

CHAPTER XIV.
A TRIP TO PARIS.

The next day was Sunday; and after church I came over early to Knockcalltecore, and had a long talk with Norah about her school project. We decided that the sooner she began the better—she because, as she at first alleged, every month of delay made school a less suitable place for her—I because, as I took care not only to allege but to reiterate, as the period had to be put in, the sooner it was begun the sooner it would end, and so the sooner would my happiness come.

Norah was very sweet, and shyly told me that if such was my decided opinion, she must say that she too had something of the same view.

“I do not want you to be pained, dear, by any delay,” she said, “made by your having been so good to me; and I love you too well to want myself to wait longer than is necessary,”—an admission that was an intoxicating pleasure to me.

We agreed that our engagement was, if not to be kept a secret, at least not to be spoken of unnecessarily. Her father was to tell her immediate relatives, so that there[Pg 255] would not be any gossip at her absence, and I was to tell one or two of my own connexions—for I had no immediate relatives—and perhaps one or two friends who were rather more closely connected with me than those of my own blood. I asked to be allowed to tell also my solicitor, who was an old friend of my father’s, and who had always had more than merely professional relations with me. I had reasons of my own for telling him of the purposed change in my life, for I had important matters to execute through him, so as to protect Norah’s future in case my own death should occur before the marriage was to take place. But of this, of course, I did not tell her.

We had a happy morning together, and when Joyce came in we told him of the conclusion we had arrived at. He fully acquiesced; and then, when he and I were alone, I asked him if he would prefer to make the arrangements about the schools himself or by some solicitor he would name, or that should all be done by my solicitor? He told me that my London solicitor would probably know what to do better than anyone in his own part of the world; and we agreed that I was to arrange it with him.

Accordingly I settled with Norah that the next day but one I should leave for London, and that when I had put everything on a satisfactory footing I should return to Carnaclif, and so be for a little longer able to see my darling. Then I went back to the hotel to write my letters in time for post.

[Pg 256]

That afternoon I wrote to my solicitor, Mr. Chapman, and asked him to have inquiries made, without the least delay, as to what was the best school in Paris to which to send a young lady, almost grown up, but whose education had been neglected. I added that I should be myself in London within two days of my letter, and would hope to have the information.

That evening I had a long talk on affairs with Dick, and opened to him a project I had formed regarding Knockcalltecore. This was that I should try to buy the whole of the mountain, right away from where the sandy peninsula united it to the mainland—for evidently it had ages ago been an isolated sea-girt rock-bound island. Dick knew that already we held a large part of it—Norah the Cliff Fields, Joyce the upper land on the sea side, and myself the part that I had already bought from Murdock. He quite fell in with the idea, and as we talked it over he grew more and more enthusiastic.

“Why, my dear fellow,” he said, as he stood up and walked about the room, “it will make the most lovely residence in the world, and will be a fine investment for you. Holding long leases, you will easily be able to buy the freehold, and then every penny spent will return many fold. Let us once be able to find the springs that feed the bog, and get them in hand, and we can make the place a paradise. The springs are evidently high up on the hill, so that we can not only get water for irrigating and ornamental purposes, but we[Pg 257] can get power also! Why, you can have electric light, and everything else you like, at the smallest cost. And if it be, as I suspect, that there is a streak of limestone in the hill, the place might be a positive mine of wealth as well! We have not lime within fifty miles, and if once we can quarry the stone here we can do anything. We can build a harbour on the south side, which would be the loveliest place to keep a yacht in that ever was known—quite big enough for anything in these parts—as safe as Portsmouth, and of fathomless depth.

“Easy, old man!” I cried, for the idea made me excited too.

“But I assure you Art, I am within the truth!”

“I know it, Dick—and now I want to come to business!”

“Eh! how do you mean?” he said, looking puzzled.

Then I told him of the school project, and that I was going to London after another day to arrange it. He was delighted, and quite approved.

“It is the wisest thing I ever heard of!” was his comment. “But how do you mean about business?” he asked.

“Dick, this has all to be done; and it needs some one to do it. I am not a scientist nor an engineer, and this project wants the aid of both, or of one man who is the two. Will you do it for me—and for Norah?”

He seemed staggered for a moment, but said heartily:

“That I will—but it will take some time!”

“We can do it within two years,” I answered, “and[Pg 258] that is the time that Norah will be away. It will help to pass it!” and I sighed.

“A long time, indeed, but oh, what a time, Art! Just fancy what you are waiting for; there need be no unhappy moment, please God, in all those months.”

Then I made him a proposition, to which he, saying that my offer was too good, at first demurred. I reasoned with him, and told him that the amount was little to me, as, thanks to my Great Aunt, I had more than I ever could use; and that I wanted to make Norah’s country home a paradise on earth—so far as love and work and the means at command could do it; that it would take up all Dick’s time, and keep him for the whole period from pursuing his studies; and that he would have to be manager as well as engineer, and would have to buy the land for me. I told him also my secret hope that in time he would take all my affairs in hand and manage everything for me.

“Buying the land will, I fancy, be easy enough,” he said. “Two of the farms are in the market now, and all round here land is literally going abegging. However, I shall take the matter in hand at once, and write you to London, in case there should be anything before you get back.” And thus we settled that night that I was, if possible, to buy the whole mountain. I wrote by the next post to Mr. Caicy, telling him that I had a project of purchase in hand, and that Mr. Sutherland would do everything for me during my absence, and that whatever he wished was to be done. I asked him[Pg 259] to come over and see Dick before the week was out.

The next day I spoke to Joyce, and asked him if he would care to sell me the lease of the land he now held. He seemed rejoiced at the chance of being able to get away.

“I will go gladly, though, sure enough, I’ll be sad for a while to lave the shpot where I was born, and where I’ve lived all me life. But whin Norah is gone—an’ sure she’ll never be back, for I’m thinkin’ that after her school ye’ll want to get married at once—”

“That we shall!” I interrupted.

“An’ right enough too! But widout her the place will be that lonesome that I don’t think I could abear it! Me sister ’ll go over to Knocknacar to live wid me married sister there,

that'll be only too happy to have her with her; and I'll go over to Glasgow where Eugene is at work. The boy wants me to come, and when I wrote and told him of Norah's engagement, he wrote at once asking me to leave the Hill and come to him. He says that before the year is out he hopes to be able to keep himself—an' me, too, if we should want it—an' he wrote such a nice letter to Norah—but the girl will like to tell ye about that herself! I can't sell ye the Cliff Fields meself, for they belong to Norah; but if ye like to ask her I'm sure she'll make no objection."

"I should be glad to have them," I said, "but all shall be hers in two years!"

And then and there we arranged for the sale of the [Pg 260] property. I made Joyce the offer; he accepted at once, but said it was more than it was worth.

"No," said I, "I shall take the chance! I intend to make improvements."

Norah did not make any objection to her father selling the Cliff Fields. She told me that as I wanted to have them, I might, of course; but she hoped I would never sell the spot, as it was very dear to her. I assured her that in this as in all other matters I would do as she wished, and we sealed the assurance with——. Never mind! we sealed it!

I spent the afternoon there, for it was to be my last afternoon with Norah until I came back from Paris. We went down for a while to the Cliff Fields and sat on the table rock and talked over all our plans. I told her I had a scheme regarding Knockalltecore, but that I did not wish to tell her about it as it was to be a surprise. It needed a pretty hard struggle to be able to keep her in the dark even to this extent—there is nothing more sweet to young lovers than to share a secret. She knew that my wishes were all for her, and was content.

When we got back to the cottage I said good-bye. This naturally took some time—a first good-bye always does!—and went home to get my traps packed ready for an early start in the morning—more especially as I wished, when in Galway, to give Mr. Caicy instructions as to transferring the two properties—Norah's and her father's.

[Pg 261]

When Dick came home, he and I had a long talk on affairs; and I saw that he thoroughly understood all about the purchase of the whole mountain. Then we said good-night, and I retired.

I did not sleep very well. I think I was too happy, and out of the completeness of my happiness there seemed to grow a fear—some dim haunting dread of a change—something which would reverse the existing order of things. And so in dreams the Drowsy God played at ball with me; now throwing me to a dizzy height of joy, and then,

as I fell swiftly through darkness, arresting my flight into the nether gloom with some new sweet hope. It seemed to me that I was awake all the night—and yet I knew I must have slept for I had distinct recollections of dreams in which all the persons and circumstances lately present to my mind were strangely jumbled together. The jumble was kaleidoscopic; there was an endless succession of its phases, but the pieces all remained the same. There were moments when all seemed aglow with rosy light, and hard on them, others horrid with the gloom of despair or fear; but in all, the dominating idea was the mountain standing against the sunset, always as the embodiment of the ruling emotion of the scene—and always Norah's beautiful eyes shone upon me. I seemed to live over again in isolated moments all the past weeks; but in such a way that the legends and myths and stories of Knockcalltecore which I had heard were embodied in each moment. Thus, Murdock had always a part in the [Pg 262] gloomy scenes, and got inextricably mixed up with the King of the Snakes. They freely exchanged personalities, and at one time I could see the Gombeen Man defying St. Patrick, whilst at another the Serpent seemed to be struggling with Joyce, and, after twisting round the mountain, being only beaten off by a mighty blow from Norah's father, rushing to the sea through the Shleenanaher.

