husbandry elicited an abundant crop; the roughest preparation made it eatable. He had not even the wants of life to educate his nature; he

existed and enjoyed without labour. It was just a remove from the life of the animal, which digs up roots with its snout and devours them."

"You speak rather forcibly," said Mr. Orme, smiling. "But, indeed, I have often bitterly thought of the vast difference between the peasantry of our own land and those of the sister island, and I cannot help seeing, in this apprehended evil, the opening of brighter prospects than ever for Ireland."

"When the present race shall have been well-nigh extirpated," said Mr. Kingston gloomily. "They now hang by a thread over an abyss of ruin. Get me my hat, Frank."

The day was hot; a steam of haze rose even from the cool sea; all vegetation drooped. Mr. Kingston did not like the flaccid look of the plants—the listless hanging of leaf and blossom by the stem. He pulled up a stalk: white and round clustered the small tubers at its root: he minutely examined the leafage.

"Sound as yet," was his decision; "but just such was the look of the plant before it was stricken last autumn."

"Now, father," said Frank, taking his arm, "it's only the natural effect of a hot day. The geraniums in the hall windows have just the same symptoms. Do come for a row in the 'Sealark' with Mr. Orme and me, and put potatoes out of your head for a while. Lina will come, will you not?"

Lina was going down to the village on the beach, and paused with them for a moment.

"If you will call at the pier for me in a quarter of an hour, I will be very glad," she said; "but mamma has given me a message to do first."

Mr. Kingston was too busy to go with them. Mr. Orme was very willing. Frank ran back to the house for Rosie, trusting that his speed would overtake the others as they sauntered towards the shore.

Lina had gone to take a gift from her mother to a poor old man in the village—a blind piper, who had been always a sort of retainer of the family. He was very aged: about the time of the revolt of the American colonies he had suffered from smallpox, and since then his eyes had been dull to the clearest sunlight. In his earlier years, while the French Revolution was stirring Europe, and the ferment reached even to Ireland, he was accustomed to itinerate through the country, playing the pipes at every festive gathering in the province; but now he had returned to the first earth, in the shadow of the Golden Hills, where he was born; and in a poor cabin, allotted him by Mr. Kingston, he solaced himself with his beloved music still. Every one was kind to him; the old wife tended him with the love of youth; his son, a piper in a Highland regiment, sent him an allowance from his pay; the few gentry who had known

him subscribed for his comfort. And blind Maurice was very grateful for it all: with a simple piety, he traced every event to the hand of the Lord, and believed that He cared for him as well as for the wild birds.

Lina found him sitting in a straw chair by the fire; and there was a pleasant abstraction in his blind face, as if he was having some musical dream. He recognized her step, and stood up, with the help of his stick, to greet her respectfully.

"Miss Liney, ye're as welcome as the flowers of May. Dust a chair for her, Winny"—which, indeed, the old woman had commenced vigorously to do on the visitor's appearance. "I hope the mather an' missus, an' the whole house has their health well?"

With the old-fashioned courtesy of one of Nature's gentlemen, he continued standing, his white hair uncovered, till she had taken a seat; then he sank feebly down among his straw cushions, breathing a little hard from the slight exertion.

"Give me the pipes," he said, dropping his staff, and opening his arms as if for a dear child. "Miss Liney 'll like a bit of the music, surely."

Now, the young lady did not particularly admire the sound of bagpipes; but it was impossible not to be touched by the old man's enthusiasm, as he played some of the Irish ditties which he loved. And the old wife, who was not in the least a

melodious soul, looked at him as if he were beautiful, instead of being, in very sooth, a furrowed, unshapely face, and a bent, withered figure.

"Whisht awhile," said she, nodding to the visitor, with a grimace implying that presently would come the most marvellous display of all. "Where's the tune ye made out for Miss Liney's self, Maurice ashore?"

The old piper smiled, and passed his bony hands over the pipes tenderly, as if caressing them. Soon he began to play a lively movement, clustered about two or three of Lina's favourite airs.

"D'ye like that?" when he paused. "That's Miss Liney's fancy: I thought of it the other night, an' I couldn't help playing it at wanst, though I woke Winny, an' she wasn't obliged to me. I can't rest till I spake my thoughts in the music, sometimes. 'Tis a blessin' from the Lord, Miss Liney—is music!"

"Indeed it is, Maurice."

"An' it's plentiful about us," continued the old man, "like all His other blessin's. Everythin' that's beautiful in the world, mostly, has music: the sea always rollin' out yonder, an' the little birds in the bushes, an' the wind stirrin' about in the lonesome night, an' the voice that's kind in spakin' to a poor ould heart is the sweetest of all. Miss Liney, achora, maybe ye'd have time to read a letter for me; it's from John, the boy of mine

that's in the Indies in a regiment: Winny, get it for the lady."

From the red box, containing the family treasures, it was produced, wrapped in a white handkerchief. And the great round writing of the "boy"—a person six feet in height, and forty years in age—was deciphered by Lina, to the delighted ears of his parents, who had heard the same epistle several times previously from various lips. This was their wont: every "fine reader" that came in their way was engaged in the service: the news never grew stale to those affectionate hearts, till another letter dethroned the old one, which retired in a dilapidated condition to swell the precious packet of its predecessors. "He's a good boy—a good boy, a comfort to me an' his mother, thanks be to God."

The blind pauper knew and loved his Saviour; therefore was his old age thus happy. Lina drew the tiny Testament from her pocket which she always carried there, and read to him some of the holy words. "Thank you kindly, miss; it's good of you to come an' lighten a half-hour of an ould man like me, that's near the verge of the grave. Not but I'm as happy as the days is long: the Lord gives me such pleasant thoughts in myself—praised be His name!"

He rose again at her departure, and stood till she passed the threshold. The boat was floating in the bay, and drew towards the pier.

"Now for the lobster-pots," exclaimed Frank, when Lina was comfortably settled in the bows with Rosie. "It's twice as pleasant to catch them one's self, and mamma wants some, I know, for pickling. I heard her say it this morning. The fishermen lay them off there, in the deep water outside the shelving rocks."

"I don't admire having live lobsters walking about the bottom of the boat," observed Lina: "you must shut them up in the locker, Frank."

"So I can. Here goes—there's the float—catch it, Mr. Orme! Now pull up the rope—it's pretty long—does it feel heavy?"

Yard after yard of the rope was drawn into the boat. "At last I see the basket," said Philip, as it appeared through the translucent green tide.

"And a magnificent fellow in it!" exclaimed Frank. The black prisoner walked about his cage vigorously: Mr. Orme declined to touch him.

"Not knowing the art of holding him, my fingers would certainly be bitten," said he; but Frank opened the wicker door, put in his hand boldly, eluded the powerful claws, and grasped him by that portion of his body which might be called the back of his neck. The lobster was landed into the locker, and the lid shut down safely.

"Now if you put any others in," said Rosie, "they will kill one another, and break off all their legs, Frank."

"I'll manage," said he confidently. The trap was thrown back into the sea, fresh baited with a bit of fish which Frank had brought for the purpose. The next one contained only a crab, who, in virtue of his insignificance, was set at liberty in his native element—proving the safety of a low estate.

"We're drawing up your lobster-pots," called out Frank to a fishing canoe passing by. The men responded—

"Aye, aye, sir!" and swept along. "There's a shoal outside, sir!"

"Do you hear that?" exclaimed Frank. "Every canoe on the coast will be out by and by. Let's go and look at them. Will you, Lina?"

It was easy to discover the locality of the shoal; for multitudes of birds had settled down upon the deep in great white clouds. Cormorants, being solitary savages, dived and devoured alone, and were never satisfied. With a mighty screaming and squabbling, flocks of puffins and gulls did the like. A few canoes were hovering on the outskirts of the shoal, spreading nets. Porpoises rolled in its wake. While yet the Golden Hills boat waited, there was a sudden animation of the water all around: thousands of little fishes bounded into the air with inconceivable rapidity, and continued many minutes in this sort of rapturous dance; only the myriad silver tails being distinctly distinguish-

able amid the foam and splash. The sound was as of a heavy thunder-shower on the sea.

"Ah," said Rosie, "I do believe they are all very happy about something!"

But the birds soon perceived the rising of a part of the shoal in a new place, and a detachment of them swooped down on the devoted herrings. Human enemies were also collecting thickly. Boats with a light at the stern attracted the unwary fish; long stripes of silver underlaid the water where the shoal was densest. Vast seine-nets were spread between the shore and the ocean to enclose them.

It was growing dark; but Lina consented to wait and see a "take." In the depths they could observe the bewildered herrings darting to and fro as the net neared the surface. The water was perceptibly warmer than the surrounding sea; and its drops on the ropes were phosphoric. Then, as the fish were drawn up, could be heard the faint "cheep" of their expiring strength, when they tried to breathe the air which suffocated them.

"I suppose there are five thousand herrings in that one draw," said Alick.

It was bright moonlight when they landed at the pier.

"What a difference between the shore and sea atmosphere!" said Mr. Orme. "What can cause that peculiar odour?"

The others had noticed it. Lina's heart sank.

"It's the blight," answered Alick shortly. "My father is ruined!"

They walked to the house almost in silence. Mr. Kingston was in his study; he pointed to a plant lying on the table. Alick took it up: on the leaves were a few brownish spots here and there.

"I pulled that at sundown," said his father: "I suppose by this time the whole country is blackened."

The shadow of the coming Angel of Death passed over the land that night.

Chapter XXVI

ALICK THE UNSTABLE

SLOWLY under that bright moonlight spread the mysterious plague. On the low-lying lands might be perceived a dark mist creeping along, clinging to the earth in shadowed places. Gradually grew the death-spots on the abundant foliage, burning deeper as they increased, withering away the vitality of the plant.

While the people quietly slept through all the cabins dotting the country the scourge was abroad. Morning light dawned, and the vapour of the pestilence fled before it ; but the green fields were as if a burning blast had passed over them. Black patches lay where the day previously had been verdure, and the keen odour of decay escaped from them on all sides. A few spots here and there were untouched ; in others the destruction was but partial, the stalks and leaves being tainted, but not wholly withered.

From the whole land arose a despairing cry. The last hope of the people was stricken. At one

stride gaunt Famine stood among them, and grasped them in its lean arms. In a month there would be no food throughout the country for four millions of human beings.

On that memorable morning Harry Burke's mother rose as usual, and fixed the quern to grind barley-meal for breakfast. The subtle smell of the blight first warned her of its presence. Looking into her little garden, she perceived the ridges all spotted; and her child Harry was roused from his sleep by the sound of bitter weeping.

"Oh, masthore machree!" cried the poor woman, clasping him wildly in her arms; "my heart's darlin', but the wicked blight is come again, an' I don't know what 'll become of us!" She broke into Irish lamentations, for in that language she had more freedom of expression, and it abounds in words of sorrow.

"Mother," said the little fellow at length, "do you forget the great God that's above all? Miss Liney tell'd me about all He did for us, an' how He takes care of us every day: sure He won't let us die, mother?"

"His holy name be praised!" Mrs. Burke ejaculated piously; "I put my trust in Him. But, Harry acushla, if the angels aren't sent to feed the people, as they wor' in that story you tell'd me one time about the manna, I don't know how else they'll be kept alive at all!"

"An', mother, there's another story about a good man that had the ravens sent to him every mornin' with bread an' meat by the Lord, to feed him in a time of starvation. Mother, I don't think there's any fear of us, if we pray to the Lord."

She wept over him, but more quietly. It was rather the looking at his fragile, slender figure, and thinking how ill he could cope with hardship, and how easily a short suffering of want would bring him to death that ailed her motherly heart now. But she raised her head.

"All I had in the world went in settin' them praties, that'll be nothin' but a mass of rottenness to-morrow. I suppose it's all right since the Lord did it, praises be to Him! But we've nobody to look to, alannuv, an' we'll have nothin' to ate byneby, when the handful of male is out. No wondher for me to cry, mavourneen, if yer little heart could understand it all."

Mrs. Burke put her cloak over her head after breakfast, when Harry was going to school, and went up with him to Golden Hills. On the way she perceived that her own field was not at all so badly blighted as some others. Well she knew it was but a temporary respite. She came to show a specimen of the disease to Mr. Kingston, and to ask whether anything could be done to stop its progress.

"I fear not, my poor woman," he answered

gently. "The tubers are probably not tainted as yet, but they will not grow any larger."

"Would diggin' 'em out be any good, yer honour?" she asked.

"If they were at all ripe you might save a few by doing so," he replied.

She returned home, to spend a laborious day in trying this chance of safety. Mr. Kingston spoke scientifically about it.

"The blight," he observed to William, who was writing at the opposite side of the table, "has a singular power of putting an end to the vital processes of the plant, even though life is not actually destroyed. If its progress through the haulm to the tuber be intercepted, the latter may be saved from decay, but in an unripe and imperfect state, and therefore innutritious."

Mr. Kingston had a large farm; all the potato-fields on it were blighted, which would entail a heavy loss. He had some landed property; of course, his tenants could not pay the rent of their holdings, and by so much would he be the poorer. William could not foresee that the rates payable by the landlord on such estates would rise in some instances to forty shillings in the pound on their annual rental. Mr. Kingston was an agent for absentee owners, and, of course, if he could not collect their incomes he would not receive the percentage which formed a considerable part of his own. Thus there

was no small reason for Alick's sudden exclamation, "My father is ruined!"

But they did not speak of these things to each other. Mr. Kingston could alone look in the face of these disastrous facts, and nerve himself to meet them fully. He wanted not sympathy; he kept up an appearance of better courage than he really had in the depths of his heart. But his children were keener diviners than he thought.

Alick had private reasons for especial gloom. Like many a youth, well-meaning but infirm of purpose, he had got immersed in money troubles, even thus early in his career. For a debt, comparatively trifling, he had been induced to borrow from a usurious moneylender; the date was drawing near at which both principal and interest would be due, and he had no means of meeting the demand. Lina had noticed his fluctuating spirits, and was skilful enough to guess that some rankling care must be the cause, but she could not directly ask for his confidence. His manner was still darker and more restless after the evening they had been to the herring fishery. Whatever thought he had previously entertained of asking his father for the requisite money, he could not do so now. And Alick, the once bright and joyous, became moody even to sullenness. Having fastened a millstone round his own neck, it was but just that he should feel its weight sorely.

He had a letter one evening towards the close of the month, in a handwriting unknown ; but, with suspicion of its contents, he went out into the garden to read it ; and Lina, happening to come towards the seat he had chosen, as she watered her flowers, was startled by seeing his head bent forward on his hands in a most despondent position. As her step approached he thrust the letter into his pocket, but did not raise his face.

Now, if she had asked directly what ailed him, he would probably have answered in a repellent way, " Nothing," and shut up his heart closer than ever. She was gifted with tact enough to refrain from this, and just proceeded to water the carnations in a bed near him silently. But seeing he did not move nor look, she drew nearer.

" Dear Alick, I know you have something which you are keeping from the knowledge of everybody, and it makes you unhappy. I wish you would tell it, and your heart would be easier."

He replied nothing at the time ; and lest she might be thought at all demanding his confidence, she went to other parts of the garden. When she was going into the house afterwards, with the empty watering-pot, she heard his voice calling her.

" Read that, and say if I have not cause to be miserable."

It was a request from Mr. Isaac Levi, jeweller, — Street, Dublin, that Mr. Alexander Kingston

would take up the bill held by him for sixty pounds, and falling due on the 25th of July past, with no indistinct threat of consequences in case of defalcation. Lina's cheek blanched as she read. Debt had always been to her a vague horror, involving all sorts of fearful results ; and now to find Alick in its very meshes ! He watched her face.

" Well ! what do you think of that ? " he asked, perhaps a little defiantly.

" I think it very wrong and very terrible. "

" I know that perfectly well ; it does not console me. I shouldn't have troubled you with the letter if I had thought that was all you could say. "

" Oh, dear Alick ! I only said my first idea, perhaps too hastily. " The tears were in those truthful, sisterly eyes : he could not bear to meet them fully. " I think you ought at once to go to father, show him this letter, and tell him all about it. "

" That is easily said ; it would only torment him beyond bearing, draw his whole anger on my head ; and, after all, with his affairs embarrassed as they must be by all that has happened of late years, would he, or could he, pay the money ? "

" As to his anger, " Lina said firmly, " you will not deny that you deserve it, Alick. But his heaviest wrath would be more easily borne than the consciousness of this dreadful secret with you every day. "

Her brother sighed. "There is truth in that : nobody can tell what I have suffered, Lina."

"Poor fellow!" she said compassionately, stroking his hand. The caressing gesture was almost too much for him ; he turned away his head quickly. "But I cannot say that I am sorry you have suffered, dear Alick ; it was good for you." (Lina had an insinuating way of saying very unpalatable truths.) "And you ought to get over whatever feeling of shame or fear keeps you from confessing all to father. What else can you do but tell him at length?"

"I was thinking of trying to have the bill renewed," he muttered.

Such was Lina's ignorance on these subjects that he had to explain his meaning ; but when she understood it, and that twenty-five per cent. would be added on for a three months' postponement of payment, she saw at once the madness of such a proceeding. "It's only putting yourself deeper in debt, Alick, and making yourself miserable the longer. No ; take the straightforward course ; go to father this very evening, before tea, while he is in the study."

Alick quailed at the thought of his father's keen, bright eye bent searchingly upon him while he told the tale of his folly and weakness. He was wanting in moral courage ; therefore was the more likely to get into such a scrape, and the more incapable

of extricating himself. But at last he half-promised to do as his sister recommended.

"Father will be angry, I am sure," she said ; "but he loves you very much, Alick."

Those words nerved the limp youth somewhat. His father's affection was an undoubted fact, and by this reserve he was doing it injustice. "Lina, I would give anything I had never left home. You don't know how hard it is for a fellow to keep himself clear. I wish I could be like William—so simple-hearted and steady, yet with such strong common sense."

"Alick dear, William has one thing you have not : he is a Christian."

Her brother was silent.

"I believe it is the Holy Spirit who gives him that steadiness and sense," Lina went on. "Dear Alick, I pray daily that our Father in heaven would bestow on you the same blessed Spirit, to transform your heart, and give you the desires of a Christian."

"You are a good little sister," he said, after a pause. "Something very strong indeed would need to take hold of me to make my nature as gentle and good as yours."

"Ah, no, Alick !" she said, with unaffected humility, "don't speak so : but, dear Alick, oh that you would give yourself to the blessed Saviour ! You cannot think what happiness it is to feel that He loves you and is with you always."

She looked happy as she spoke. It was not of unfeigned truth she told him, but of what was the light in her own life. Therefore her words had weight.

"And is it this thought which makes you so uniformly cheerful, Lina?"

"Few things ought to trouble me," she replied, "when I believe that the Lord Jesus died to save me, and lives to be my Friend in heaven; and when I know that His Spirit dwells in my soul, making me love Him, and desire to be with Him for ever."

She had not thought she could utter a confession of faith such as this. The timid and gentle Lina rose to a new phase of moral elevation in Alick's eyes, as he looked at the glowing, earnest face which spoke; and he knew that nothing in her everyday life contradicted her words. She was very thankful for that conversation afterwards, and for the way in which she was led imperceptibly to speak of her hope in Christ.

The way for Alick's action was made easy. His father saw him returning to the house, and sent Frank to call him in. Alick was startled. Could the usurer have written to Mr. Kingston? He entered the study with a beating heart.

"I am sorry to tell you," said his father, who stood on the hearthrug with his back to the grate—for even in summer he seldom dispensed with fires

—"that I shall not be able to pay your college bills any longer, Alick. The times are unprecedentedly hard, and likely to become worse; I must curtail my expenses at every possible point. I am very sorry for this, but it is absolutely requisite."

His son stammered out something in reply; the half-formed purpose was driven back into his heart. Fortunately Mr. Kingston noticed his embarrassment, and by a direct question roused him to a sense of duty.

"Had you anything to say to me? If so, now is the time, when I want to settle your accounts definitely."

Alick grew red and pale by turns.

"I had, sir, something to tell you: perhaps, if you would read that letter."

It was easier thus to shift off the difficulty of explanation than to detail his debt in words. His father read it through; his face became like iron.

"May I ask you to explain this letter?" he asked, in a changed, hard voice, his eyes cold and piercing as steel.

Shuffling guiltily under that stern gaze, the young man was compelled to narrate it all—from the first slight debt of a few pounds, incurred for superfluous luxuries, to this accommodation bill, given to a usurer. Mr. Kingston sat down with his back to his son: Alick felt relieved when those cold eyes were off his own shamed and downcast face.

“ I warned you against debt ; the warning was in vain. It is not the amount of money, though that will press heavily enough on me now, but the bare fact of your having done this, which pains me. Leave me that letter, and go away.”

Chapter XXVII

THE CLOUD HEAVILY ON THE LAND

A WEEK thereafter Alick again sought an interview with his father. He had heard nothing in the meantime of his debt ; but Mr. Kingston's manner was reserved. Perhaps concerning the thing he felt deepest he would speak least. His wife did not know of her darling son's fault ; he could not put a shadow on that gentle brow.

"I want to consult you, father, about an offer I have had. It is the daily tutorship of a gentleman's two sons in Dublin, which would furnish me both with means and opportunity of prosecuting my college course." He laid the letters on the table. "Philip Orme recommended me for the post ; and I am so unwilling to give up my chance of a profession, and to be a burden on you, that I think it worth the trial."

The proceeding was so unlike Alick, in its independent and decisive action, that Mr. Kingston felt both surprise and pleasure. Being slow of judgment until he distinctly saw the bearings of

a case, he read through the letters before saying a word.

"It looks well," was his first remark. "But, Alick, you propose to enter upon a position of extreme difficulty."

"I know it," he answered humbly; "especially after what you know of my conduct last term."

Mr. Kingston took a letter from his desk, and handed it to him. The bill was enclosed; the sixty pounds had been paid.

"Thank you, father," was all the son said, though his heart quickened with gratitude. "I hope to show myself not unworthy of such kindness," he added, after a few seconds, during which Mr. Kingston burned the paper, but answered nothing to the implied promise of amendment.

"If you think you can manage with the small means that will be at your command, and have industry and perseverance sufficient to work hard for a scholarship during your spare hours, then try this tutorship. But I fear for you, Alick: the plan would involve no small quantity of self-denial and self-control."

The young man could not but acknowledge that there was reason for distrust. He said submissively, "I hope to do better my second year than my first, if you will permit me to try."

"Very well, my son; I am willing to believe that you will never run aground on that rock again.

But remember that your own exertion is all you have to look to. It is impossible that I can help you, so far as I see at present. Most of my sources of income are stopped, owing to the blight."

Alick felt so guilty concerning that sixty pounds ! He resolved that by some means he would repay it ; by some earnest exertion he would gladden the father's heart to which he had brought such sore depression.

He studied closely during the remainder of his stay at home. He taught Frank classics for two hours daily, with a view to " getting his hand into his trade," as he jocosely expressed it. His spirits were livelier and more equable than previously ; the sweets of independence were thrilling his nature.

The scarcity of food in the district was soon so great that Lina was compelled to have a breakfast daily for her pupils, or the poor little creatures would have wellnigh starved. And yet the people living by the sea were not so badly off as those inland. On the shore were to be found many sorts of small shell-fish which might furnish a meal, many edible weeds which could be boiled into nutritious jelly. Thus might absolute death from famine be kept off by those who were able to use the labour necessary for the attainment of such food.

Lina's breakfast for her scholars was porridge of Indian meal. Their eager, sharpened faces over this dry food suggested to her many a lesson of

contentment. Her whole time and mind were at this period engrossed by the poor. Mr. Kingston frequently conferred with her about means of relief such as she could share in carrying out.

His own labours were incessant. Daily at the Relief Committee, dispensing food to the utmost of his ability, patient amid the despairing beggars that thronged round him for the means of life ; circumscribing his family expenses in every possible way, that he might give the larger sum: thus autumn found him employed.

The cry of the famine-stricken nation went throughout the world. Vast sums of money were collected ; even the Sultan of Turkey, even Hindoo rajahs, subscribed for the starving Irish.

Two things had to be done: furnish a supply of provisions as substitute for the perished crop, and supply the means of buying such provisions. The peasant had no money. In his simple, half-savage existence, he felt neither the need nor the desire of it. If he were a farm labourer, his wage was a bit of ground for potato-planting. If rent had to be paid, the pig was his bank bill. Prudence and frugality were terms the meaning of which were to him utterly unknown. He lived almost without the ordinary forms of barter. He was ignorant of the value of labour, or of time, or of money.

I speak concerning the lowest of the people—

the great operative substratum of society in Ireland. The con-acre system—that by which a tenant sublets small portions of his holding for yearly crops, as payment to his labourers—was much to blame for this disastrous feature in the state of the peasantry.

Lina saw a crowd on the beach one day, collected round a house which she knew to be empty. Frank, who had a boy's natural gravitation towards any gathering of people, ran down to ascertain the cause.

On a table, which some neighbour had lent, lay two bodies: one that of an attenuated woman, wrapped in an old cloak; beside her, inclosed by her arm, was a dead baby. The coroner had arrived, and they were forming a jury in presence of the poor dead ones, whose emaciated faces and lean limbs told enough of the cause of death. Frank felt cold as he looked on the hollow eyes and claw-like fingers of the wretched mother, and the pinched, oldened features of the hapless child, whose life had yielded to the slow torments of hunger.

"The crathur! her arm was about him to the last," said a bystander. "I'll be bound it's more of him than of hersel' she was thinkin', even in the agony—poor weenoch, his little hand is round her finger." The women were weeping; men could scarcely repress emotion. O love, stronger than death! O mother's instinct, more imperative than

even Nature's clinging to life ! How does the heart warm to it, and recognize the universal brotherhood !

There was not much evidence but what lay before their eyes: but that was sufficient to guide them to a verdict—

“Died from starvation.”

Part of a gnawed turnip was found in the woman's pocket. Her emaciation was something terrible. The gradual death must have been drawing on for weeks.

Frank returned to Golden Hills with a sober step. Lina's heart sickened at his recital: it was the first time that such a thing had occurred within her personal knowledge. During the next eighteen months she was to become, in a manner, familiarized with death from hunger.