Towards morning, as I suppose the needs of the waking day became more present to my mind in the gradual process of awakening, the bent of my thoughts began to be more practical; the Saint and His Majesty of the Serpents began to disappear, and the two dim cuirassiers who, with the money chest, had through the earlier hours of the night been passing far athwart my dreams—appearing and disappearing equally mysteriously—took a more prominent, or, perhaps, a more real part. Then I seemed to see Murdock working in a grave, whose sides were ever crumbling in as he frantically sought the treasure chest, whilst the gun-carriage, rank with the slime of the bog, was high above him on the brink of the grave, projected blackly against the yellow moon. Every time this scene in its myriad variations came round, it changed to one where the sides of the grave began to tumble in, and Murdock in terror tried to scream out, but could make no sound, nor could he make any effort to approach Norah, whose strong hands were stretched out to aid him.

With such a preparation for waking is it any wonder [Pg 263] that I suddenly started broad awake with a strong sense of something forgotten, and found that it was four o'clock, and time to get ready for my journey. I did not lose any time, and after a hot cup of tea, which the cheery Mrs. Keating had herself prepared for me, was on my way under Andy's care to Recess, where we were to meet the "long car" to Galway.

Andy was, for a wonder, silent, and as I myself felt in a most active frame of mind, this rather gave me an opportunity for some amusement. I waited for a while to see if he

would suggest any topic in his usual style; but as there was no sign of a change, I began:—

“You are very silent to-day, Andy. You are sad! What is it?”

“I’m thinkin’!”

“So I thought, Andy. But who are you thinking of?”

“Faix, I’m thinkin’ iv poor Miss Norah there wid ne’er a bhoy on the flure at all, at all; an’ iv the fairy girrul at Knocknacar—the poor craythur waitin’ for some kind iv a leprachaun to come back to her. They do say, yer ’an’r, that the fairies is mighty fond iv thim leprachauns intirely. Musha! but it’s a quare thing that weemen of all natures thinks a power more iv minkind what is hard to be caught nor iv thim that folls thim an’ is had aisy!”

“Indeed! Andy.” I felt he was getting on dangerous ground, and thought it would be as well to keep him to generalities if I could.

[Pg 264]

“Shure they do tell me so; that the girruls, whether fairies or weemen, is more fond iv lukin’ out fur leprachauns, or min if that’s their kind, than the clargy is iv killin’ the divil—an’ they’ve bin at him fur thousands iv years, an’ him not turned a hair.”

“Well! Andy, isn’t it only natural, too? If we look at the girls and make love to them, why shouldn’t they have a turn too, poor things, and make love to us? Now you would like to have a wife, I know; only that you’re too much afraid of any woman.”

“Thru for ye! But shure an’ how could I go dhrivin’ about the counthry av I had a wife iv me own in wan place? It’s meself that’s welkim everywhere, jist because any wan iv the weemen might fear I’d turn the laugh on her whin I got her home; but a car-dhriver can no more shpake soft to only wan girrul nor he can dhrive his car in his own shanty.”

“Well! but Andy, what would you do if you were to get married?”

“Faix, surr, an’ the woman must settle that whin she comes. But, begor! it’s not for a poor man like me—nor for the likes iv me—that the fairies does be keepin’ their eyes out. I tell yer ’an’r that poor min isn’t iv much account anyhow! Shure poverty is the worst iv crimes; an’ there’s no hidin’ it like th’ others. Patches is saw a mighty far way off; and shure enough they’re more frightfuller nor even the polis!”

“By George! Andy,” said I, “I’m afraid you’re a cynic.”

[Pg 265]

“A cynic, sir; an’, faix, what sin am I up to now?”

“You say poverty is a crime.”

“Begor! but it’s worse! Most crimes is forgave afther a bit; an’ the law is done wid ye whin ye’re atin’ yer skilly. But there’s some people—aye! an’ lashins iv thim too—what’d rather see ye in a good shute iv coffin than in a bad shute iv clothes!”

“Why, Andy, you’re quite a philosopher!”

“Bedad, that’s square; but whisper me now, surr, what kind iv a thing’s that?”

“Well! it’s a very wise man—one who loves wisdom.”

“Begor! yer ’an’r, lovin’ girruls is more in my shtyle; but I thought maybe it was some new kind iv a Protestan’.”

“Why a Protestant?”

“Sorra wan iv me knows! I thought maybe they can believe even less nor the ould wans.”

Andy’s method of theological argument was quite too difficult for me, so I was silent; but my companion was not. He, however, evidently felt that theological disquisition was no more his *forte* than my own, for he instantly changed to another topic:—

“I’ll be goin’ back to Knockcalltecore to-morra, yer ’an’r. I’ve been tould to call fur Mr. Caicy, th’ attorney—savin’ yer prisence—to take him back to Carnaclif. Is there any missage ye’d like to send to any wan?” He looked at me so slyly that his meaning was quite obvious.

[Pg 266]

“Thanks, Andy, but I think not; unless you tell Mr. Dick that we have had a pleasant journey this morning.”

“Nothin’ but that?—to nobody?”

“Who to, for instance, Andy?”

“There’s Miss Norah, now! Shure girruls is always fond iv gettin’ missages, an’ most iv all from people what they’re not fond iv!”

“Meaning me?”

“Oh, yis! oh, yis! if there’s wan more nor another what she hates the sight iv, it’s yer ’an’r! Shure didn’t I notice it in her eye ere yisterday night, beyant at the boreen gate? Faix! but it’s a nice eye Miss Norah has! Now, yer ’an’r, wouldn’t an eye like that be bettther for a young gintleman to luk into, than the quare eye iv yer fairy girrul—the wan that ye wor lukin’ for, an’ didn’t find!”

The sly way in which Andy looked at me as he said this was quite indescribable. I have seen sly humour in the looks of children where the transparent simplicity of their purpose was a foil to their manifest intention to pretend to deceive. I have seen the arch glances of pretty young women when their eyes contradicted with resistless force the apparent meaning of their words; but I have never seen any slyness which could rival that of Andy. However, when he had spoken as above, he seemed to have spent the last bolt in his armoury; and for the remainder of the drive to Recess he did not touch again on the topic, or on a kindred one.

[Pg 267]

When I was in the hotel porch waiting the arrival of the long car, Andy came up to me:—

“What day will I be in Galway for yer ’an’r?”

“How do you mean, Andy? I didn’t tell you I was coming back.”

Andy laughed a merry, ringing laugh:—

“Begor! yer ’an’r, d’ye think there’s only wan way iv tellin’ things? Musha! but spache ’d be a mighty precious kind iv a thing if that was the way!”

“But, Andy, is not speech the way to make known what you wish other people to know?”

“Ah, go to God! I’d like to know if ye take it for granted whin ye ask a girrul a question an’ she says ‘no,’ that she manes it—or that she intends ayther that ye should think she manes it. Faix! it ’d be a harrrd wurrlid to live in, if that was so; an’ there ’d be mighty few widdys in it ayther!”

“Why widows, Andy?”

“Shure, isn’t wives the shtuff that widdys is made iv!”

“Oh! I see. I’m learning, Andy—I’m getting on!”

“Yis! yer ’an’r. Ye haven’t got on the long cap now; but I’m afeerd it’s only a leather medal ye’d get as yit. Niver mind! surr. Here’s the long car comin’; an’ whin ye

tellygraph to Misther Dick to sind me over to Galway fur to bring ye back, I'll luk up Miss Norah an' ax her to condescind to give ye some lessons in the differ betwixt 'yes' an' 'no' as shpoke by girruls. I'm tould now, it's a mighty intherestin' kind iv a shtudy for a young gintleman!"

[Pg 268]

There was no answering this Parthian shaft.

"Good-bye! Andy," I said, as I left a sovereign in his hand.

"Good luck! yer 'an'r; though what's the use iv wishin' luck to a man, whin the fairies is wid him!"

The last thing I saw was Andy waving his ragged hat as we passed the curve of the road round the lake before Recess was hidden from our view.

When I got to Galway I found Mr. Caicy waiting for me. He was most hearty in his welcome; and told me that as there was nearly an hour to wait before the starting of the Dublin express, he had luncheon on the table, and that we could discuss our business over it. We accordingly adjourned to his house, and after explaining to him what I wanted done with regard to the purchase of the property at Knockcalltecore, I told him that Dick knew all the details, and would talk them over with him when he saw him on the next evening.

I began my eastward journey with my inner man in a most comfortable condition. Indeed, I concluded that there was no preparation for a journey like a bottle of 'Sneyd's 47' between two. I got to Dublin in time for the night mail, and on the following morning walked into Mr. Chapman's office at half-past ten o'clock.

He had all the necessary information for me; indeed, his zeal and his kindness were such that then and there I opened my heart to him, and was right glad that I had done so when I felt the hearty grasp [Pg 269] of his hand as he wished me joy and all good fortune. He was, of course, on the side of prudence. He was my own lawyer and my father's friend; and it was right and fitting that he should be. But it was quite evident that in the background of his musty life there was some old romance—musty old attorneys always have romances—so at least say the books. He entered heartily into my plan; and suggested that, if I chose, he would come with me to see the school and the schoolmistress in Paris.

"It will be better, I am sure," he said, "to have an old man like myself with you, and who can in our negotiations speak for her father. Indeed, my dear boy, from being so old a friend of your father's, and having no children of my own, I have almost come to look

on you as my son, so it will not be much of an effort to regard Miss Norah as my daughter. The schoolmistress will, in the long run, be better satisfied with my standing *in loco parentis* than with yours." It was a great relief to me to find my way thus smoothed, for I had half expected some objection or remonstrance on his part. His kind offer was, of course, accepted; and the next morning found us in Paris.

We went to see the school and the schoolmistress. All was arranged as we wished. Mr. Chapman did not forget that Norah wished to have all the extra branches of study, or that I wished to add all that could give a charm to her life. The schoolmistress [Pg 270] opened her eyes at the total of Norah's requirements, which Mr. Chapman summed up as "all extras"—the same including the use of a saddle-horse, and visits to the opera and such performances as should be approved of, under the special care and with the special accompaniment of Madame herself.

I could see that for the coming year Norah's lines would lie in pleasant places in so far as Madame Lepecheaux could accomplish it. The date of her coming was to be fixed by letter, and as soon as possible.

Mr. Chapman had suggested that it might be well to arrange with Madame Lepecheaux that Norah should be able to get what clothes she might require, and such matters as are wanted by young ladies of the position which she was entering. The genial French woman quite entered into the idea, but insisted that the representative of Norah's father should come with her to the various *magasins* and himself make arrangements. He could not refuse; and as I was not forbidden by the unsuspecting lady, I came too.

These matters took up some time, and it was not until the fifth day after I had left Connemara that we were able to start on our return journey. We left at night, and after our arrival in the early morning went, as soon as we had breakfasted, to Mr. Chapman's office to get our letters.

I found two. The first I took to the window to read, where I was hidden behind a curtain, and where I might kiss it without being seen; for, although the [Pg 271] writing was strange to me—for I had never seen her handwriting—I knew that it was from Norah.

Do any of us who arrive at middle life ever attempt to remember our feelings on receiving the first letter from the woman or the man of our love? Can there come across the long expanse of commonplace life, strewn as it is with lost beliefs and shattered hopes, any echo—any after-glow—of that time, any dim recollection of the thrill of pride and joy that flashed through us at such a moment? Can we rouse

ourselves from the creeping lethargy of the contented acceptance of things, and feel the generous life-blood flowing through us once again?

I held Norah's letter in my hand, and it seemed as though with but one more step, I should hold my darling herself in my arms. I opened her letter most carefully; anything that her hands had touched was sacred to me. And then her message—the message of her heart to mine—sent direct and without intermediary, reached me:—

“My dear Arthur,—

“I hope you had a good journey, and that you enjoyed your trip to Paris. Father and I are both well; and we have had excellent news of Eugene, who has been promoted to more important work. We have seen Mr. Sutherland every day. He says that everything is going just as you wish it. Mr. Murdock has taken old Bat Moynahan to live with him[Pg 272] since you went; they are always together, and Moynahan seems to be always drunk. Father thinks that Mr. Murdock has some purpose on foot, and that it cannot be a good one. We shall all be glad to see you soon again. I am afraid this letter must seem very odd to you; but you know I am not accustomed to writing letters. You must believe one thing—that whatever I say to you, I feel and believe with all my heart. I got your letters, and I cannot tell you what pleasure they gave me, or how I treasure them. Father sends his love and duty. What could I send that words could carry? I may not try yet. Perhaps I shall be more able to do what I wish, when I know more.

“Norah.”

The letter disappointed me! Was any young man ever yet satisfied with written words, when his medium had hitherto been rosy lips, with the added commentary of loving eyes? And yet when I look back on that letter from a peasant girl, without high education or knowledge of the world, and who had possibly never written a letter before except to her father or brother, or a girl friend, and but few even of these—when I read in every word its simplicity and truth, and recognise the *arrière pensée* of that simple phrase, “whatever I say to you I feel and think with all my heart,” I find it hard to think that any other letter that she or anyone else could have written, could have been more suitable, or could have meant more.

[Pg 273]

When I had read Norah's letter over a few times, and feared that Mr. Chapman would take humorous notice of my absorption, I turned to the other letter, which I knew was from Dick. I brought this from the window to the table, beside which I sat to read it, Mr. Chapman being still deep in his own neglected correspondence.

I need not give his letter in detail. It was long and exhaustive, and told me accurately of every step taken and everything accomplished since I had seen him. Mr. Caicy had made his appearance, as arranged, and the two had talked over and settled affairs. Mr. Caicy had lost no time, and fortune had so favoured him that he found that nearly all the tenants on the east side of the hill wished to emigrate, and so were anxious to realize on their holdings. The estate from which they held was in bankruptcy; and as a sale was then being effected, Mr. Caicy had purchased the estate, and then made arrangements for all who wished to purchase to do so on easy terms from me. The nett result was, that when certain formalities should be complied with, and certain moneys paid, I should own the whole of Knockcalltecore and the land immediately adjoining it, together with certain other parcels of land in the neighbourhood. There were other matters of interest also in his letter. He told me that Murdock, in order to spite and injure Joyce, had completed the damming up of the stream which ran from his land into the Cliff Fields by blocking with great stones the narrow chine in the[Pg 274] rocks through which it fell; that this, coupled with the continuous rains had made the bog rise enormously, and that he feared much there would be some disaster. His fear was increased by what had taken place at Knocknacar. Even here the cuttings had shown some direful effects of the rain; the openings, made with so much trouble, had become choked, and as a consequence the bog had risen again, and had even spread downwards on its original course. Alarmed by these things, Dick had again warned Murdock of the danger in which he stood from the position of his house; and further, from tampering with the solid bounds of the bog itself. Murdock had not taken his warnings in good part—not any better than usual—and the interview had, as usual, ended in a row. Murdock had made the quarrel the occasion of ventilating his grievance against me for buying the whole mountain, for by this time it had leaked out that I was the purchaser. His language, Dick said, was awful. He cursed me and all belonging to me. He cursed Joyce and Norah, and Dick himself, and swore to be revenged on us all, and told Dick that he would balk me of finding the treasure—even if I were to buy up all Ireland, and if he had to peril his soul to forestall me. Dick ended his description of his proceedings characteristically:—“In fact, he grew so violent, and said such insulting things of you and others, that I had to give him a good sound thrashing.”

“Others”—that meant Norah, of course—good[Pg 275] old Dick! It was just as well for Mr. Murdock’s physical comfort, and for the peace of the neighbourhood, that I did not meet him then and there; for, under these favouring conditions, there would have been a continuance of his experiences under the hands of Dick Sutherland.

Then Dick went on to tell me at greater length what Norah had conveyed in her letter—that, since I had left, Murdock had taken Bat Moynahan to live with him, and kept him continually drunk; that the two of them were evidently trying to locate the whereabouts of the treasure; and that, whenever they thought they were not watched, they trespassed on Joyce's land, to get near a certain part of the bog.

"I mean to watch them the first dark night," wrote Dick, at the close of his letter; "for I cannot help thinking that there is some devilment on foot. I don't suppose you care much for the treasure—you've got a bigger treasure from Knockalltecore than ever was hidden in it by men—but, all the same, it is yours after Murdock's time is up; and, as the guardian of your interest, I feel that I have a right to do whatever may be necessary to protect you. I have seen, at times, Murdock give such a look at Moynahan out of the corners of his eyes—when he thought no one was looking—that, upon my soul, I am afraid he means—if he gets the chance—to murder the old man, after he has pumped him of all he knows. I don't want to accuse a man of such an intention, without being able to prove it, and of course [Pg 276] have said nothing to a soul; but I shall be really more comfortable in my mind when the man has gone away."

By the time I had finished the letter, Mr. Chapman had run through his correspondence—vacation business was not much in his way—and we discussed affairs.

The settlement of matters connected with my estate, and the purchase of Knockalltecore, together with the making of certain purchases—including a ring for Norah—kept me a few days in London; but at length all was complete, and I started on my trip to the West of Ireland. Before leaving, I wrote to Norah that I would be at Knockalltecore on the morning of the 20th October; and also to Dick, asking him to see that Andy was sent to meet me at Galway on the morning of the 19th—for I preferred rather to have the drive in solitude, than to be subjected to the interruptions of chance fellow-passengers.

At Dublin Mr. Caicy met me, as agreed; and together we went to various courts, chambers, offices, and banks—completing the purchase with all the endless official formalities and eccentricities habitual to a country whose administration has traditionally adopted and adapted every possible development of all belonging to red-tape.

At last, however, all was completed; and very early the next morning Mr. Caicy took his seat in the Galway express, in a carriage with the owner of Knockalltecore, to whom he had been formally appointed Irish law agent.

[Pg 277]

The journey was not a long one, and it was only twelve o'clock when we steamed into Galway. As we drew up at the platform, I saw Dick, who had come over to meet me. He was, I thought, looking a little pale and anxious; but as he did not say anything containing the slightest hint of any cause for such a thing, I concluded that he wished to wait until we were alone. This, however, was not to be for a little while; for Mr. Caicy had telegraphed to order lunch at his house, and thither we had to repair. We walked over; although Andy, who was in waiting outside the station, grinning from ear to ear, offered to "rowl our 'an'rs over in half a jiffey."

Lunch over, and our bodies the richer for some of Mr. Caicy's excellent port, we prepared to start. Dick took occasion to whisper to me:—

"Some time on the road propose to walk for a bit, and send on the car. I want a talk with you alone, without making a mystery!"

"All right, Dick. Is it a serious matter?"

"Very serious!"

[Pg 278]

CHAPTER XV. A MIDNIGHT TREASURE HUNT.

When, some miles on our road, we came to a long stretch of moorland, I told Andy to stop till we got off. This being done, I told him to go on and wait for us at the next house, as we wished to have a walk.

"The nixt house?" queried Andy, "the very nixt house? Must it be that same?"

"No, Andy!" I answered, "the next after that will do equally well, or the third if it is not too far off. Why do you want to change?"

"Well, yer 'an'r, to tell ye the thruth there's a girrul at the house beyant what thinks it's a long time on the road I am widout doin' anythin' about settlin' down, an' that its time I asked her fortin, anyhow. Musha! but it's afeerd I am to shtop there, fur maybe she'd take advantage iv me whin she got me all alone, an' me havin' to wait there till yez come. An' me so softhearted, that maybe I'd say too much or too little."