Old Martin Brennan, who lived in the cabin next to that where the inquest had been held, was one of the jurors. He returned to his own house, and sat down by the hearth.

“We have it fairly down among oursels now, the black hunger. I don't see where it's to end, or how the people 'll be fed to the next harvest—a twel'month away.” And the old man ejaculated a prayer.

His daughter was spinning flax at a wheel by the doorway. She responded “Amen.”

“Bring me the Prayer Book, Ansty alana, an’

read a spell. It's too careless we are about our unfort'nate souls, wid such sorrowful examples as that crathur in the next cabin before our eyes. I wish I could make out the book meself ; but I forget all the thrifle of larnin' I ever had."

"An' I'd sooner spin a hank of yarn than read a page," replied his daughter. "Here, I'll call some of the gossoons [little boys] that goes to school."

She went outside, and looked up and down the road, with her hand over her eyes. A little boy was coming along in the sunshine, holding a book open as he walked.

"Harry—Harry Burke !"

"Yes, ma'am." He ran towards her.

"Come in an' read a bit for ould Martin, like a good boy."

"Oh, ma'am, I read only very badly," he said.

"Never mind ; he don't know the differ. In with you" ; and she shut the half-door on a troop of hens which sought entrance. "There, father, I've brought you a fine clever reader ; an' here's the Prayer Book," dusting it well with her apron.

Harry pulled off his ragged cap with a timid obeisance, as the old man turned on him his glittering eyes. "Sure that crathur can't read?"

"Wait awhile till you hear him," said Ansty.

"I'll read a bit of my lesson, sir, the lesson Miss Liney taught me to-day—it's a nice story,

sir." As his auditor offered no objection, he went on. It was a Scripture incident, translated into easy words for children—the miracle of the great draught of fishes. Old Martin listened first carelessly, then interestedly, then eagerly. He asked to hear it again.

"All night they were out, and caught nothin'—that was hard on 'em, the poor fellows. An' then to have the shoal come right down at wanst, all of a suddent—read it for me, little boy."

The story appealed to his own mode of life—to his own experiences of disappointment and exultation. "The Lord did it Himself! Are you sure it's all throe?"

"I'm sure it is, sir, every word, because it's took out of the Bible."

"That isn't a Bible, is it?" the man asked, with a touch of apprehension.

"Oh no, a Bible is three times the size."

"That's right; for if Father Conway met you wid a Bible, he might lay his whip on yer shoulders. But that's a beautiful story all out; have ye e'er another one like it?"

Harry read one or two of the former lessons, but suddenly shut his book.

"I forgot, sir—I have a right to be helpin' my mother in pickin' the mussels an' barnochs for supper. Sure I didn't remember it till this minit. I may go away, sir?"

"Do, an' look in to-morrow when yer comin' down from school. Give him a square of the cake, Ansty."

Ansty produced a large angular piece of dark, unfermented bread, baked on the pan. He took it to his mother with delight. Those who had given it to him looked at each other ominously.

"He's more like a spirit than a child; betune us an' harm," said Ansty, crossing herself. "His eyes are as big an' as dark as the pools in the rocks. An' that weenoch will be standin' in the wet gatherin' them mussels—I wondher at his mother, so I do."

"She doesn't see it—the poor woman; the mark of heaven is often on a face before one's own people notices it. He was always a delicate crathur; but troth he's a wondherful reader entirely. An' surely that story about the fishes wud teach a person to put their trust in the Lord through anythin'!"

Harry went to the rocks, with a small wooden pail and a knife blade, to gather shell-fish. He also watched for stray bits of corrigeen moss washed ashore; for crabs hidden under long seaweed; and at a patch of sand in a hollow, he looked for the holes of the razor-fish and cockles. Other children were also there; but Harry was the most venturous, going on the most slippery places, and nearest the waves, yet by his lightness

and adroitness never stumbling or even getting a spray-shower.

"The tide's risin' now, acushla," said his mother, "an' ye'd better keep in a bit from the edge. There's plenty of pools above here we didn't look at."

They moved a little inland. "There's white horses gettin' on the sea, mother," said Harry. "Look how beautiful they are! Mother, isn't it a great wondher that the Lord Jesus was able to walk on waves like them, in the middle of a storm?"

The child's mind was so imbued with the knowledge and love of Him, that perhaps His name was oftener on his lips and thoughts than any other. The commonest incidents and scenes served as remembrancers of his Saviour.

"I think I'd have been like Peter--wantin' to walk to Him on the water. He was so good, I'd wish to be near Him always. I think if He was over there, now, I'd a'most run into the sea to get to Him, mother."

"Acushla machree!" his startled mother exclaimed, looking at him fondly; "but you wouldn't want to go away from me, Harry?"

And at that moment a tremendous wave rushed twenty feet over the rocks, and upon the poor weed-gatherers. The mother was dashed down--blinded, stunned; but Harry was gone.

Chapter XXVIII

HURT PRIDE

THE waves of the Atlantic on the west coast of Ireland are proverbially treacherous. Hardly is their gentlest mood to be trusted: far out a roll of surf will gather, and creep onwards, piling higher as it swells inshore, till with thunder it rushes over the rocks, bursting into a hundred sheets of spray. So, with velvet tread had come the fatal wave over poor little Harry; it had wrapped him round, drawn his slight grasp from the slippery ledges, and borne him out into the wild sea.

They found the child a few hours afterwards, lying on the sand in a little cave not far distant, where the receding tide had left him. The whole hamlet had turned out to seek his body at the evening ebb. Tenderly old Martin Brennan lifted the slight form, and carried it in his arms to the widow's cabin, and laid it on her bed. The other women, her friends, were weeping plentifully; the chief sufferer was tearless, from the depth of her sorrow. They brought her to look at the fair

dead child ; wet and tangled curls lay on the round, soft brow, a gleam of blue eyes was visible among the clasped lashes ; but the mother wept not.

“An’ that’s yerself, achora machree: it’s time for ye to come back, Harry, afther the whole place lookin’ for ye. Take a sleep now, mavourneen, an’ nobody ’ll disturb ye awhile. Whisht, all of yees, don’t ye see the child’s asleep?” And she sat down as if to watch beside him till the waking.

The neighbours were puzzled : any form of grief would be more manageable than this gentle delusion.

“The sorrow’s too big for her poor heart,” said a mother present ; “byne-by she’ll know what it manes, the crathur. Sure, isn’t it merciful of the Lord above that she can look at him there widout her heart burstin’?”

“One or two of ye stay wid her,” said old Martin, “an’ she’ll come to herself when she finds he don’t waken up. I’m afeard he’s very bad, Mrs. Burke,” addressing the mother—“very bad entirely : feel how cold and wake he is.”

The dead hand was put in hers, and she chafed it.

“Oh, it’s no wondher he’d be cold, he was a long time in the water,” she remarked. “He mustn’t ever pick barnochs so near the edge again. Sure it’s well meself wasn’t swept out too,” she added, with a smile. “Look at the bruises on

my arms where I hit the rocks. Mavourneen, he hasn't a bruise in the world on him; he was always as white as the foam beyant at the Head."

Martin ceased his efforts to recall her to the sharpness of her woe. And, after all, when a dullness of perception comes over the newly bereaved, is it not a merciful numbing of the heart-surface whereon the stroke falls? Be not anxious to awaken such to the full agony of consciousness; soon enough will it come to rend the soul.

Later in the evening she was observed to bend her head, as if hearkening for the breath of the sleeper. When her cheek touched his cold face she started, and was still for a moment, as if endeavouring to recall something. Then, sitting down composedly: "I'm afear'd it's thrue for Martin Brennan; he's died in his sleep, the poor lamb. Let one of ye go for Mrs. Maher, till we lay him out dacent."

This Mrs. Maher was the wise woman of the hamlet, who presided at every birth and burying—a wizened old creature, with sharp eyes of the calibre of a ferret's; and when she entered the cabin, Mrs. Burke was talking rapidly.

"It's quare that his father, an' his grandfather, an' his two uncles, died abroad in the sea; but they say, when that death enters a family, it sticks to 'em, an' the water's their doom. I thought to lengthen his little coat, the crathur, but there'll

be no need now. Isn't it wondherful how cold they grows?" putting her hand on Harry's forehead. "There's nothin' in life so bitter cold as a corpse."

Mrs. Maher shook her head, and spoke behind her hand to one of the women.

"She has a wild look in her eyes; but it's better to humour her awhile. I often see 'em that way at first. Thru for you, Mrs. Burke, ma'am, there's nothin' at all to compare to it for the dead cowlid. He'll be a beautiful corpse, so he will. But I don't see anythin' for the wake, Mrs. Burke: you aren't goin' to let the neighbours sit here all night doin' nothin', a respectable woman like you?"

The poor mother rummaged in her pocket, and drew out a rusty key, attached to a bit of black string.

"Open the box," she said, "an' there's an ould stockin' in the corner, wid seven shillin's in it, which I was gatherin' for the rent. Sure I never thought of the wake, an' I humbly beg yer pardon, neighbours; but I don't feel right, somehow." She pressed her hand to her head.

Mrs. Maher's eyes twinkled as she took the key: her rapacity enjoyed the handling of other people's money. But a slender girl, who was sitting on the red box in question, extended her hand.

"My mother's not herself," she said, "an' I'm the fittest person to settle about the wake. Give me the key."

In the sudden surprise of such unlooked-for opposition, the old woman suffered it to be taken from her fingers. But her wrath boiled over a minute afterwards. "One wud think I was a common robber!" she ejaculated; "an' it's very unbecomin' of you, Mary Burke, to say you'd do the likes of that by an oul' friend, that was only considerin' the dacency of the family." She sat down near the fire in high dudgeon.

"I'm sure I didn't mane to offend you, Mrs. Maher," apologized the girl; "but I think 'twould be a dale more aginst the dacency of the family if my mother hadn't the rent-money to pay at Michaelmas, than if we had a poor wake now. But I'm not goin' to put ye off that way, neighbours; ye shall have somethin' for all yer kindness, as much as ever we can afford." She put the key in her pocket as she went out.

Some of those present secretly applauded the girl's conduct; the thriftless majority sided with the disappointed hag, in denouncing it as "upsetting an' mighty disrespectful to her eldhers." So did their words harass the poor mother, that on her daughter's return with some tea, flour, and tobacco, purchased with her own earnings, she demanded the key.

"I haven't it, mother—I haven't it at all—I left it outside." And she was firm in her refusal to reveal its hiding-place. "I'll not, mother, let your

little thrifle be took, an' you'll thank me aafterwards for it."

"That's a good girl," said Martin Brennan, who had just entered. "Don't ye harass her any more about it; she's very right."

Mary looked at him gratefully through her flowing tears, and proceeded to knead a cake for the supper of the guests.

She had learned other things besides an ability to work, at Lina's school. Some forethought and thrift had been also implanted; some sense of the social obligation of "tribute to whom tribute is due." And this was another offshoot from Lina's influence.

Next morning Lina came down from Golden Hills, with Frank, to see her little dead pupil. At noon he was to be buried. The mother sat there, still tearless—a dry glittering light in her dilated eyes.

"Aye, take yer last look at him, Miss Liney: it's he that loved the very ground ye walked on! An' when ye wor' sick in the summer-time, his first run in the mornin' wud be up to the house to hear somethin' about ye: an' not a thing ye ever taught him that he didn't remember, an' say 'em over to me aafterwards. Achora machree he was!"

Lina stood by the quiet form, only the day before full of life. She could only cover her face and her blinding tears, as she raised her heart to God.

Mixed with the prayer was a humble thanksgiving that He had permitted her in anywise to teach this child concerning the things of His kingdom; and she was comforted to remember the many tokens of spiritual grace he had given during the latter months of his life.

The evening brought letters from Alick. A fortnight since, he had lumbered up to the metropolis in a stage-coach, for at that time there was scarcely a line of rail in Ireland. Consequently, the journey was both fatiguing and tedious in the extreme: letters were two days in coming to remote places like Golden Hills.

Alick was striving with purpose of heart to accomplish his resolve. He had cut himself apart, as much as might be, from former idle acquaintances: his pupils and private study took up his entire time. Mr. Kingston's heart was gladdened by the news. But Laura, who was now on a visit to her Aunt Aubrey, had not been pleased to find her brother a tutor: it hurt her pride.

"I cannot imagine the necessity of such a thing," she said. "Surely father could have given you money enough for college without that."

"I fear not," replied Alick; "father is a poor man now. I am very glad to be able to take my own weight off his hands."

"Poor! Nonsense!" quoth Laura, with an impetuous movement of her rich silk dress. "Things

are always exaggerated. I don't believe a word of it."

A double knock having come to the door, and a gentleman's tread ascending, Laura smoothed her ruffled manners, and presented a bright countenance to Mr. Philip Orme.

Naturally she disliked to hear of a poverty that must abridge her luxuries. But her aunt, Mrs. Aubrey, finding her in tears as she dressed for dinner, and eliciting the cause, declared that whatever happened should make no difference to her: she must live with them until these horrid famine times were over. Which was corroborated by Mr. Aubrey, when he returned from the Four Courts.

"O'Brien dines with us to-morrow, my dear," he said to his wife; but his glance at Laura caused her to colour, which she was vexed with herself for doing: was not Mr. O'Brien more than old enough to be her father? Nevertheless, he came again and again—naturally enough, for he was one of Mr. Aubrey's clients—but Laura's pretty face continued to colour at her uncle's insinuations.

So Laura lived the butterfly life that was her ideal; rode and drove as she chose; was admired at all places of private and public amusement. Yet did she at times cast a glance to the sober, practical existence of Lina at Golden Hills, and wish for such quiet satisfaction as she remembered her sister to enjoy.

Chapter XXIX

THE BLACK WINTER

A GRANT of fifty thousand pounds was promised by the Premier to certain specified famine districts, so soon as sufficient subscriptions entitling to such aid should have been raised by the local gentry. This was the first effort made by Government in that disastrous year to stay the desolation of the people. Parliament addressed all its energies to the solution of the tremendous problem—how to feed the four millions of human beings whom the potato blight had left actually without the commonest means of subsistence.

Women and children then became politicians. Every proceeding in the Legislature was watched by the eager eyes of the nation; thence was their human hope. The whole family at Golden Hills were deeply interested in the debates; Lina, who never cared to glance at a newspaper before, now read aloud column after column of the speeches in Parliament, for her father and William; even Frank and Rosie listened, and, by the exigencies of the times, were sharpened to comprehension.

And when one evening the post-bag was proved to contain a copy of the newly passed Labour Rate Act, how did the household gather round to hear from Mr. Kingston the nature and powers of this result of legislative wisdom. He pored over it deeply.

The magistrates and cess-payers in every barony proclaimed as distressed were to hold extra-presentation sessions, to tax themselves for public works, under the revision of a central Board. The money required was to be furnished by a loan from the Treasury, subject to repayment by instalments during periods of varying length. Such was the substance of the Act, when stripped of the prodigious redundancy of words deemed necessary by those who construct parliamentary Bills. Mr. Kingston noted the practical points in his memorandum-book: first, an application from the local gentry to the Irish Government; then the Viceroy's order for a Road Sessions; subsequently another application for the warrant of the lords of the Treasury.

"The people will be starved during all these preliminaries," was his sorrowful comment. "And suppose they had employment and wages next week, where is the food for them to buy?"

"I suppose the demand will bring supply," answered William.

"But commerce is of slow growth; channels of

trade are not opened in a day. For instance, this district of Golden Hills has hardly a single retail dealer: the peasantry heretofore never wanted a shop. The potato stood in lieu of every necessary and luxury. Now there is nothing—nothing—literally nothing," reiterated Mr. Kingston, "between them and death from hunger. If a man is wrecked at sea, he may have a plank to sustain him till help come: the Irish peasant has not even a plank to hold him up till means of safety can be provided."

"I heard you saying, father," interposed Lina, "that the harvest of wheat and oats was unusually good."

"Yes; but it is chiefly bought up by forestallers, and stored until higher prices come with the deeper famine. There are men speculating on the chances of further and heavier misery to their fellow-creatures, and these will realize famine-fortunes in the times coming. It is maddening," added Mr. Kingston, rising suddenly, "to see in that paper that Indian corn is sixteen shillings a quarter in America, while it is sixty shillings in London!"

He had been the day previously at another inquest: verdict, "Died from starvation." He may be excused for feeling and speaking strongly.

"But where are the ships to bring breadstuffs?" he asked. "They cannot be withdrawn from other branches of commerce in sufficient numbers to meet

the present need. Ah! we shall have an effective system of relief organized by the time that the people have perished."

His own household had been straitened so far as he could curtail expense. Many a former luxury was never seen now. Nobody seemed to want new clothes; Lina and Rosie made and mended garments wonderfully.

But what were these to the privations endured by others, for the sake of the poor, in the famine years? Mr. and Mrs. Brooke—so much the objects of former dislike—showed themselves true disciples of Him who returned good for evil. The incessant and bitter hostility to which they had been exposed had not exasperated them into enmity towards those who sought their hurt. Now, in time of need, they worked strenuously for the relief of the destitute. To the verge of their own limited means, they expended money in food; Mr. Brooke wrote continually to wealthy friends in England and Scotland, collected statistics and facts concerning the famine, and stirred up the benevolent through the newspapers. He was untiring.

The people loved him, recognizing him for their benefactor. Not that he shunned to declare unto them the whole gospel of Christ at every fitting opportunity; he dreaded not the frequent taunt that he was endeavouring to bribe into Protestantism. Harmless fell the foul aspersion from

the white robe of the good man's consistent profession. He could not forget that he was Christ's ambassador to the souls of all who would hear him.

Lina and William drove to Castlebay with their father, on the day that the Road Sessions were to be held. A melancholy blackened view lay on all sides as they crossed the country. The fields, which had glistened with verdure in the summer, were covered with withered stalks and decayed leaves: numbers of cabins were deserted, the poor inhabitants having gathered in the larger villages, or gone to the workhouse. Few were on the roads; traffic seemed dead.

One family travelling towards the town attracted their attention. It consisted of a father, lean and ragged, carrying a tolerably grown child in his arms; the mother held an infant, and two little creatures strayed after them. All were attenuated and wretched-looking in no ordinary degree: their hollow eyes expressed a world of want.

"Father, stop the car; I've got some bread here—a loaf of the home-baking I was bringing to Aunt Orme: let me give it to those poor people."

The horse was reined in for a few minutes. It was pitiable the way the little children seized and devoured that bread.

"My man," said Mr. Kingston to the father, "where are you going?"

"Oh, then, yer honour, it's to the poorhouse, an'

nowhere else; I could bear anythin'—anythin' at all, but the starvin' childher. An' it's little I ever thought to be reduced to this——" The man turned away, to hide the tears flowing over his thin cheeks. "We couldn't keep the life in them any other way, yer honour. We shut up the little cabin this mornin', sir, an' since the daybreak we're walkin' the four mile: but the childer's very wake intirely"; and truly so they looked. Thin as sticks were their naked legs and arms; yet the hands and feet were swollen unnaturally; while the poor little sharpened face of the infant in its mother's arms looked like an old person's.

This occurred about two miles outside Castlebay. Mr. Kingston paused at Lance Brady's cottage, and desired that the ass and cart should be sent to meet that wretched family, and bring them to the workhouse without delay; for this day the guardians met, and if too late, they could not be admitted till the next assembling of the Board.

A large corn store in the town had been hired as an auxiliary workhouse, while extensive additions were being built to the original. In the last two years this had assumed more the semblance of a barrack than a house; squares, and alleys, and great dormitories gradually grew upon it, and branched out on all sides.

Mr. Kingston was an ex-officio guardian, as holding the commission of the peace. He proceeded

now to the board-room. Throngs were without, waiting for admission to the house ; but hardly a sound proceeded from them. The spirit of the people was utterly broken. His heart failed as he looked from the window on that perishing crowd. Their glazed eyes watched the door of the ark of refuge, but no vivid hope or fear seemed to have place in their hearts. They had almost outlived sensation.

He turned to the interior of the workhouse. The women's ward was nearest : here he saw scores sitting stupidly on the ground, under a shed that skirted the yard at one side ; these were the latest comers, who had not recovered their prior starvation. Also groups were assembled in different spots, listening to stories and songs : these were the younger paupers, who, having no work, must expend their activities in some way : consequently a fight was not infrequent, the weapons for which were the iron spoons each carried. But the listless, stricken look of the elder women was remarkable. All in the uniform check livery of paupers, sitting there for twelve hours daily in silent idleness, separated from kinsfolk and children, without a hope or an aim throughout existence—truly they formed a melancholy gathering.

The men's side of the house was no more inspiriting. Mr. Kingston could not help mentally ejaculating : "What a vast waste of operative

power! These hundreds languishing in idleness, while the great plains of Canada and Australia call out for labourers!" A scheme of industrial occupation for these paupers seemed to him absolutely essential to their well-being. He was aware what a stimulant is employment, what an educator into independence of character.

The hospital was full, stocked with all diseases created by inanition and misery. The children's ward contained a crowd of boys and girls, having a strange similitude of countenance to one another; but there was little play going on, nothing of the unsubdued spirits of childhood prevailed; they were very noiseless. Roundness had not yet returned to their young limbs, nor brightness to their eyes, nor a buoyant flow to their blood. They seemed a collection of abbreviated men and women.

When the subject of new admissions came before the Board, a guardian remarked that the weekly returns showed the house already filled with 127 paupers above the number it had been constructed to accommodate; and while in debate on this point, a movement and exclamations in the waiting crowd attracted attention. Clamour was so unusual among the stricken people that all looked for some extraordinary cause. Mr. Kingston went out, and returned, his face pale and rigid.

"Gentlemen, while we have debated one of the applicants for our aid has died!"

It was the weakly child whom he had seen the father carrying on the road an hour and a half before. Though seven years of age, his body was light as that of a year-old infant. Neither father nor mother wept; when a pressure of misery has lasted long it obliterates ordinary feeling. The doctor summoned to the board-room would have questioned the mother; but her sole answer was: "The hunger. Sure ye needn't be surprised: we're all dyin' of the hunger."

Mr. Kingston remembered that the poor child had rejected the bread offered by Lina, and seemed in a lethargy; the worst stage of starvation being that in which all appetite goes, and the numbness of apathy seizes on the whole nature. The surgeon also said that he must have suffered from a chronic weakness of constitution, which rendered him a readier victim to "the hunger."

Unanimously were the admissions voted on that day.

Most of the Poor Law guardians proceeded subsequently in a body to the court-house, where the Road Sessions were to be held. A great gathering was anticipated. It was a matter of the utmost importance to decide on the public improvements most needed.

"I shall not be surprised," observed Mr. Kingston to his next neighbour, "to hear money voted away lavishly to-day; for men do not feel expense which

is to be paid in the future : none the less really is it out of 'our own pockets, all the while."

"Well, sir," said the other—who was a shrewd old farmer, and having avoided the potato crop in favour of oats and beans, had preserved his standing amid the general distress—"an ould story says, 'There's nothing like leather' ; an' you may be sartin sure every man will be for the job nearest himself, that'll put work in his own electoral division, an' lighten the rates. I've lived a good while now, Mr. Kingston, an' I never saw much of what they call 'public spirit' where anythin' was to be gained by selfishness. It's every man for himself in this world, sir."

These words proved correct. For relief of the present pressure the ratepayers were ready to pledge their estates and tenancies to any amount. Roads were proposed to be made where no traffic had ever existed ; across bogs, where the drawing of turf during one month in the twelve was the sole shadow of necessity ; through hills with deep cuttings, where never a horse had toiled save when an occasional plough was needed in some distant field. Likewise were quays projected in ocean creeks, where nothing but a canoe ever floated ; and bridges over mountain streams passable by stepping-stones in their deepest seasons.

Mr. Kingston, and a few like-minded, endeavoured to support the more sensible plans and organize

enterprises that would be for general public utility. Their voices were weak among those harassed and impoverished men. Not one present but was a sufferer from the national distress in some form or other. Eager, disturbed faces surrounded the chairman, each anxious for the execution of the project that would soonest relieve his own immediate neighbourhood from the oppressive burden of overwhelming pauperism.

Thus, with the Labour Rate Act as the single staff to breast the torrent, deepened "the black winter" of 1846.

Chapter XXX

A FOOD RIOT

IN the beginning of December a road was to be opened in the neighbourhood of Mr. Kingston's residence. The day appointed was bleak and dismal; uniform grey clouds darkened all the heavens, while a keen east wind swept cuttingly over the country, and forbade all hope of a softening in the weather.

Yet on this severe morning, when still twilight was not quite cleared away, numbers of people were collecting at the junction of the roads near which the work would be commenced. They sheltered themselves, poor ragged creatures, under the walls, crouched in silent groups, waiting for the engineer who should give them leave to try their weak muscles with the pickaxe and shovel.

As the day advanced some dropped off to seek food, either to their huts, where scant porridge was preparing, or to the shore, where the liberal sea daily supplied shell-fish for the gathering; or, the most destitute of all, to roam the fields for stray

sound potatoes in the mass of corrupt roots. On a tempestuous day like the present, the ocean waifs of weeds and limpets were not obtainable without a certain amount of danger.

Anxiously was the distant road watched by the earnest eyes of those waiting. But nothing came; and they could from this point see the white way for miles lying along, intercepted occasionally by a height or hollow. Murmurs arose among them. The malcontents said it was all a "schamin' piece of roguery"; and one or two were heard to mutter hard words against Mr. Kingston.

"They don't care—not they! about oursels an' our starvin' childher: sure they're nice an' comfortable in their grand houses, an' they don't know the feel of the hunger. If they did, my hand to you they'd take more throuble to get us a bit to ate than they do."

Thus spoke a wild-eyed, haggard creature to a knot of other such: they had not yet come to the apathetic stage of their sad malady. What wonder that they were envious and rebellious? It is in peaceful plenty that the gentle virtues are elicited.