"Why too much or too little?"

“Faix! if I said too much I might be settled down before the month was out; an’ if I said too little I [Pg 279] might have a gurrul lukin’ black at me iv’ry time I dhruv by. The house beyant it is a public, an’ shure I know I’m safe there anyhow—if me dhrouth’ll only hould out!”

I took the hint, and Andy spun my shilling in the air as he drove off. Dick and I walked together, and when he was out of earshot I said:—

“Now, old fellow, we are alone! What is it?”

“It’s about Murdock.”

“Not more than you told me in your letter, I hope. I owe you a good turn for that thrashing you gave him!”

“Oh, that was nothing; it was a labour of love! What I want to speak of is a much more serious affair.”

“Nothing to touch Norah, I hope?” I said anxiously.

“This individual thing is not, thank God! but everything which that ruffian can do to worry her or any of us will be done. We’ll have to watch him closely.”

“What is this new thing?”

“It is about old Moynahan. I am in serious doubt and anxiety as to what I should do. At present I have only suspicion to go on, and not the faintest shadow of proof, and I really want help and advice.”

“Tell me all about it.”

“I shall! exactly as I remember it; and when I have told you, you may be able to draw some conclusion which can help us.”

“Go on! but remember I am, as yet, in ignorance of what it is all about. You must not take any knowledge on my part for granted.”

[Pg 280]

“I’ll bear it in mind. Well! you remember what I said in my letter, that I had a suspicion of Murdock, and intended watching him?” I nodded. “Two nights after I had written that, the evening was dark and wet—just the weather I would have chosen myself had I had any mysterious purpose on hand. As soon as it got dark I put on my black waterproof and fishing boots and a sou’wester, and then felt armed for any crouching or lying down that might be required. I waited outside Murdock’s house in the laneway,

where I could see from the shadows on the window that both men were in the house. I told you that old Bat Moynahan had taken up his residence entirely with the Gombeen Man——”

“And that he was always drunk!”

“Exactly! I see you understand the situation. Presently I heard a stumble on the stone outside the porch, and peeping in through the hedge I saw Murdock holding up old Moynahan. Then he shut the door and they came down the path. The wind was by this time blowing pretty strongly, and made a loud noise in the hedgerows, and bore in the roar of the surf. Neither of the men could hear me, for I took care as I followed them to keep on the leeward side, and always with something between us. Murdock did not seem to have the slightest suspicion that any one was even on the hill side, let alone listening, and he did not even lower his tone as he spoke. Moynahan was too drunk to either know or care how loud he spoke, and indeed both had to [Pg 281] speak pretty loud in order to be heard through the sound of the growing storm. The rain fell in torrents, and the men passed down the boreen stumbling and slipping. I followed on the other side of the hedge, and I can tell you I felt grateful to the original Mackintosh, or Golosh, or whatever was the name of the Johnny who invented waterproof. When they had reached the foot of the hill, they went on the road which curves round by the south-east, and I managed to scramble through the fir wood without losing sight of them. When they came to the bridge over the stream, where it runs out on the north side of the Peninsula, they turned up on the far bank. I slipped over the bridge behind them, and got on the far side of the fringe of alders. Here they stopped and sheltered for a while, and as I was but a few feet from them I heard every word which passed. Murdock began by saying to Moynahan:—

“Now, keep yer wits about ye, if ye can. Ye’ll get lashins iv dhrink whin we get back, but remimber ye promised to go over the ground where yer father showed ye that the Frinchmin wint wid the gun carriage an’ the horses. Where was it now that he tuk ye?’ Moynahan evidently made an effort to think and speak:—

“It was just about this shpot wheer he seen thim first. They crast over the sthrame—there wor no bridge thin nigher nor Galway—an’ wint up the side iv the hill sthstraight up.’

[Pg 282]

“Now, couldn’t ye folla the way yer father showed ye? Jist think. It’s all dark, and there’s nothin’ that ye know to confuse ye—no threes what has growed up since thin.

Thry an' remimber, an' ye'll have lashins iv dhrink this night, an' half the goold whin we find it."

"I can go! I can show the shpot! Come on.' He made a sudden bolt down into the river, which was running unusually high. The current almost swept him away; but Murdock was beside him in a moment, crying out:—

"Go an! the wather isn't deep! don't be afeerd! I'm wid ye.' When I heard this I ran round and across the bridge, and was waiting behind the hedge on the road when they came up again. The two men went up the hill straight for perhaps a hundred yards, I still close to them; then Moynahan stopped:—

"Here's about the shpot me father tould me that he seen the min whin the moon shone out. Thin they went aff beyant,' and he pointed to the south. The struggle through the stream had evidently sobered him somewhat, for he spoke much more clearly.

"Come on thin,' cried Murdock, and they moved off.

"Here's wheer they wint to, thin,' said Moynahan, as he stopped on the south side of the hill—as I knew it to be from the louder sound of the surf which was borne in by the western gale. 'Here they wor, jist about here, an' me father wint away to hide from thim beside the big shtone at the Shleenanaher so that they[Pg 283] wouldn't see him.' Then he paused, and went on in quite a different voice:—

"There, now I've tould ye enough for wan night. Come home! for it's chilled to the harrt I am, an' shtarved wid the cowld. Come home! I'll tell no more this night.' The next sound I heard was the popping of a cork, and then the voice of Murdock in a cheery tone:—

"Here, take a sup of this, ould man. It's chilled we both are, an' cramped wid cowld. Take a good dhraw, ye must want it if ye're as bad as I am!' The gurgle that followed showed that he had obeyed orders; this was confirmed within an incredibly short time by his voice as he spoke again.

"Me father hid there beyant. Come on!' We all, each in his own way, moved down to the Shleenanaher, and stood there. Moynahan spoke first.

"From here, he seen them jist over the ridge iv the hill. I can go there now; come on!' He hurried up the slope, Murdock holding on to him. I followed, now crouching low, for there was but little shelter here. Moynahan stopped and said:—

"It was just here!'

“How do ye know?’ asked Murdock doubtfully.

“How do I know! Hasn’t me father been over the shpot wid me a score iv times; aye, an’ a hundhred times afore that be himself. It was here, I tell ye, that he seen the min wid the gun carriage for the last time. Do ye want to arguey it?’

[Pg 284]

“Not me!’ said Murdock, and as he spoke I saw him stoop—for as I was at the time lying on the ground I could see his outline against the dark sky. He was looking away from me, and as I looked too I could see him start as he whispered to himself:—

“Be God! but it’s thrue! there’s the gun carriage!’ There it was! Art, true enough before my eyes, not ten feet away on the edge of the bog! Moynahan went on:—

“Me father tould me that the mountain was different at that time; the bog only kem down about as low as this. Musha! but its the quare lot it has shifted since thin!’ There was a pause, broken by Murdock, who spoke in a hoarse, hard voice:—

“An’ where did he see them nixt?’ Moynahan seemed to be getting drunker and drunker, as was manifest in his later speech; his dose of whiskey had no doubt been a good one.

“He seen them next to the north beyant—higher up towards Murdock’s house.’

“Towards Murdock’s house! Ye mane Joyce’s?’

“No, I mane Black Murdock’s; the wan he had before he robbed Joyce. But begor! he done himself! It’s on Joyce’s ground the money is! He’s a nagur, anyhow—Black Murdock the Gombeen—bloody end to him!’ and he relapsed into silence. I could hear Murdock grind his teeth; then after a pause he spoke as the bottle popped again.

“Have a sup; it’ll kape out the cowld.’ Moynahan took the bottle.

[Pg 285]

“Here’s death and damnation to Black Gombeen!’ and the gurgling was heard again.

“Come! now, show me the shpot where yer father last saw the min!’ Murdock spoke authoritatively, and the other responded mechanically, and ran rather than walked along the side of the hill. Suddenly he stopped.

“Here’s the shpot!’ he said, and incontinently tumbled down.

“Git up! Wake up!’ shouted Murdock in his ear. But the whiskey had done its work; the man slept, breathing heavily and stentoriously, heedless of the storm and the

drenching rain. Murdock gathered a few stones and placed them together—I could hear the sound as they touched each other. Then he, too, took a pull at the bottle, and sat down beside Moynahan. I moved off a little, and when I came to a whin bush got behind it for a little shelter, and raising myself looked round. We were quite close to the edge of the bog, about half way between Joyce's house and Murdock's, and well in on Joyce's land. I was not satisfied as to what Murdock would do, so I waited.

“Fully an hour went by without any stir, and then I heard Murdock trying to awaken old Moynahan. I got down on the ground again and crawled over close to them. I heard Murdock shake the old man, and shout in his ear; presently the latter awoke, and the Gombeen Man gave him another dose of whiskey. This seemed to revive him a little as well as to complete his awakening.

[Pg 286]

“Musha! but it's cowld I am!’ he shivered.

“Begor it is—git up and come home!’ said Murdock, and he dragged the old man to his feet.

“Hould me up, Murtagh,’ said the latter, ‘I'm that cowld I can't shtand, an' me legs is like shtones—I can't feel them at all, at all!’

“All right!’ said the other, ‘walk on a little bit—ststraight—as ye're goin' now—I'll just shtop to cork the bottle.’

“From my position I could see their movements, and as I am a living man, Art! I saw Murdock turn him with his face to the bog, and send him to walk straight to his death!”

“Good God! Dick—are you quite certain?”

“I haven't the smallest doubt on my mind. I wish I could have, for it's a terrible thing to remember! That attempt to murder in the dark and the storm, comes between me and sleep! Moreover, Murdoch's action the instant after showed only too clearly what he intended. He turned quickly away, and I could hear him mutter as he moved past me on his way down the hill:—

“He'll not throuble me now—curse him! an' his share won't be required,’ and then he laughed a low horrible laugh, slow and harsh, and as though to himself; and I heard him say:—

“An' whin I do get the chist, Miss Norah, ye'll be the nixt!””