"Boys," said another, rising with excited looks, "aren't we mane-spirited to be sittin' here all day, waitin' as if for the crows to pick our bones? An' throth 'tisin't anythin' worth their throuble they'd find on mine, anyhow," he added, with a gleam of ghastly humour. "But what for are we waitin', an'

the hunger-pain gnawin' us, and gnawin' the little childher—oh, boys, that's the worst of all, our innocent little childher !—when that thief Pat M'Fadden, below there, has flour an' meal enough in his shop—the villain of a forestaller !—to give us all enough to ate for a week? ”

The hint was received in dead silence. Nobody seemed to be prepared thus openly to infringe the law ; but a sudden gleam seemed to kindle in many an eye, though only for a moment.

He who had spoken first sprang to his feet.

“ An' if the Peelers did catch us, an' put us into prison, what could they do but give us enough to ate, at all events? That's the whole of it, boys ; we don't want to harm any one ; we want only some of the corn an' oats our own fields grow'd, an' we must have it, for the starvin' women an' childher, boys ! ”

The train was lighted. That watchword was irresistible. In a mass the people moved towards the village, where the meal-shop was. The dissentients were carried along by the majority ; and as they went, under the harangues of the leaders, their fury was momentarily augmenting.

“ Pat M'Fadden, the villain ! he hadn't a screed to his back last year, an' now he's dressed in black cloth like any gentleman ! Out of the people's hunger he wrung the money, the spalpeen ! 'Twould be a good deed to give him a taste of the salt water.”

"Aye," cried another, "an' he refused credit to the widow Carey, when she went to him for a han'ful of meal, an' her little boy just dyin'!" A howl of execration followed. "Ha, boys, we'll tache him to have compassion on the orphan—won't we?"

A crowd under the influence of want is readily excited. The weakened body has thrown every mental principle off its balance; the brain seems to have an affinity for fever. This mob swelled as it progressed. The news came to Golden Hills by a breathless messenger—

"Oh, sir, the whole counthry is riz, an' are gone down to Pat M'Fadden's wid pikes, an' guns, an' scythes, an' say they'll sweep him off the face of the earth!"

Mr. Kingston was a calm man by nature, but this intelligence startled him. He could not know, for they were not yet in sight, that it was exaggerated, and that the populace were without weapons save their own famishing hands; but he had thought once or twice of the possibility of a food riot, and the awful consequences that might ensue. He pondered on the wisest course for his own conduct in the emergency: the nearest police-station was two miles distant.

"William, put a pistol in your breast-pocket, and come down there with me."

Lina had heard the news, and entered the room as they were putting on their great-coats. Her

heart trembled ; but her father found time for a consoling word.

“ Don't fear, Lina : the poor fellows are hungry, and I'll just give them a good meal all round at the soup-shop. There's no need for saying a word of this to your mother.”

She thought he made too light of the peril, and turned away, her eyes full of tears. Even in his haste he would not leave her thus, but took up the telescope and made her observe through it that the mob now assembled round the flour-shop were unarmed. The sight reassured her.

“ And yet,” said her father, in a low tone, “ if there be a special Providence caring for me, Lina, as I believe there is, that Providence could preserve me as safely amid pikes and pistols as in the quietest gathering.”

Another reproof to her weak faith ! Lina went to her mother's room to intercept any possible word of the riot, and endeavoured to read aloud calmly, while her heart palpitated with anxiety to know what was happening in the village. At last she made an excuse to go to the study. Still the mob was gathered about the house, but she could observe a sensible diminution of their violence ; her father seemed as if speaking to them ; William stood by. A little while she watched them. But as she looked a fearful change came over the scene. The door of the shop was burst open, and the meal-seller

was dragged forth amid the most infuriated gestures. Her father and William rushed forward to protect him.

Lina's eyes grew dizzy, and she was fain to take her sight from the glass. When she was again able to see, her father seemed to stand at bay in the midst of the crowd, protecting a prostrate figure. At this instant the loud ringing of her mother's bell recalled her ; and, without understanding a syllable, she read to her mechanically through pages and pages for half an hour, which felt like a day's length.

The noise of the approaching mob—and there are few sounds which surpass in awfulness the thunder of an angry multitude—had warned those at the shop of their danger a few minutes before the tumult burst about them.

Pat M'Fadden knew that he had given the people no good reason to love him ; but heartily at this moment would he have delivered up his half-year's profits—which were of no niggard value—to purchase the scattering of the mob that was rolling down upon him. From head to foot the unhappy meal-seller shook as he heard the many voices nearing, and could distinguish his own name mixed in their yells. Every bar and bolt about the place was fastened, and furniture piled against the doors. A volley of stones shivered the glass ; but the shutters within were strong.

McFADDEN WAS DRAWN FROM HIS HIDING-PLACE INTO THE OPEN AIR.





"I'll have a presentment on the county for this," thought Pat; and he was not so much concerned about the damage. He had sent his boy running over the fields to Constable Nolan, and if he could hold out till the police came all would be right.

But like the shock of a battering-ram was the rush of the besiegers against the doors.

"I have a gun," shouted the shopkeeper, "'an I'll fire through the shutters on ye!" A savage yell answered—

"If you do the like of that, Pat M'Fadden, all the Peelers from Connaught to Cork won't save you from being thrun over the highest cliff in Lissard!"

"Maybe he don't know that we took the iligant messenger he was sendin' over to Nolan!" shouted another voice.

At these words M'Fadden's heart grew cold. He thought of a compromise with the mob. Through a crevice he peered out, and saw the hungry, half-savage faces surrounding his house. Many a misdeed, many a hard and uncharitable action rose to his memory in the light of that glance; and he repented heartily, as all men repent when retribution draws nigh.

There was a lull. He soon found that it was caused by the arrival of Mr. Kingston and his son. Courage kindled afresh. He could hear the clear, firm tones of the magistrate addressing the

crowd, telling them boldly that their conduct was illegal, and that they would suffer for it.

"But we're starvin', an' this villain M'Fadden has been makin' money of our blood an' our lives!" was the cry.

Mr. Kingston's words were powerless. Another determined rush drove in the door, weakened with previous shocks; and, after a brief search, M'Fadden was drawn from his hiding-place into the open air.

"Now, you spalpeen of the world, we'll pay you what's owin' to you this many a day! Who was it raised the yellow male to half a crown a stone, whin 'twas only two shillings in Castlebay? Who was it refused credit to Pat Mahoney an' his family, dyin' of the hunger? Come, boys, we'll not dirty our hands wid the likes of him; but, as I said before, let's bring him to the cliff an' hurl him over!"

The entreaties of the unfortunate man were pitiable.

"Ye have my shop now," he said, "an' my flour an' male, an' every haporth belongin' to me; what good is my life to ye compared wid that?"

Mr. Kingston wrestled his way through the crowd.

"Let him go!" he ordered imperatively to those holding the prisoner. "You know that I am not to be trifled with," and he showed a pistol in his hand. "My son and I are armed, and we will

use our arms in defence of this man's life if necessary."

The words were followed by a blow of a cudgel at M'Fadden, from some one behind, which threw him prostrate ; but the crowd drew back before Mr. Kingston's determined aspect. Added to which, the main purpose of the expedition had been gained, which was the robbing of the flour-shop. Gradually the mob thinned. They began to fear the arrival of the police. An alarm spread that they were coming, which speedily had the effect of clearing the ground.

The shop had been totally cleaned out. The bins of meal and sacks of flour were empty. M'Fadden looked into his till. The money had been tumbled about, but none of it was taken ; whereat he was somewhat comforted, and yet more so at the thought of the presentment he would have upon the county to refund his losses.

Lina's thankfulness was deep when her father and William returned home in safety.

Chapter XXXI

THE FAMINE FEVER

THE gloomy Christmas time passed by over the mourning land. No rejoicing heralded a new year ; all men looked with fear for what fresh disaster it might bring. Stagnation benumbed commerce and trade in Ireland ; all, except the traffic in food, was wellnigh suspended. The *Gazette* teemed with insolvents ; and the amount of distress among artisans, salesmen, and small shopkeepers was incalculable.

Higher in society crept the influence of the famine. There was an interval before it was felt by the gentry resident in towns, because the peasantry had been, as it were, beyond the pale of civilization, so far as related to the ordinary mercantile transactions connecting man with man. But, as the upper classes became sufferers, their ability to support the operations of trade was lessened. Food was so high in price, that a fixed income could not be estimated at more than half its former value ; while those dependent in any

way upon landed estate became little better than paupers.

A gigantic system of public works was the only enterprise that appeared to prosper throughout the country. The unparalleled spectacle of seven hundred thousand labourers supported by the State attracted the attention of all Europe. It was calculated that, reckoning their families, the number thus dependent amounted to more than two millions of human beings.

What were these seven hundred thousand men doing? The treasure cities of Pharaoh were built by a like number. The imperial capital of Petersburg was raised from a frozen marsh by such an army of artificers. But these three-quarters of a million pairs of hands were making and mending a few hundred miles of roads!

In order not to interfere with agricultural employment, the wages were fixed at twopence a day below the current rate of payment in each district. But it was soon discovered that roadwork was only a species of laborious idleness; and as the peasant loved his ease better than the pence to be gained by harder exertion, he preferred a lazy fiddling with the pickaxe to the higher wage for which his sinews should strive.

"We shall be compelled to introduce task-work," said the engineer one day to William Kingston, as both looked on the scattered crowd of labourers.

"Just observe that fellow yonder with the pick. He has not in ten blows broken away as much as I would in one."

To illustrate this by a practical lesson, he went over to the man, a hulking, able-bodied peasant, and, taking the implement from him, struck the bank with it, bringing down a quantity of earth and stones. The supplanted labourer grinned.

"Sure yer honour has twenty times the strength of the likes of me," he whined; "sure that yellow male doesn't lave us the power of a rish" (rush); and he took up the pickaxe again, with an indolent shrug of his broad shoulders.

"But there are some really feeble, on whom task-work would fall heavily," William said.

"No doubt," rejoined the engineer; "still, it would be juster than the present system of equal compensation to the steady workman and to the idler. Positively, I consider that I am helping to destroy the moral principle of the labourers, by giving that impostor yonder as much wages as the pale man here at my right, who has toiled conscientiously. Not, indeed, my dear Kingston," added the urbane Englishman, "that I can compliment you on the amount of conscientiousness I have hitherto found among your countrymen."

William shook his head.

"They are strangely obtuse on some of the commonest principles of moral obligation," he admitted. "Ribandism is an example."

"I see it in nothing so plainly as in the ordinary transactions of this road-work: they are inherently idle and lazy, ready to take any wages, without at all considering themselves bound to yield an equivalent of labour. What do you think," he continued, breaking off the thread of his sentence—"I was told yesterday that on a road near Castlebay a fellow gave as a toast, 'Success to the rot'; and the sentiment was received with cheers!"

"I can only say that the evil few always make greater stir than the well-conducted many," was William's plea.

William was employed as clerk of the works in the district surrounding Golden Hills. It entailed on him considerable labour and responsibility. The accounts alone occupied two days of each week: here Lina could help him, and was glad to lighten her dear brother's toil.

She went one afternoon to meet him as he returned home. Rosie was her companion in the walk, and Hugo bounded along before them. The day was cold and bright, without warmth even in the clear sunshine; they took a sheltered road, and went along rapidly. It was altogether a walk of duty on Lina's part; she knew that exercise was necessary, and just proposed to herself William's coming as an object of inducement.

William's car came in sight. He had brought

the letters from the nearest post-town. "And there is a leader in the paper," said he, "on the efficacy of lime against the blight, and a column of receipts for making soup out of as near nothing as may be. It is amusing to read of the experiments of comfortable chemists on nutritious substances—if they knew how some of the Irish gentry are living! I went into Mr. Brooke's, at Lissard, last evening, and I found him at dinner, with his wife, on a mess of turnips and Indian meal, with a little bread!"

Lina was surprised and pained to hear of such privation. "When he spoke of it to me," added William, "he said that both he and Mrs. Brooke were providentially in the soundest health, and able to bear a little self-denial. I had no idea they had given up all the comforts of life so completely; and for the sake of such people—those who hated and persecuted him while ever they had the power."

"Dear Mr. Brooke! he will have the reward laid up in heaven," Lina said, tears brimming her eyes. "I had a note from Mrs. Brooke to-day. She says the road fever is bad among the poor people there."

"It is spreading everywhere," said William; "I met with some cases of it to-day; exertion and starvation combined are bringing it on the unhappy labourers,"

"I hope it is not infectious," Lina said apprehensively.

"I believe not, except to those who have the qualification of hunger," he answered. "What does Laura say?"

"One thing that I don't understand," Lina said, reading the letter as the car rolled slowly on. "She wonders whether I will be surprised to hear something about her—what, she does not specify; but only that she has written to father."

The eyes of brother and sister met.

"And here is a letter in Mr. O'Brien's hand," William said, taking it out. "It may perhaps be about business, as usual."

"Oh, William, I would be so sorry! That old man! I am sure he is sixty; and our pretty Laura!"

"She likes wealth, and he is very rich," was the brief remark, as William touched the horse with the whip, and they proceeded rapidly homewards.

Lina sat in the dining-room, watching every sound. She heard her father come out of the study, and go to her mother's dressing-room; his step boded no good; it was heavy and displeased.

Presently she was sent for; Mr. Kingston stood upon the hearthrug, and his face was dark.

"Has your sister told you of this?" he inquired, pointing to the open letters on her mother's lap.

Lina read them. One was from Mr. Aubrey,

descanting on the advantages of the proffered alliance ; another from Laura herself, stating that she had accepted Mr. O'Brien conditionally on her parents' approval ; and a third from the suitor, beseeching Mr. Kingston not to withhold his sanction because of the only objection—disparity of age.

“The man is fully ten years older than her father,” Mr. Kingston said: “I shall never give my consent.” With these emphatic words he walked downstairs again.

“Poor dear Laura !” said Mrs. Kingston ; “it is all so sudden, that I can hardly collect my thoughts enough to say whether I really disapprove. In point of money, the match is beyond what she could expect, under present circumstances ; but certainly his age is against him.”

Lina was recalling the picture of an evening when O'Brien had sat beside Laura at tea, and had noticed William's attention to his mother ; and in her memory the contrast between the pair struck her painfully.

“How could Laura say that she will love and honour him?” were her words.

“Well, my dear, if she thinks that she can love him, really I do not see that any violent opposition should be made to the match. If your father would only consider what a heavily embarrassed man he is himself, and how little hope there is that he can retrieve his circumstances—but here

he comes again. Your father is so restless, my dear ! ”

Mr. Kingston had returned to say that he would not write to Laura, but would leave for Dublin himself on the next day but one. “ I have an appointment to-morrow at a farm on Slievemore, otherwise the young lady would have my personal presence by return of post.”

He was grave and preoccupied during next morning's drive, though he did not refer in words to the subject of his thoughts. But the knit brow, and stern eye beneath, were sufficient intimation to William that his father's mood was gloomy.

The roads in the neighbourhood were disagreeable, owing to the relief work in progress ; short cuts were being constructed, heights levelled, and hollows filled up. If finished, all this would be improvement ; at present it was obstruction to the thoroughfare. But the only animation through the country seemed on these works. Fields lay in scores uncultivated, and the cabins were roofless and deserted.

In one more than usually lonely reach of the road they came upon a very wretched hut. The bare, blackened rafters had a covering of sods and ragged thatch over one corner ; the door hung outside crookedly by the lower hinge. A cry from the interior startled them.

“ Some one in the faver, sir,” explained the

driver ; " they do be sometimes left to die by their-selves, because of the dhread the people has " ; and he ejaculated a prayer.

The cry was repeated ; Mr. Kingston jumped off the car. Before he reached the threshold, a little creature appeared there, scrambling on all-fours weakly, and raised its chill, watery eyes towards the gentleman. Its swollen hands on the damp ground smoked from the evaporation of fever heat.

" What is the matter ? " asked Mr. Kingston. " Who is in there ? "

The child only scrambled slowly away, as if to make room for his entrance. He stooped, and saw in the dark corner something lying on straw, which called out frantically for water—water !

" Do you know where is a well in the neighbourhood ? " he asked hurriedly of the driver.

" I'll find somebody that does, sir," was the answer ; and, amid incoherent blessings from the wretched being on the straw pallet, he took up the tin pannikin, and went out. In a minute he returned, with a draught from the ditch close at hand. " Sure the crathur'll never know the differ, sir, an' the sooner his pain is stopped the better 'tis for him." Greedily the water was drained to its last drop.

The man raised himself, in the sudden strength of that coolness. His gaunt face had hair upon it almost as long as the matted locks of his head.

He pointed to a bundle of rags lying on the same straw heap. Mr. Kingston could perceive the great glistening eyes of another child staring out sadly. No plaint or moan from either of the little creatures; their worst weeping would have been less affecting than this still suffering.

"The mother died last week, of the hunger an' the faver together. I was workin' at the road till then, but some days I could only earn three-pence, for want of the strength. Now lave the water there anear me, good Christian people, an' shut the door tight when ye go out, *for I'm afeard of the dogs!*"

With horror in his voice and look he whispered the last words vehemently. Mr. Kingston recoiled. He knew that in some graveyards bands of these animals, being left masterless to roam the country, and savage from hunger, had torn up the dead; for, among a crowd of burials, there was not time to put a sufficiency of earth above the poor bodies.

They left the hovel. "It's all up wid 'em," said the servant; "the Queen's palace couldn't put life in 'em now; I'd be aisy if that poor fellow had enough of water as long as he wants it. Maybe yer honour would take the reins, an' let me stay wid him till yer comin' back in the evenin'?"

Mr. Kingston did so. His heart heavy with an inexplicable weight, he spent the day at the mountain farm.

Chapter XXXII

MR. KINGSTON'S CONFESSION

WEARILY the hours passed over the watcher by the fever-stricken peasant. He fetched a pail from a house half a mile away, filled it with water, and kept the lips of the dying man wet with cool drops, which dried up momentarily from his burning breath. The children did not sleep, nor speak; either would have been a relief from the monotonous gaze of their sad, still eyes. Fevered as their father was, their wretched limbs—almost resembling canes in attenuation—were numb with cold. A fire had been in one corner of the shed; only ashes remained, and an old tin vessel, which he supposed had cooked their porridge while the mother lived. Some half-dressed Indian meal and water was in it; but the children rejected that semblance of food.

“I'll get a bit of fire,” thought Michael, “an' maybe they'd ate the stirabout if it was boiled; the neighbours can't but give me a couple of sods”: and, fastening the door with a stone against it, he set off to the house where he had

borrowed the pail. But the people there would not admit him. "We're bad enough oursel's, without bringing the faver atop of us," a voice said.

"Why, then, that ye may be never thrated as ye're thratin' me," he answered good-humouredly: "sure, if we didn't help one another, what wud become of half the world? An' it's clane against my principles to let a crathur die like a dog, if I could help him a bit. At any rate, I don't want much from ye now, only the seed of a fire—a couple of coals off the hearth, an' a couple of sods out of the turf rick, which I'll help meself to, with yer lave."

"Aye, do so," said another voice—that of the woman. "We'll put the coals outside for yees."

"That's a good honest pleasant voice, anyhow," cried Michael, with a touch of flattery; "an' may ye never want a good turn, ma'am!"

When he came back for the fire, he found beside it a cloth containing some oatmeal. As the husband's tones were objurgating within the house, he thought best not to notice the gift. His walk back to the fever-hut was necessarily slow, as the fire required care, and his means of carrying it were only two flat stones. Doubling a corner of the road, he met a woman.

"Why, then, good-morrow to you, Sall, an' save you kindly! an' where are you from, the day?"

"I was mindin' people above on the mountain,

that had the faver, Michael Conran, so keep out from me unless ye want to get it ; an' it kills 'most every one."

But instead of shunning her, he laid down his burden for a minute, to shake hands with her.

"I don't believe, meself, that the faver or any other sickness 'll take any one the Lord hasn't ordained," was his remark: "an' so the masther gev me lave—me bein' an outside servant, that hasn't recourse into the house—to stop awhile wid a poor fellow that's above here. An' he has two little childher, Sall, that's just dyin' of the hunger ; I was goin' to thry wud they ate a little oatmale stirabout, if 'twas made for 'em."

Sally came with him to the hut. She peered into the worn and gaunt face of the dying man, and recognized him.

"Oh, then, Pat Mangan, you crathur, is it you? that had the good farm on Slievemore, an' often gave poor Sally the good breakfast an' dinner ! An' are these the weenochs that was once stout an' hearty, runnin' about the fields afther the lambs —an' that I see christened wid such grand christenins? Michael Conran, there used to be in that man's barn a dinner for the reapers that the likes of it wasn't in the parish ; barrows of praties an' tubs of new milk, an' oul' Maurice the piper to play for 'em whin the work was done ! an' now to have him come to this !"

She sat down with her chin on her knees, and appeared to give herself up to mournful reflections. Michael noticed that her bonnets were gone, and her thin, light-coloured hair hung down to her shoulders in jagged ends, resembling tow: she looked thin and hungry herself. Yet he had heard of her kindly offices towards many families in the fever; for though her brain was not sound, poor Sally's woman-heart was whole.

"Look here," he said, attracting her attention gently; "be blowin' the fire while I give this crathur a drink. As soon as the water boils, put in the oatmale, Sally, avourneen. Though indeed it's to ax yer pardon I ought, for spakin' a word about makin' stirabout or anythin' else, seein' the women's a dale handier at it than ever the men could be. If them childher wud ever close their eyes, 'twould be an ease to me!" he said, in a lower tone.

"Them!" She looked over her shoulder. "Their blood in their body is turned into water, an' it shines out in their eyes; an' the smell of the earth is gatherin' about 'em already." She blew the sods vigorously with the skirt of her petticoat, and a blaze sprang up. "Bring one of 'em over to me," she said; "maybe he'd feel the warmth." The little body, light as a doll, was laid on her lap: she chafed its shrunken arms.

"Broth wud be the only chance for them: hot

soup wud revive them, if anything could," said Michael, as he stood by. "But sure the nearest soup-shop is down at the Hill, four miles off. An' now that I see that weenoch in the light, throth he has a look of my own little Patsey at home; the hair is like, anyhow." The comparison caused the father to put up an internal prayer for his child.

"Sally, agrah," he exclaimed suddenly, "wud ye stay here, if I brought up the broth from the Hill below?"

"I'll not lave Pat Mangan till I see the last of him," was her reply: "many's the day he kep' the warm corner of the fire for poor Sally."

The fevered man turned his eyes towards them gratefully. "May the Lord in heaven bless ye both for ever an' ever," he feebly articulated. "I'm dyin' aisy by the manes of yer kindness. Whisht!" he added, fearfully staring towards the half-open door; "isn't them the dogs I hear, comin'?"

It was the distant wheels of Mr. Kingston's car, returning from the mountain farm. Michael jumped on the driver's seat. "We found a famous nurse, sir," said he: "cracked Sall came in, an' she knew the poor fellow long ago, an' said she'd stay by him to the very last. Maybe yer honour wud remember him—Pat Mangan, that had a farm on Slievemore, before the bad times."

"Can it be possible?" said Mr. Kingston and William in a breath. "Pat Mangan, of Slievemore!" They recollected the comely, broad-built farmer, who had regularly brought his rent to the office each May and November; had given up his holdings, with a touching submission, when in justice to the landlord he could no longer retain them; and had retired somewhere out of ken, among the labouring masses of the people, to hide his indigence, and earn a livelihood, if possible. Thus had the struggle for existence on absentee landlords' conditions ended.

Michael obtained the donkey and cart, to bring him again to the hut where poor Mangan lay. The soup was heated and given to the children; it appeared rather to pain them than to do any good.

"'Twill be that way for a while," observed Sally; "but you'll see to-morrow they'll be different; they'll get hungry again, if the life in them is sthrong enough."

Scenes of such sadness as this were not spoken of at Golden Hills by William or his father, when they returned home. Mr. Kingston doubted the advantage of paining the sensitive hearts of Lina and her mother with tales of woe which they could not alleviate, when every day brought continual claims on their sympathy and benevolence. He had sometimes thought that his daughter was years

older, in care and gravity of spirit, than was natural to her age ; and he knew that this arose from the circumstances surrounding her life, and the unwonted duties that had pressed upon her. But, with all the strength of his own nature, he honoured her steady persistence in the plans of practical good she had formed ; he respected her character with no ordinary esteem ; and Lina felt that a stronger bond of union existed between her father's heart and her own than had been before these troublesome years.

The Times arriving that evening contained the memorable letter from Commodore Coffin, of her Majesty's ship "Scourge," describing his visit to Skull and its neighbourhood. Accustomed as the Golden Hills family were to scenes of misery, this was a still deeper gulf of wretchedness than any they had contemplated. Mr. Kingston sat with his head on his hands, while William read aloud the sad recital. His posture excited Lina to doubt whether he was quite well ; but then—he never was so buoyant lately as she remembered him three years ago, before his hair had grown so white at the temples. Her dear father ! how she loved him ! what a warm throb filled her heart as she noted his careworn attitude, and longed to take to herself some of his anxieties, and bear them in his stead !

He raised his face. "There is a verse in one

of the Psalms that struck me lately: 'He turneth a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.' It is just so with this unfortunate country; I believe the famine to be a judicial punishment for the bloodshed lying upon it."

Lina looked up from her work. Then her father had been reading the Bible for himself, and with the attention which makes reality of the inspired words. She had never known of his doing so before. Surely that Divine Word would not return void from its mission, but would be the seed of spiritual life in his precious soul!

"Strange it is," he further said, "how from the faults of men their punishment is evolved, as from a plant its fruit. The slothful character and improvident habits of our Irish peasantry have originated a vast proportion of their present misery. This suffering has been laid in store for them by generations of indolence and animalism."

William remarked: "I have read somewhere of a saying that as nations are not immortal, so God judges them in this world."

"Aye, and individuals likewise. No man's doings but are followed by a shadow of retribution, tracking his footsteps pertinaciously, and surely visiting him with a suitable vengeance of sorrow."

"But," rejoined William, "are 'not many now

suffering for ancestral faults and sins? The little children, what have they done?"

"What did the children of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, when they were swallowed down alive into the pit do? Or the children in Sodom and Gomorrah, when fire rained from heaven? This is one of the questions which may safely be left to the solution of Infinite Justice."