My blood began to boil as I heard of the villain's[Pg 287] threat:—"Where is he Dick? He must deal with me for that."

"Steady, Art! steady!" and Dick laid his hand on me.

"Go on!" I said.

"I couldn't go after him, for I had to watch Moynahan, whom I followed close, and I caught hold of as soon as I thought Murdock was too far to see me. I was only just in time, for as I touched him he staggered, lurched forward, and was actually beginning to sink in the bog. It was at one of those spots where the rock runs sheer down into the morass. It took all my strength to pull him out, and when I did get him on the rock he sank down again into his drunken sleep. I thought the wisest thing I could do was to go to Joyce's for help; and as, thanks to my experiments with the magnets all those weeks, I knew the ground fairly well, I was able to find my way—although the task was a slow and difficult one.

When I got near I saw a light at the window. My rubber boots, I suppose, and the plash of the falling rain dulled my footsteps, for as I drew near I could see that a man was looking in at the window, but he did not hear me. I crept up behind the hedge and watched him. He went to the door and knocked—evidently not for the first time; then the door was opened, and I could see Joyce's figure against the light that came from the kitchen.

"Who's there? What is it?" he asked. Then I heard Murdock's voice:—

[Pg 288]

"I'm lookin' for poor ould Moynahan. He was out on the hill in the evenin', but he hasn't kem home, an' I'm anxious about him, for he had a sup in him, an' I fear he may have fallen into the bog. I've been out lukin' for him, but I can't find him. I thought he might have kem in here.'

"No, he has not been here. Are you sure he was on the hill?"

"Well, I thought so—but what ought I to do? I'd be thankful if ye'd advise me. Be the way, what o'clock might it be now?"

"Norah, who had joined her father, ran in and looked at the clock.

"It is just ten minutes past twelve,' she said.

"I don't know what's to be done,' said Joyce. 'Could he have got to the shebeen?"

“That’s a good idea! I suppose I’d better go there an’ luk afther him. Ye see, I’m anxious about him, for he’s been livin’ wid me, an’ if anythin’ happened to him, people might say I done it!”

“That’s a queer thing for him to say!” said Norah to her father.

“Murdock turned on her at once.

“Quare thing—no more quare than the things they’ll be sayin’ about you before long.”

“What do you mean?” said Joyce, coming out.

“Oh, nawthin’, nawthin’! I must look for Moynahan.’ And without a word he turned and ran. Joyce and Norah went into the house. When Murdock had [Pg 289] quite gone I knocked at the door, and Joyce came out like a thunderbolt.

“I’ve got ye now ye ruffian”—he shouted—‘what did ye mean to say to me daughter?’ but by this time I stood in the light, and he recognized me.

“Hush!” I said, ‘let me in quietly’—and when I passed in we shut the door. Then I told them that I had been out on the mountain, and had found Moynahan. I told them both that they must not ask me any questions, or let on to a soul that I had told them anything—that much might depend on it—for I thought, Art, old chap, that they had better not be mixed up in it, however the matter might end. So we all three went out with a lantern, and I brought them to where the old man was asleep. We lifted him, and between us carried him to the house; Joyce and I undressed him and put him in bed, between warm blankets. Then I came away and went over to Mrs. Kelligan’s, where I slept in a chair before the fire.

“The next morning when I went up to Joyce’s I found that Moynahan was all right—that he hadn’t even got a cold, but that he remembered nothing whatever about his walking into the bog. He had even expressed his wonder at seeing the state his clothes were in. When I went into the village I found that Murdock had been everywhere and had told everyone of his fears about Moynahan. I said nothing of his being safe, but tried quietly to arrange matters so that I might be present when Murdock should set his [Pg 290] eyes for the first time on the man he had tried to murder. I left him with a number of others in the shebeen, and went back to bring Moynahan, but found, when I got to Joyce’s that he had already gone back to Murdock’s house. Joyce had told him, as we had arranged, that when Murdock had come asking for him he had been alarmed, and had gone out to look for him; had found him asleep on the hillside, and had brought him home with him. As I found that my scheme of facing Murdock with his victim was frustrated, I took advantage of Murdock’s absence to remove the

stones which he had placed to mark the spot where the treasure was last seen. I found them in the form of a cross, and moving them, replaced them at a spot some distance lower down the line of the bog. I marked the place, however, with a mark of my own—four stones put widely apart at the points of a letter Y—the centre marking the spot where the cross had been. Murdock returned to his house not long after, and within a short time ran down to tell that Moynahan had found his way home, and was all safe. They told me that he was then white and scared-looking.” Here Dick paused:—

“Now, my difficulty is this. I know he tried to murder the man, but I am not in a position to prove it. No man could expect his word to be taken in such a matter and under such circumstances. And yet I am morally certain that he intends to murder him still. What should I do? To take any preventive steps would involve making the charge which I cannot prove.[Pg 291] As yet neither of the men has the slightest suspicion that I am concerned in the matter in any way—or that I even know of it. Now may I not be most useful by keeping a watch and biding my time?”

I thought a moment, but there seemed to be only one answer:—

“You are quite right, Dick! We can do nothing just at present. We must keep a sharp look out, and get some tangible evidence of his intention—something that we can support—and then we can take steps against him. As to the matter of his threat to harm Norah, I shall certainly try to bring that out in a way we can prove, and then he shall have the hottest corner he ever thought of in his life.”

“Quite right that he should have it, Art; but we must think of her too. It would not do to have her name mixed up with any gossip. She will be going away very shortly, I suppose, and then his power to hurt her will be nil. In the mean time everything must be done to guard her.”

“I shall get a dog—a good savage one—this very day; that ruffian must not be able to even get near the house again——” Dick interrupted me:—

“Oh, I quite forgot to tell you about that. The very day after that night I got a dog and sent it up. It is the great mastiff that Meldon, the dispensary doctor, had—the one that you admired so much. I specially asked Norah to keep it for you, and train it to be always with her. She promised that she would always feed him[Pg 292] herself and take him about with her. I am quite sure she understood that he was to be her protector.”

“Thank you, Dick,” I said, and I am sure he knew I was grateful.

By this time we had come near the house, outside which the car stood. Andy was inside, and evidently did not expect our coming so soon, for he sat with a measure of stout half emptied before him on the table, and on each of his knees sat a lady—one evidently the mother of the other. As we appeared in the doorway he started up.

“Be the powdhers, there’s the masther! Git up, acushla!”—this to the younger woman, for the elder had already jumped up. Then to me:—

“Won’t ye sit down, yer ’an’r—there’s only the wan chair, so ye see the shifts we’re dhruv to, whin there’s three iv us. I couldn’t put Mrs. Dempsey from off iv her own shtool, an’ she wouldn’t sit on me knee alone—the dacent woman!—so we had to take the girrul on too. They all sit that way in these parts!” The latter statement was made with brazen openness and shameless effrontery. I shook my finger at him:—

“Take care, Andy. You’ll get into trouble one of these days!”

“Into throuble! for a girrul sittin’ on me knee! Begor! the Governmint’ll have to get up more coorts and more polis if they want to shtop that ould custom. An’ more betoken, they’ll have to purvide more shtools, too. Mrs. Dempsey, whin I come round agin, mind ye kape[Pg 293] a govermint shtool for me! Here’s the masther wouldn’t let any girrul sit on any wan’s knee. Begor! not even the quality nor the fairies! All right, yer ’an’r, the mare’s quite ready. Good-bye, Mrs. Dempsey. Don’t forgit the shtool—an’ wan too for Biddy! Gee up, ye ould corncrake!” and so we resumed our journey.

As we went along Dick gave me all details regarding the property which he and Mr. Caicy had bought for me. Although I had signed deeds and papers without number, and was owner in the present or in future of the whole hill, I had not the least idea of either the size or disposition of the estate. Dick had been all over it, and was able to supply me with every detail. As he went on he grew quite enthusiastic—everything seemed to be even more favourable than he had at first supposed. There was plenty of clay; and he suspected that in two or three places there was pottery clay, such as is found chiefly in Cornwall. There was any amount of water; and when we should be able to control the whole hill and regulate matters as we wished, the supply would enable us to do anything in the way of either irrigation or ornamental development. The only thing we lacked, he said, was limestone, and he had a suspicion that limestone was to be found somewhere on the hill.

“I cannot but think,” said he, “that there must be a streak of limestone somewhere. I cannot otherwise account for the subsidence of the lake on the top of the hill. I almost begin to think that that formation of rock to which the Snake’s Pass is due runs right through[Pg 294] the hill, and that we shall find that the whole top of it has similar

granite cliffs, with the hollow between them possibly filled in with some rock of one of the later formations. However, when we get possession I shall make accurate search. I tell you, Art, it will well repay the trouble if we can find it. A limestone quarry here would be pretty well as valuable as a gold mine. Nearly all these promontories on the western coast of Ireland are of slate or granite, and here we have not got lime within thirty miles. With a quarry on the spot, we can not only build cheap and reclaim our own bog, but we can supply five hundred square miles of country with the rudiments of prosperity, and at a nominal price compared with what they pay now!”

Then he went on to tell me of the various arrangements effected—how those who wished to emigrate were about to do so, and how others who wished to stay were to have better farms given them on what we called “the mainland”; and how he had devised a plan for building houses for them—good solid stone houses, with proper offices and farmyards. He concluded what seemed to me like a somewhat modified day-dream:—

“And if we can find the limestone—well! the improvements can all be done without costing you a penny; and you can have around you the most prosperous set of people to be found in the country.”