"And Infinite Mercy," Lina added gently.

"Perhaps an early and certain heaven is better for them, even though the way be through pain, than a prolonged life on earth," William said.

"Why, after the longest and the happiest life, all we hope for is the same heaven," his father answered. "Ah, my children, I have lately thought that we all lay too much stress on the perishable needs and pleasures of mortality, and have too little consideration for the one thing needful."

Never had their father spoken such words before, and his calm face flushed slightly at the avowal. Whence this cowardice, even in the firmest natures, to confess that the interests of the soul are becoming paramount? Why doth the traitor heart hold back when the lips would speak of things eternal? Any subject is more easily introduced, any theme more fluently dwelt upon, than this, which is most important of all matters that can engage the attention of our immortal faculties.

"I have been a man of business all my life,"

continued Mr. Kingston, with a little effort ; " I have never left a question unsettled which it was of any moment to decide ; I have been accurate and clear in every arrangement ; my books have been kept with precision, and my affairs are in order. But not long since "—he stood up before the fire now, and leaned his arm upon the mantel-piece, looking into the burning embers—" the thought visited me, that I, who am so exact in temporal arrangements, had left one matter undecided ; that a piece of property more valuable to me than everything else I possess was in peril—on the verge of irremediable loss. Should I not instantly make sure of that valuable possession? Should I not determine a question involving the mightiest interests of my life? "

All eyes were directed to the figure of the father, who, after a moment's pause, resumed—

" And I found written, ' Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Also, ' If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.' Here was my warrant of exclusion from heaven. I was not born again ; I had not the Spirit of Christ."

Another momentary silence: he turned himself towards the listeners, and looked upon them.

" Then I prayed. I besought the Omnipotent God to give me this mighty gift of regeneration. By myself I could no more call up a single feeling

of love to Him, or of trust in Christ, than a dead man could make his heart beat. It must be altogether a supernatural work, done in me by the Holy Spirit, Who is God Himself. I prayed for this earnestly as I would for human life, were it at stake. And I found another verse, which says: 'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?' Now, I take these words simply as they stand; they must be truth itself, for Jesus Christ spoke them; and I have asked God for His Holy Spirit, fervently: it is my greatest desire to have that Divine gift; therefore, on the ground of His own promise, I believe that I have obtained my request, and that I stand justified before God through the obedience of Christ, *my Saviour*."

With a smile he turned to Lina: "I could not have said that personal pronoun a month since," he added. She was thankful that he took no notice of the deep emotion visible in her face; but his eye dwelt on it for a moment.

When all had gone to bed that night, Lina came downstairs again, softly. Her father was in the study still: he had till just now been giving William a variety of directions respecting the business which he was to conduct in his absence, and packing some papers to take with him to Dublin.

Lina entered noiselessly, as he sat with his back to the door ; when he perceived her, he drew her towards him.

"Father, you have made me so happy this night !"

"Dear child, I thank God Who enabled me. You were 'in Christ' before me: will you pray for your father?"

"We have got a new relationship," he said afterwards, "which will endure into the eternal world ; even the spiritual relationship which is through our Lord Jesus. I am stronger for the confession this evening, Lina."

Chapter XXXIII

A SHADOW OF FEAR

IN the grey twilight of the next morning, while yet dawn was weakly struggling with superincumbent clouds, Mr. Kingston set off on his journey. A line of rail had been just completed to a provincial city some fifty miles away; he would reach this by coach and steamboat from Castlebay, and thence travel to the metropolis.

The day seemed very long to Lina, owing to her unusually early rising to get her father's breakfast before he started. Her pupils met as usual; the class had swelled considerably in number since little Harry was first introduced to it; for she could not refuse application from the destitute, attracted by the single daily meal which she gave her scholars; nor could she lightly put aside opportunity of extended good, placed before her by Him Whom she recognized as her Lord.

She also endeavoured to find industrial employment for all the little hands: as a beginning, she had taught netting to some, and set them to instruct others. Now they manufactured cabbage and fruit

nets well, which found a ready sale through the kind Miss Simson, in England. Without such means of gaining a fund, Lina could not have continued her school and given food to the children.

The elder girls' work was improving in quality, so that Miss Simson could give better prices for it than previously. The moral change which a habit of industry was working on their characters and looks cheered their teacher oftentimes. Carefulness and tidiness were insensibly gaining on them; self-respect began to be a principle in their minds.

Alick, under the quickening which his feelings had lately received, was uneasy about his young brother's education, and not satisfied with the classical teaching of a rustic pedagogue, who presided over the national school of the district, and came for some hours weekly to instruct Frank in *Virgil* and *Sallust*. So he had proposed that the boy should come to Dublin, and live with himself, for closer study.

"Darling old Golden Hills!" exclaimed Frank impulsively; "don't I love every stone of it—every blade of grass in the fields—every wave on that big sea! I wonder whether I could bring myself to leave it at all, Lina."

And Lina fully entered into his enthusiasm for their beloved home. Others might say that the situation was bleak, that the absence of woodland gave the view a barrenness adverse to soft beauty;

but these children of Golden Hills thought no place so enjoyable as their nest by the cliffs of the wild Atlantic main. Born in the sound of its ceaseless surge, its music was more to them than the most civilized loveliness of calmer scenes; the blue expanse of waters fairer than miles of waving harvests; the scream of sea-birds more attractive than nightingales' melody.

Lina was sitting before the open window of her room on the following evening—it had been a soft, showery day, and the air was cool and grateful—when she heard her mother's voice calling, in a strange, hurried tone: she hastened downstairs. Mrs. Kingston was in the hall, and held a letter in her hand.

"Your father has been taken ill—some of us must go to him at once. I have a few lines from him, written in pencil—and so unlike his writing! My poor Richard!"

Truly her daughter's heart turned cold. She read the letter: it was dated from the city at which he was to have taken the train, and where he had been stopped by illness. "You or Lina had better come to me," he wrote: "I may have the fever."

Her mother wept abundantly; Lina could not shed a tear. In a sort of maze she went about packing their things, and was surprised afterwards to find that she had forgotten nothing. Hardly

a word did she speak : she had no very clear comprehension of the depth of the misery which threatened her. Yet the sentence, " I may have the fever," was repeated over and over by her thoughts like some refrain, and in the darkness appeared as burnt in bright letters on the blank gloom.

All her eagerness was to get to where her father was lying ill. The night seemed hours longer than any other she had ever passed. Her dear father ! was he tossing restlessly on his hot pillows, with no loving hand to arrange them freshly, or moaning in fevered sleep, without a cool touch to bathe his temples ? Such pictures her imagination conjured up incessantly. At last from her burning eyes flowed tears, as her unbelief was rebuked, and the ever-watchful care of our Father for His children was presented to her mind as all-sufficient. The verse in Psalm ciii. which was the first she had taught to little Harry awoke in her own memory with soothing power : " Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame ; He remembereth that we are dust."

She slept quietly and deeply till her mother touched her. Mrs. Kingston was already dressed.

" I did not disturb you, dear, till the last moment," she said ; " for you will want all the strength you can get to-day. I have fastened the trunks, and they are gone downstairs."

Chapter XXXIV

THE SHADOW PASSES

THE physician in attendance had deemed it prudent to remove Mr. Kingston to private lodgings. It was indeed the famine fever, in an aggravated form, that preyed upon him. Night after night did his wife and daughter listen to the incoherent ravings of his delirium, till Lina doubted whether the once calm and clear mind could ever again be unclouded.

But ah! how close was she to God in these days of trial! How humbly she walked in the fear of Him Who held that precious life in His hand! What glimpses was she given within the veil separating the sanctuary of heaven from the outer court of prayer: what views of her Saviour pleading for His weak child! What nearness to Jesus made her soul strong and glad, even under the cloud of sorrow! Looking back upon that time, afterwards, Lina could not say that it had been wholly gloomy; in the calendar of her spiritual life, it was a period of revival.

The time of crisis came and passed. Mr. Kingston

was pronounced better; but his weakness was as a child's. Hardly could he raise that worn hand; and lines had gathered on his face, which had lost its swarthy hue, and was pale and meagre. For hours he would lie motionless, sometimes drawing his fingers feebly along the coverlet; too weak to speak or to listen, or even to look. Thus was it at first.

One day, about noon, a slight knock came to the muffled door, and a gentleman requested to see Miss Kingston. Lina went downstairs, much wondering who the visitor could be, if it were not William. Her heart bounded at the thought. But—it was Philip Orme.

“You will excuse my sending for you,” he said, with a little embarrassment; “but I greatly wanted to know whether I could render you any service. I shall be in town for a few days on business, and if I can do anything for you—”

He would have been flattered to know how secretly pleased she was to see any face that had ever been connected with Golden Hills. And the days of last summer returned vividly to her memory.

“Have you seen Alick lately?” she asked, when she had thanked him.

Yes, he had good reports of that dear brother; praised him cordially, stating how much his steady, self-denying conduct was admired by his superiors in the University, and how sure he was to get on well. Lina's heart was cheered by the words of

approbation, for she thought highly of Mr. Orme's judgment and truthfulness.

"Father will be so glad to hear all this, when he is well enough," she said; "and, I dare say, would like to see you, perhaps, in a day or two."

"I shall be very happy," Philip said, with a bow.

He remained a short time longer; promised to obtain her some books, as she had leisure for reading while sitting silently by the window in her father's room, now that the more active duties of sick-nursing were over. Which books Mr. Orme forthwith proceeded to purchase at a bookseller's, and left at their lodgings an hour afterwards, for Miss Kingston.

On the same side of the street with themselves was a row of private houses, and a little apart at the left, with a railing and narrow court before it, a small chapel stood. One evening, when her father was at the worst, and Lina and her mother in a sort of dull despair, they sat together in his room, where lethargic slumber oppressed him at intervals, and sounds of music floated in upon them. They were hymns from this neighbouring chapel, softened by the distance and the darkness: soothingly the notes fell on the weary listeners' ears. With their hearts they joined.

In trouble and in grief, O God,
Thy smile hath cheered my way;
And joy has budded from each thorn
That round my footsteps lay.

The hours of pain have yielded good,
Which prosperous days refused ;
As herbs, though scentless when entire,
Perfume the air when bruised.

" It is beautiful ! " Mrs. Kingston sighed, when the music ceased ; " but I cannot say the last two lines of the hymn, Lina : I cannot truthfully say—

' I'll welcome still the heaviest grief
That brings me near to Thee.'

No, it is impossible ; there is one grief I could not welcome."

" My own mother, you need not : if God gives it to you to bear, He will also give strength."

And so the hymns of that little band of worshippers, on a weekday evening, had gained one end they never thought of—the comforting of two tried hearts. Now that Mr. Kingston was better, Lina asked her mother whether she might go into the chapel for the Wednesday evening service. She longed again to worship the Lord in an assembly of His saints, and to hear cheering words from some Mr. Greatheart, as he guided a band of pilgrims to the Celestial City. The place was small and mean ; a paintbrush had not been in it for half a score of years ; the congregation were few in number, and of poor-looking people chiefly. But Lina's soul received benefit from the union in prayer and praise : near the entrance she sat in an obscure pew, withstanding the offices of the doorkeeper,

who would have shown the lady to a higher seat. When coming out, she saw Mr. Orme.

"I sometimes come here of a week evening," he said, after the greeting: "the man who speaks and prays is a real Christian, so far as my judgment goes: and I think one's spiritual sense readily ascertains that. But I shouldn't have expected to see you here."

She told him how it was. Next day Mr. Kingston was allowed to see him; and Philip sat a long time, talking of many things. Also he read aloud from one of the books he had himself provided, wrote one or two letters at Mr. Kingston's dictation, and otherwise made himself generally useful.

"He is excellent," was the short comment when he had gone. "And to see a young man, talented as he is, and born to wealth—to see him giving his youth and strength to the Lord Christ, it is a noble sight!"

The commendation pleased both listeners heartily. Day after day Mr. Orme spent with them, and none grew weary of the other.

At the end of February had been passed the Act for Temporary Relief of Destitute Persons in Ireland, rendered necessary by the inadequacy of the Labour Rate Act to meet many existing forms of want. It provided that Relief Committees should be formed in every electoral division under the

Poor Law Board, when the Viceroy deemed that the circumstances of the district warranted such appointment; these committees were to furnish lists of families requiring relief, and to make an estimate of the expense, which expense was to be met by an assessment on all tenants liable to poor-rate.

"That is, in fact, throwing the whole weight of the destitute on the landed proprietors and tenant farmers, who are already crushed to the earth with burdens of all sorts," Mr. Kingston remarked, when Philip had given him an abstract of the new Bill. "How are we to stand it? The poor-rate is already tremendous, often more than twenty shillings in the pound. Even with Government loans, we must sink."

"I am of my old opinion," said Mr. Orme: "all these storms are but the heralds of clear weather for Ireland. Emigration has vastly increased."

"Poor Ireland! she has only human exports; and, unless a trip across the salt water changes the character of these exports, makes the improvident thrifty and the idle industrious, they will only have left misery here to find it there."

"I'll give you a bargain of my estate now, Philip," he said afterwards, with a sad smile; "as fine farms as any in the country, lying waste; no tenants to cultivate them; rates cent. per cent. in some electoral divisions. Would it not be a good investment, think you?"

"I hope to invest money in Irish land," Philip

observed quietly; "for I have noticed that the lower a spring is pressed, the higher is its rebound: and shall the spirit of a nation be less elastic?"

That business of Mr. Orme's, whatever it might be, was of a singularly elastic nature; permitting his presence at all hours with his friends, and limiting his stay in the city to theirs. His father was a merchant, and this, his eldest son, might possibly have some interest of the firm's to attend to in the port. At first it was the case; subsequently he was of so much use to Mr. Kingston that he obtained leave of absence, in order further to continue his usefulness. And he certainly added to the pleasure of all three.

But the time came when they must separate to their various paths of life again. So much debility was left by Mr. Kingston's fever that his physicians ordered him to pass the next few months in England, at some sheltered watering-place—Bournemouth or Torquay.

Lina and William would keep house at Golden Hills: on the latter devolved all the responsibility of his father's business, with the aid of the old clerk, Mr. Short; who, indeed, being of a complacent disposition, fancied himself the virtual manager at all times: and no one undeceived him, for his faithfulness outweighed a little self-conceit. And Lina would carry on her school and her work-class. Had she not been idle for the last month?

She was glad in her heart to be at Golden Hills again ; drawing such full, deep inspirations of briny air that she wondered the city streets had not been straitened to her breathing, and the city air thick and stagnant. Anew she lived in the music of the glorious sea, and was surrounded by the dear faces of her native place. Rosie went with her parents to England, Frank to be with Alick for a time ; Lina and William were alone.

Laura gained her own way. One evening in April came the wedding-cards of the incongruous pair ; and a paragraph, under the " Fashionable Intelligence " of the leading metropolitan paper, gave a journalist's high-flown description of the nuptials, ending with the sumptuous *déjeuner* at Mr. Aubrey's mansion in — Square, and the further fact that the happy pair had gone on the Continent for the summer.

Thus had Laura bartered her domestic life for wealth ; and she had her reward. Many tears did her sister shed over the ill-assorted match ; but Laura's letters, when they came, were full of the delights of her foreign trip, of picture-galleries and Alpine scenes, of Italian cathedrals and Roman ruins ; likewise of society in Paris and Florence, where they finally settled for a time. The old gentleman whom she had married was incidentally mentioned as giving her everything imaginable.

" You should see my set of cameo ornaments ! "

And a wealthy style of expression crept into her language, which to Lina and William at home, amidst the poverty of the people, and themselves in straitened circumstances, seemed almost enviable; for more money would lift off such a load of care. The times were even darker as summer advanced than they had heretofore been.

The month of May 1847 brought the suspension of the public works by which two millions of the Irish people had been supported. A system of out-door relief was substituted; by which step national mendicancy was proclaimed to the world. William deemed it his duty to go often to the house where rations were dispensed, and aid in relieving the wretched applicants. Day after day the like famishing crowds gathered, with emaciated, greenish countenances and sepulchral voices, to get food barely sufficient for the support of life. As the weather grew warm, a pestilence strengthened among them. The workhouses were decimated. Two hundred deaths weekly was the bill of mortality in one gigantic poorhouse during a portion of the summer.

Approaching harvest revived hope; but again the green earth was visited by the curse. All who could do so fled from the doomed land. Deep bays on the western coast, which had never sheltered aught but fishing-smacks, beheld American ships riding at anchor, to carry off the farmers and

labourers who could pay for a passage across the seas. Numberless heads of families went, leaving their wives and children to struggle as they best could, till the father had earned enough in the foreign country to send for them also. For the first time, he must learn to be careful and saving: affection taught him the lesson. This "immeasurably loving people," as John Wesley styled the Irish, were forced to be provident, by what was to them the mightiest suffering—separation of family ties.

At first, the departure of so many of the able-bodied—husbands, brothers, fathers—augmented the public distress, by leaving helpless women and children wholly dependent upon charitable aid. But those who went away, poor fellows! toiled untiringly till they had gathered, gradually, around a new hearth in the strange land, all the dear ones of their old Irish homes. Also, the hope of this was an anchorage for the hearts left behind—an encouragement to struggle through. Even in 1846 the movement had begun. The amount of money sent by persons who had emigrated to their friends in Ireland during that year was estimated by a leading banker in Dublin at £125,000. Poor Pat was more hard-working and self-denying than people gave him credit for being.

With the autumn months the homestead had again its head: William and Lina gladly resigned their joint agency.

Chapter XXXV

DAWN OF BRIGHTER DAYS

FIVE years did the national convulsion last. God's "sore judgments" had been in the earth, "to cut off from it man and beast." The eight millions of Ireland had fallen in number by two and a half millions, who had died of the famine, or emigrated. How helpless was even the power of the mighty British Empire before a small dark speck on a plant of the field!

But in 1850 the horizon was clearing. There were hopes of fair weather. The lessened agricultural population had more elbow-room; and new systems of cropping the land were introduced among the peasantry, which in a measure displaced the uncertain potato. Overgrown estates, encumbered with heavy charges, were broken into a variety of smaller properties, freed from burden; passing from the effete hands of the old possessors into the vigorous hands of men from the middle class, who would spend their lives in connection with their estates, instead of dwelling in foreign countries afar from all duty and responsibility.

Lina had heard that Mr. Everest's estate, or a considerable portion of it, was in the courts; and all were interested to know who would be the purchaser of Golden Chase, the old family mansion, not far from Mr. Kingston's residence. It was a fine place, though neglected and deserted for many a year; though much of the old timber had been cut down to stop chinks in the Everest exchequer, and the park was eaten bare by continual grazing of fat beasts, for the same purpose; and the house was grievously out of repair, weather-beaten and desolate. Yet was a tale afloat, to the intent that when old Mr. Everest was dying, he asked to have himself removed to the window of his room; and he gazed at the lovely prospect till the tears rained from his eyes, and he mourned bitterly: "My beautiful Golden Chase! how shall I die, and leave all this?" His successor had preferred to spend his years in the *salons* of Bonn and Wiesbaden.

Mr. Kingston could have probably told who would be the purchaser of Golden Chase; but both he and William were silent as the Sphinx about office business. And so it came to pass that Frank, being the first to seize the newspaper when it arrived the day after the sale, cried aloud—

"Now just guess, Lina, who has bought Golden Chase!"

"One would think it was father," she answered,

"you look so excited. I am sure I have not an idea, Frankie."

"It is next best to father, then: only think—it is Philip Orme!"

"Nonsense!"

She was conscious of colouring deeply as Frank put the paper into her outstretched hand. Though generally mischievous enough, he was sufficiently merciful to take no notice of the very visible change in his sister's face. Quietly she handed back the journal, and resumed looking over her own letters, with the remark, "That will be very pleasant."

"Why, Lina! you will soon want a mail-bag all to yourself; such a voluminous correspondence! I say, that's out of all just proportion; eight letters per diem to one individual defrauds seven others of their due. Now here am I, panting after correspondents, and nobody writes to me!"

His sister said something about the work-school being the cause. But that evening her thoughts were not of a very business-like description; and Frank's style of conversation was rather confusing. Certainly it seemed strange that Mr. Orme should have passed by so many more advantageous investments, and bought Golden Chase. She was disposed, in her woman-mind, to give the fact a prominence and a significance which nothing about it warranted. But Lina was sensible, as well as imaginative: so, by and by, she gathered up these

stray ends of fancy, with their slender sustainment of fact, and laid all by in a corner of her mind, that present duty might not be impeded.

A few days subsequently, she was coming out of the work-school—for Lina's dream was fulfilled, and a neat plastered school-house had risen on the spot marked out by her father years before; English subscriptions had built it—all honour to the donors; she had left the little court before the door, when she heard wheels approaching rapidly. The gentleman on the car jumped off as he neared her. The next clear sensation she had was of walking beside Philip Orme towards Golden Hills, which seemed a great distance away.

He had come to see his new purchase, and to consult with Mr. Kingston on steps necessary for its restoration and improvement. He had left the firm, given up his share in the business under his father's will for a sum of money, and would establish himself at the Chase, in country life.

Oh, what a long way it was to Golden Hills! Would the lodge gates ever be reached? He spoke further concerning his ideas of the duty attached to landed property, and how he would endeavour to fulfil that duty faithfully. Then came a silence for some minutes. Lina broke it by saying something desperately about the weather. He took no heed, and in surprise she looked up at him.

"I did not answer, because I wanted to see your face," he said. "Lina, it was to please you that I bought Golden Chase. Will you take it from me? Will you be my wife?"

So did Philip gain the object which brought him to Golden Hills.

The whole house was glad.

"Ha!" said Frank, "it was not for nothing that you blushed like a peony the evening news came of who had bought the Chase!" And the tall, strong youth put his arms round the dear little Lina in a very tender congratulation.

"She's worth her weight in gold, Philip, every ounce of it. I don't know what we shall all do without her, when you take her away. We'll just have to remove to the Chase too, that's a fact: sure you know we can't possibly give her up! And, Philip, mind you build her a big school-house, or she won't be happy!" Thus talked Frank, with a series of notes of admiration.

And now Lina, in the great happiness of this human love, had to strive that it should not become dominant. She prayed to be kept from this sin, and that nothing, however precious, should come between her soul and its Saviour.

Philip spent most days at the Chase, carrying out various improvements. Laura and her husband arrived while he was thus absent on one occasion. They had been three years travelling on the Con-

continent, and were now come to settle at home for a little time, if indeed Laura's restlessness could fix anywhere. She was gorgeously dressed, and the pretty girl had bloomed into an elaborate and fashionable woman. Gentle Mrs. Kingston was rather overpowered by her daughter's grandeur, by the stiff silks that rustled perpetually about her, the arms laden with bracelets, and other signs of wealth. She was curious about Lina's engagement; and glad as both were to meet again, there was a hardness of tone and an undauntedness of eye about Laura which pained her sister, by its contrast with "old times."

"And where is your ring, dear? You don't wear it—oh, fie!"

"My ring!" Lina said, extending both unadorned hands. "I have no ring—I mean—he did not give me one," she added, colouring.

"Not give you one! Did any human being ever hear of an engagement without a ring? My dear Lina, either he is the stingiest creature on earth or strangely forgetful. When I was engaged, Mr. O'Brien gave me this hoop of emeralds and rubies," putting her finger on her guard-ring. "I shall certainly ask Mr. Orme what he means by not giving you a ring."

"Pray don't," said Lina; "I never thought of it, and I never wore a ring in my life: pray don't." But Laura shook her handsome head

wilfully, and when Mr. Orme came in, Lina took care to be absent from the interview.

"You have committed one great oversight, Mr. Philip," Laura said to him, after the first few sentences were exchanged: "I find from Lina that you have not given her an engagement ring."

"Indeed!"

"You know the promise is not valid without such confirmation," Laura added.

"I was not aware of that," he answered dryly.

"Now that you are better informed, I hope you will write to Waterhouse for one immediately." He bowed. "She has never had a ring, poor child! and is naturally desirous of the bauble."

The implication in these words did not escape his notice. Yet Laura seemed to value the "baubles" pretty highly herself, to judge by her frequent contemplation of her own on her slender fingers. When Lina again entered the room, Philip went towards her.

"Your sister tells me that it is usual to give an engagement ring; do you wish for one?"

"Oh no," she answered, with a bright smile.

"I don't think we would feel the bond any closer for such an outward sign—would we, dear?"

She gave him her hand for a moment, and he clasped it in his own.

Mr. O'Brien was just Laura's husband; that was his standing in domestic life, and in society.

The poor old gentleman exulted in his imperious, handsome wife, and obeyed her unhesitatingly in all things. Lina's affection was not long before seeing that even Laura's wealth and abundance of beautiful possessions had added nothing to her happiness. Seasons of oppressive *ennui* were not infrequent, when her submissive husband could do nothing acceptable for her, and would sit aside meekly, waiting till her humour grew better. He looked considerably more advanced in years than Mr. Kingston, though the hair of the latter had grown almost white since his illness.

The summer gathering at Golden Hills increased. Alick came from his curacy in the north. He had been two years ordained, and while in the country aided Mr. Brooke each Sabbath. What joy it was to hear him read and preach that Gospel concerning which he had been once a practical unbeliever! How was Lina's heart glad to see him ministering among the Lord's chosen servants! And she knew that Alick had not entered upon the sacred office merely as a profession, but because he was desirous to serve his Saviour, and to spread the knowledge of His truth.

"It seems to me," said Mr. Kingston, one evening when the whole family were walking in the light of the sunset, on the lawn facing the sea, "that we owe something to the dark years past, even though they brought us suffering. Looking into my own

heart, I can see the good worked by what appeared an evil time. Perhaps each of you could say likewise? "

Truly they could. Thus from evil doth the All-wise educe good.

And here must close this chronicle of Golden Hills. The influence which had been so powerful for good hitherto was not removed; but its sphere of action was enlarged by addition of the talent of wealth.

In spite of the attempts upon his life, and the drain upon his diminished resources, Mr. Kingston had continued his benevolence to the stricken people about him. He had had his revenge, but it was a revenge that met with the approval of his Lord and Master.

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