In such talk as this the journey wore on till the evening came upon us. The day had been a fine one—one of those rare sunny days in a wet autumn. As we went [Pg 295] could see everywhere the signs of the continuous rains. The fields were sloppy and sodden, and the bottoms were flooded; the bogs were teeming with water; the roads were washed clean—not only the mud but even the sand having been swept away, and the road metal was everywhere exposed. Often, as we went along, Dick took occasion to illustrate his views as to the danger of the shifting of the bog at Knockalltecore by the evidence around us of the destructive power of the continuous rain.

When we came to the mountain gap where we got our first and only view of Knockalltecore from the Galway road, Andy reined in the mare, and turned to me, pointing with his whip:—

“There beyant, yer ’an’r, is Knockalltecore—the hill where the threasure is. They do say that a young English gintleman has bought up the hill, an’ manes to git the threasure for himself. Begor! perhaps he has found it already. Here! Gee up! ye ould cornrake! What the divil are ye kapin’ the quality waitin’ for?” and we sped down the road.

The sight of the hill filled me with glad emotion, and I do not think that it is to be wondered at. And yet my gladness was followed by an unutterable gloom—a gloom that fell over me the instant after my eyes took in the well-known hill struck by the falling sunset from the west. It seemed to me that all had been so happy and so bright and so easy for me, that there must be in store some terrible shock or loss to make the balance even, and, [Pg 296] to reduce my satisfaction with life to the level above which man's happiness may not pass.

There was a curse on the hill! I felt it and realized it at that moment for the first time. I suppose I must have shown something of my brooding fear in my face, for Dick, looking round at me after a period of silence, said suddenly:—

“Cheer up Art, old chap! Surely you, at any rate, have no cause to be down on your luck! Of all men that live, I should think you ought to be about the very happiest!”

“That's it, old fellow,” I answered. “I fear that there must be something terrible coming. I shall never be quite happy till Norah and all of us are quite away from the Hill.”

“What on earth do you mean? Why, you have just bought the whole place!”

“It may seem foolish, Dick; but the words come back to me and keep ringing in my ears—‘The Mountain holds—and it holds tight.’” Dick laughed:—

“Well, Art, it is not my fault, or Mr. Caicy's, if you don't hold it tight. It is yours now, every acre of it; and, if I don't mistake, you are going to make it in time—and not a long time either—into the fairest bower to which the best fellow ever brought the fairest lady! There now, Art, isn't that a pretty speech?”

Dick's words made me feel ashamed of myself, and I made an effort to pull myself together, which lasted until Dick and I said good-night.

[Pg 297]

CHAPTER XVI.

A GRIM WARNING.

I cannot say the night was a happy one. There were moments when I seemed to lose myself and my own anxieties in thoughts of Norah and the future, and such moments were sweet to look back on—then as they are now; but I slept only fitfully and dreamt frightfully.

It was natural enough that my dreams should centre around Knockcalltecore; but there was no good reason why they should all be miserable or terrible. The Hill seemed to be ever under some uncomfortable or unnatural condition. When my dreams began, it was bathed in a flood of yellow moonlight, and at its summit was the giant Snake, the jewel of whose crown threw out an unholy glare of yellow light, and whose face and form kept perpetually changing to those of Murtagh Murdock.

I can now, with comparatively an easy effort, look back on it all, and disentangle or give a reason for all the phases of my thought. The snake “wid side whiskers” was distinctly suggested the first night I heard the legend at Mrs. Kelligan’s; the light from the jewel was a part[Pg 298] of the legend itself; and so on with every fact and incident. Presently, as I dreamt, the whole Mountain seemed to writhe and shake as though the great Snake was circling round it, deep under the earth; and again this movement changed into the shifting of the bog. Then through dark shadows that lay athwart the hill I could see the French soldiers, with their treasure-chest, pass along in dusky, mysterious silence, and vanish in the hill side. I saw Murdock track them; and, when they were gone, he and old Moynahan—who suddenly and mysteriously appeared beside him—struggled on the edge of the bog, and, with a shuddering wail, the latter threw up his arms and sank slowly into the depths of the morass. Again Norah and I were wandering together, when suddenly Murdock’s evil face, borne on a huge serpent body, writhed up beside us; and in an instant Norah was whirled from my side and swept into the bog, I being powerless to save her or even help her.

The last of all my dreams was as follows:—Norah and I were sitting on the table rock in the Cliff Fields; all was happy and smiling around us. The sun shone and the birds sang, and as we sat hand in hand, the beating of our hearts seemed a song also. Suddenly there was a terrible sound—half a roar, as of an avalanche, and half a fluttering sound, as of many great wings. We clung together in terror, waiting for the portent which was at hand. And then over the cliff poured the whole mass of the bog, foul-smelling, fœtid, terrible, and of endless might. Just as it was about[Pg 299] to touch us, and as I clasped Norah to me, so that we might die together, and whilst her despairing cry was in my ear, the whole mighty mass turned into loathsome, writhing snakes, sweeping into the sea!

I awoke with a scream which brought nearly every one in the hotel into my bedroom. Dick was first, and found me standing on the floor, white and drunk with terror.

“What is it, old fellow?—oh! I see, only a nightmare! Come on! he’s all right; it’s only a dream!” and almost before I had realized that the waking world and not the world of shadows was around me, the room was cleared and I was alone. I lit a candle and put

on some clothes; as it was of no use trying to sleep again after such an experience, I got a book and resolutely set to reading. The effort was successful, as such efforts always are, and I quite forgot the cause of my disturbance in what I read. Then the matter itself grew less interesting....

There was a tap at my door. I started awake—it was broad daylight, and the book lay with crumpled leaves beside me on the floor. It was a message to tell me that Mr. Sutherland was waiting breakfast for me. I called out that I would be down in a few minutes, which promise I carried out as nearly as was commensurate with the requirements of the tub and the toilet. I found Dick awaiting me; he looked at me keenly as I came in, and then said heartily:—

“I see your nightmare has not left any ill-effects. I say! old chap, it must have been a whopper—a regular Derby winner among nightmares—worse than Andy’s old[Pg 300] corncrake. You yelled fit to wake the dead. I would have thought the contrast between an ordinary night and the day you are going to have would have been sufficient to satisfy anyone without such an addition to its blackness.” Then he sung out in his rich voice:—

“Och, Jewel, kape dhramin’ that same till ye die,
For bright mornin’ will give dirty night the black lie.”

We sat down to breakfast, and I am bound to say, from the trencher experience of that meal, that there is nothing so fine as an appetiser for breakfast, as a good preliminary nightmare.

We drove off to Knockcalltecore. When we got to the foot of the hill we stopped as usual. Andy gave me a look which spoke a lot, but he did not say a single word—for which forbearance I owed him a good turn. Dick said:—

“I want to go round to the other side of the hill, and shall cross over the top. I shall look you up, if I may, at Joyce’s about two o’clock.”

“All right,” I said; “we shall expect you,” and I started up the hill.

When I got to the gate, and opened it, there was a loud, deep barking, which, however, was instantly stilled. I knew that Norah had tied up the mastiff, and I went to the door. I had no need to knock; for as I came near, it opened, and in another instant Norah was in my arms. She whispered in my ear when I had kissed her:—

“I would like to have come out to meet you, but I thought you would rather meet me here!” Then, as we went into the sitting-room, hand-in-hand, she whispered again:—

“Aunt has gone to buy groceries, so we are all alone. You must tell me all about everything.”

We sat down close together, still hand-in-hand, and I told her all that we had done since I had left. When I had finished the Paris part of the story, she put up her hands before her face, and I could see the tears drop through her fingers.

“Norah! Norah! Don’t cry, my darling! What is it?”

“Oh, Arthur, I can’t help it! It is so wonderful—more than all I ever longed or wished for!” Then she took her hands away, and put them in mine, and looked me bravely in the face, with her eyes half-laughing and half-crying, and her cheeks wet, and said:—

“Arthur, you are the Fairy Prince! There is nothing that I can wish for that you have not done—even my dresses are ready by your sweet thoughtfulness. It needs an effort, dear, to let you do all this—but I see it is quite right—I must be dressed like one who is to be your wife. I shall think I am pleasing you afresh, every time I put one of them on; but I must pay for them myself. You know I am quite rich now. I have all the money you paid for the Cliff Fields; father says it ought to go in such things as will fit me for my new position, and will not hear of taking any of it.”

[Pg 302]

“He is quite right, Norah, my darling—and you are quite right, too—all shall be just as you wish. Now tell me all about everything since I went away.”

“May I bring in Turco? he is so quiet with me; and he must learn to know you and love you, or he wouldn’t be any friend of mine.” She looked at me lovingly, and went and brought in the mastiff, by whom I was forthwith received into friendship.

That was indeed a happy day! We had a family consultation about the school; the time of beginning was arranged, and there was perfect accord amongst us. As Dick and I drove back through the darkness, I could not but feel that, even if evil were looming ahead of us, at least some of us had experienced what it is to be happy.

It had been decided that after a week’s time—on the 28th October—Norah was to leave for school. Her father was to bring her as far as London, and Mr. Chapman was to take her over to Paris. This was Joyce’s own wish; he said:—

“Twill be bettther for ye, darlin’, to go widout me. Ye’ll have quite enough to do for a bit, to keep even wid the girls that have been reared in bettther ways nor you, widout me there to make little iv ye.”

“But, father,” she remonstrated, “I don’t want to appear any different from what I am! And I am too fond of you, and too proud of you, not to want to appear as your daughter.”

Her father stroked her hair gently as he answered:—

[Pg 303]

“Norah! my darlin’, it isn’t that. Ye’ve always been the good and dutiful daughter to me; an’ in all your pretty life there’s not wan thing I wish undone or unsaid. But I’m older than you, daughter, an’ I know more iv the world; an’ what I say, is best for ye—now, and in yer future. I’m goin’ to live wid Eugene; an’ afther a while I suppose I, too, ’ll be somethin’ different from what I am. An’ thin, whin I’ve lived awhile in a city, and got somethin’ of city ways, I’ll come an’ see ye, maybe. Ye must remimber, that it’s not only of you we’ve to think, but of th’ other girls in the school. I don’t want to have any of them turnin’ up their noses at ye—that’s not the way to get the best out iv school, me dear; for I suppose school is like everywhere else in the world—the higher ye’re able to hould yer head, the more others’ll look up to ye!”

His words were so obviously true, that not one of us had a word to say, and the matter was acquiesced in *nem. con.* I myself got leave to accompany the party as far as London—but not beyond. It was further arranged that Joyce should take his daughter to Galway, to get some clothes for her—just enough to take her to Paris—and that when in Paris she should have a full outfit under the direction of Madame Lepechaux. They were to leave on Friday, so as to have the Saturday in Galway; and as Norah wanted to say good-bye on the Sunday to old schoolfellows and friends in the convent, they would return on Monday, the 25th October. Accordingly, on the morning after next, Joyce took a letter[Pg 304] for me to Mr. Caicy, who was to pay to him whatever portion of the purchase-money of his land he should require, and whom I asked to give all possible assistance in whatever matters either he or Norah might desire. I would have dearly liked to have gone myself with them, but the purpose and the occasion were such that I could not think of offering to go. On the day fixed they left on the long car from Carnaclif. They started in torrents of rain, but were as well wrapped up as the resources of Dick and myself would allow.

When they had gone, Dick and I drove over to Knockcalltecore. Dick wished to have an interview with Murdock, regarding his giving up possession of the land on the 27th, as arranged.

We left Andy as usual at the foot of the hill, and went up to Murdock's house. The door was locked; and although we knocked several times, we could get no answer. We came away, therefore, and went up the hill, as Dick wished me to see where, according to old Moynahan, was the last place at which the Frenchmen had been seen. As we went on and turned the brow of the mound, which lay straight up—for the bog-land lay in a curve round its southern side—we saw before us two figures at the edge of the bog. They were those of Murdock and old Moynahan. When we saw who they were, Dick whispered to me:—

“They are at the place to which I changed the mark, but are still on Joyce's land.”

They were working just as Dick and I had worked[Pg 305] with Murdock, when we had recovered the gun-carriage, and were so intent on the work at which they toiled with feverish eagerness, that they did not see us coming; and it was only when we stood close beside them that they were conscious of our presence. Murdock turned at once with a scowl and a sort of snarl. When he saw who it was, he became positively livid with passion, and at once began to bombard us with the foulest vituperation. Dick pressed my arm, as a hint to keep quiet and leave the talking to him, and I did nothing; but he opposed the Gombeen Man's passion with an unruffled calm. Indeed, he seemed to me to want even to exasperate Murdock to the last degree. When the latter paused for a second for breath, he quietly said:—

“Keep your hair on, Murdock! and just tell me quietly why you are trespassing; and why, and what, you are trying to steal from this property?”

Murdock made no answer, so Dick went on:—

“Let me tell you that I act for the owner of this land, who bought it as it is, and I shall hold you responsible for your conduct. I don't want to have a row needlessly, so if you go away quietly, and promise to not either trespass here again, or try to steal anything, I shall not take any steps. If not, I shall do as the occasion demands.”

Murdock answered him with the most manifestly intentional insolence:—

“You! ye tell me to go away! I don't ricognize ye at all. This land belongs to me frind, Mr. Joyce, an'[Pg 306] I shall come on it whin I like, and do as I like. Whin me frind tells me not to come here, I shall shtay away. Till then I shall do as I like!”

Said Dick:—

“You think that will do to bluff me because you know Joyce is away for the day, and that, in the meantime, you can do what you want, and perhaps get out of the bog some property that does not belong to you. I shall not argue with you any more; but I warn you that you will have to answer for your conduct.”

Murdock and Moynahan continued their pulling at the rope. We waited till the haul was over, and saw that the spoil on this occasion was a part of the root of a tree. Then, when both men were sitting exhausted beside it, Dick took out his note-book, and began to make notes of everything. Presently he turned to Murdock, and said:—

“Have you been fishing, Mr. Murdock? What a strange booty you have brought up! It is really most kind of you to be aiding to secure the winter firing for Mr. Joyce and my friend. Is there anything but bogwood to be found here?”

Murdock’s reply was a curse and a savage scowl; but old Moynahan joined in the conversation:—

“Now, I tould ye, Murtagh, that we wur too low down!”

“Shut up!” shouted the other, and the old man shrank back as if he had been struck. Dick looked down, and seemed to be struck by the cross of loose stones at his feet, and said:—

[Pg 307]

“Dear me! that is very strange—a cross of stones. It would almost seem as if it were made here to mark something; but yet”—here he lifted one of the stones—“it cannot have been long here; the grass is fresh under the stones.” Murdock said nothing, but clenched his hands and ground his teeth. Presently, however, he sent Moynahan back to his house to get some whiskey. When the latter was out of earshot, Murdock turned to us, and said:—

“An’ so, ye think to baffle me! do ye? Well! I’ll have that money out—if I have to wade in yer blood. I will, by the livin’ God!” and he burst into a string of profanities that made us shudder.

He was in such deadly earnest that I felt a pity for him, and said impulsively:—

“Look here! if you want to get it out, you can have a little more time if you like, if only you will conduct yourself properly. I don’t want to be bothered looking for it. Now, if you’ll only behave decently, and be something like a civilized being, I’ll give you another month if you want it!”

Again he burst out at me with still more awful profanities. He didn't want any of my time! He'd take what time he liked! God Himself—and he particularized the persons of the Trinity—couldn't balk him, and he'd do what he liked; and if I crossed his path it would be the worse for me! And, as for others, that he would send the hard word round the country about me and my leman!—I couldn't be always [Pg 308] knocking the ruffian down, so I turned away and called to Dick:—

“Coming!” said Dick, and he walked up to Murdock and knocked him down. Then, as the latter lay dazed on the grass, he followed me.

“Really,” he said, apologetically, “the man wants it. It will do him good!”

Then we went back to Carnaclif.

These three days were very dreary ones for me: we spent most of the time walking over Knockcalltecore and making plans for the future. But, without Norah, the place seemed very dreary!

We did not go over on the Monday, as we knew that Joyce and Norah would not get home until late in the evening, and would be tired. Early, however, on the day after—Tuesday—we drove over. Joyce was out, and Dick left me at the foot of the breen, so when I got to the house I found Norah alone.

The dear girl showed me her new dresses with much pride; and presently going to her room put on one of them, and came back to let me see how she looked. Her face was covered with blushes. Needless to say that I admired the new dress, as did her father, who just then came in.

When she went away to take off the dress Joyce beckoned me outside. When we got away from the house he turned to me; his face was very grave, and he seemed even more frightened than angry.

[Pg 309]

“There's somethin' I was tould while I was away, that I think ye ought to know.”

“Go on, Mr. Joyce!”

“Somebody has been sayin' hard things about Norah!”

“About Norah! Surely there is nobody mad enough or bad enough to speak evil of her.”

“There's wan!” He turned as he spoke, and looked instinctively in the direction of Murdock's house.

“Oh, Murdock! as he threatened—what did he say?”

“Well, I don’t know. I could only get it that somebody was sayin’ somethin’, an’ that it would be well to have things so that no wan could say anythin’ that we couldn’t prove. It was a frind tould me—and that’s all he would tell! Mayhap he didn’t know any more himself; but I knew him to be a frind!”

“And it was a friendly act, Mr. Joyce. I have no doubt that Murdock has been sending round wicked lies about us all! But thank God! in a few days we will be all moving, and it doesn’t matter much what he can do.”

“No! it won’t matter much in wan way, but he’s not goin’, all the same, to throw dirt on me child. If he goes on I’ll folly him up!”

“He won’t go on, Mr. Joyce. Before long, he’ll be out of the neighbourhood altogether. To tell you the truth, I have bought the whole of his land, and I get possession of it to-morrow; and then I’ll never let him set foot here again. When once he is out of this,[Pg 310] he will have too much other wickedness on hand to have time to meddle with us!”

“That’s throe enough! Well! we’ll wait an’ see what happens—but we’ll be mighty careful all the same.”

“Quite right,” I said, “we cannot be too careful in such a matter!” Then we went back to the house, and met Norah coming into the room in her red petticoat, which she knew I liked. She whispered to me! oh so sweetly:—

“I thought, dear, you would like me to be the old Norah, to-day. It is our last day together in the old way.” Then hand-in-hand we went down to the Cliff Fields, and sat on the table-rock for the last time, and feasted our eyes on the glorious prospect, whilst we told each other our bright dreams of the future.

In the autumn twilight we came back to the house; Dick had, in the meantime, come in, and we both stayed for tea. I saw that Dick had something to tell me, but he waited until we were going home before he spoke.

It was a sad parting with Norah that night; for it was the last day together before she went off to school. For myself, I felt that whatever might be in the future—and I hoped for much—it was the last time that I might sit by the firelight with the old Norah. She, too, was sad, and when she told me the cause of her sadness, I found that it was the same as my own.

“But oh! Arthur, my darling, I shall try—I shall try to be worthy of my great good fortune—and of you!”[Pg 311] she said, as she put her arms round my neck, and leaning her head on my bosom, began to cry.

“Hush! Norah. Hush, my darling!” I said, “you must not say such things to me. You, who are worthy of all the good gifts of life. Oh, my dear! my dear! I am only fearful that you may be snatched away from me by some terrible misfortune—I shall not be happy till you are safely away from the shadow of this fateful mountain and are beginning your new life.”

“Only one more day!” she said. “To-morrow we must settle up everything—and I have much to do for father—poor father! how good he is to me. Please God! Arthur, we shall be able some day to repay him for all his goodness to me!” How inexpressibly sweet it was to me to hear her say “we” shall be able, as she nestled up close to me.

Ah! that night! Ah! that night!—the end of the day when, for the last time, I sat on the table-rock with the old Norah that I loved so well. It almost seemed as if Fate, who loves the keen contrasts of glare and gloom, had made on purpose that day so bright, and of such flawless happiness!

As we went back to Carnaclif Dick told me what had been exercising his mind all the afternoon. When he had got to the bog he found that it had risen so much that he thought it well to seek the cause. He had gone at once to the place where Murdock had dammed up the stream that ran over into the Cliff Fields, and had found that the natural position of the ground had so far aided[Pg 312] his efforts that the great stones thrown into the chine had become solidified with the rubbish by the new weight of the risen bog into a compact mass, and unless some heroic measure, such as blowing up the dam, should be taken, the bog would continue to rise until it should flow over the lowest part of the solid banks containing it.

“As sure as we are here, Art,” he said, “that man will do himself to death. I am convinced that if the present state of things goes on, with the bog at its present height, and with this terrible rainfall, there will be another shifting of the bog—and then, God help him, and perhaps others too! I told him of the danger, and explained it to him—but he only laughed at me and called me a fool and a traitor—that I was doing it to prevent him getting his treasure—his treasure, forsooth!—and then he went again into those terrible blasphemies—so I came away; but he is a lost man, and I don’t see how we can stop him.” I said earnestly:—

“Dick, there’s no danger to them—the Joyces—is there?”

“No!” he answered, “not the slightest—their house is on the rock, high over the spot, and quite away from any possible danger.”

Then we relapsed into silence, as we each tried to think out a solution.

That night it rained more heavily than ever. The downfall was almost tropical—as it can be on the West Coast—and the rain on the iron roof of the stable behind[Pg 313] the hotel sounded like thunder; it was the last thing in my ears before I went to sleep.

That night again I kept dreaming—dreaming in the same nightmare fashion as before. But although the working of my imagination centred round Knockcalltecore and all it contained, and although I suffered dismal tortures from the hideous dreams of ruin and disaster which afflicted me, I did not on this occasion arouse the household. In the morning when we met, Dick looked at my pale face and said:—

“Dreaming again, Art! Well, please God, it’s all nearly over now. One more day, and Norah will be away from Knockcalltecore.”

The thought gave me much relief. The next morning—on Thursday, 28th of October—we should be on our way to Galway *en route* for London, whilst Dick would receive on my behalf possession of the property which I had purchased from Murdock. Indeed his tenure ended at noon this very day; but we thought it wiser to postpone taking possession until after Norah had left. Although Norah’s departure meant a long absence from the woman I loved, I could not regret it, for it was after all but a long road to the end I wished for. The two years would soon be over. And then!—and then life would begin in real earnest, and along its paths of sorrow as of joy Norah and I should walk with equal steps.

Alas! for dreaming! The dreams of the daylight are often more delusive than even those born of the[Pg 314] glamour of moonlight or starlight, or of the pitchy darkness of the night!

It had been arranged that we were not on this day to go over to Knockcalltecore, as Norah and her father wanted the day together. Miss Joyce, Norah’s aunt, who usually had lived with them, was coming back to look after the house. So after breakfast Dick and I smoked and lounged about, and went over some business matters, and we arranged many things to be done during my absence. The rain still continued to pour down in a perfect deluge—the roadway outside the hotel was running like a river, and the wind swept the rain-clouds so that the drops struck like hail. Every now and again, as the gusts gathered in force, the rain seemed to drive past like a sheet of water; and looking out of the window, we could see dripping men and women trying to make headway against the storm. Dick said to me:—

“If this rain holds on much longer it will be a bad job for Murdock. There is every fear that if the bog should break under the flooding he will suffer at once. What an obstinate fool he is—he won’t take any warning! I almost feel like a criminal in letting him go to his death—ruffian though he is; and yet what can one do? We are all powerless if anything should happen.” After this we were silent. I spoke the next:—

“Tell me, Dick, is there any earthly possibility of any harm coming to Joyce’s house in case the bog should shift again? Is it quite certain that they are all safe?”

[Pg 315]

“Quite certain, old fellow. You may set your mind at rest on that score. In so far as the bog is concerned, she and her father are in no danger. The only way they could run any risk of danger would be by their going to Murdock’s house, or by being by chance lower down on the hill, and I do not think that such a thing is likely to happen.”

This set my mind more at ease, and while Dick sat down to write some letters I continued to look at the rain.

By-and-by I went down to the tap-room, where there were always a lot of peasants, whose quaint speech amused and interested me. When I came in one of them, whom I recognized as one of our navvies at Knocknacar, was telling something, for the others all stood round him. Andy was the first to see me, and said as I entered:—

“Ye’ll have to go over it all agin, Mike. Here’s his ’an’r, that is just death on to bogs—an’ the like,” he added, looking at me slyly.

“What is it?” I asked.

“Oh, not much, yer ’an’r, except that the bog up at Knocknacar has run away intirely. Whin the wather rose in it, the big cuttin’ we med tuk it all out, like butthermilk out iv a jug. Begor! there never was seen such a flittin’ since the wurld begun. An’ more betoken, the quare part iv it is that it hasn’t left the bit iv a hole behind it at all, but it’s all mud an’ wather at the prisint minit.”

[Pg 316]

I knew this would interest Dick exceedingly, so I went for him. When he heard it he got quite excited, and insisted that we should go off to Knocknacar at once. Accordingly Andy was summoned, the mare was harnessed, and with what protection we could get in the way of wraps, we went off to Knocknacar through the rain storm.

As we went along we got some idea of the damage done—and being done—by the wonderful rainfall. Not only the road was like a river, and the mountain streams were

roaring torrents, but in places the road was flooded to such a dangerous depth that we dared not have attempted the passage only that, through our repeated journeys, we all knew the road so well.

However, we got at last to Knocknacar, and there found that the statement we heard was quite true. The bog had been flooded to such a degree that it had burst out through the cutting which we had made, and had poured in a great stream over all the sloping moorland on which we had opened it. The brown bog and black mud lying all over the stony space looked like one of the lava streams which mark the northern side of Vesuvius. Dick went most carefully all over the ground wherever we could venture, and took a number of notes. Indeed, the day was beginning to draw in, when, dripping and chilled, we prepared for our return journey through the rain. Andy had not been wasting his time in the sheebeen, and was in one of his most jocular humours; and when we too were fortified with steaming hot punch we [Pg 317] were able to listen to his fun without wanting to kill him.

On the journey back, Dick—when Andy allowed him speech—explained to me the various phenomena which we had noticed. When we got back to the hotel it was night. Had the weather been fine we might have expected a couple more hours of twilight; but with the mass of driving clouds overhead, and the steady downpour of rain, and the fierce rush of the wind, there was left to us not the slightest suggestion of day.

We went to bed early, for I had to rise by daylight for our journey on the morrow. After lying awake for some time listening to the roar of the storm and the dash of the rain, and wondering if it were to go on for ever, I sank into a troubled sleep.

It seemed to me that all the nightmares which had individually afflicted me during the last week returned to assail me collectively on the present occasion. I was a sort of Mazeppa in the world of dreams. Again and again the fatal hill and all its mystic and terrible associations haunted me!—Again the snakes writhed around and took terrible forms! Again she I loved was in peril! Again Murdock seemed to arise in new forms of terror and wickedness! Again the lost treasure was sought under terrible conditions; and once again I seemed to sit on the table-rock with Norah, and to see the whole mountain rush down on us in a dread avalanche, and turn to myriad snakes as it came! And again Norah seemed to call to me, “Help! help! Arthur! Save [Pg 318] me! Save me!” And again, as was most natural, I found myself awake on the floor of my room—though this time I did not scream—wet and quivering with some nameless terror, and with Norah’s despairing cry in my ears.

But even in the first instant of my awakening I had taken a resolution which forthwith I proceeded to carry into effect. These terrible dreams—whencesoever they came—must not have come in vain! The grim warning must not be despised! Norah was in danger, and I must go to her at all hazards!

I threw on my clothes and went and woke Dick. When I told him my intention he jumped up at once and began to dress, whilst I ran downstairs and found Andy, and set him to get out the car at once.

“Is it goin’ out agin in the shtorm ye are? Begor! ye’d not go widout some rayson, an’ I’m not the bhoy to be behind whin ye want me. I’ll be ready, yer ’an’r, in two skips iv a dead salmon!” and Andy proceeded to make, or rather complete, his toilet, and hurried out to the stable to get the car ready. In the mean time Dick had got two lanterns and a flask, and showed them to me.

“We may as well have them with us. We do not know what we may want in this storm.”

It was now past one o’clock, and the night was pitchy dark. The rain still fell, and high overhead we could hear the ceaseless rushing of the wind. It was a lucky thing that both Andy and the mare knew the road[Pg 319] thoroughly, for otherwise we never could have got on that night. As it was, we had to go much more slowly than we had ever gone before.

I was in a perfect fever. Every second’s delay seemed to me like an hour. I feared—nay more, I had a deep conviction—that some dreadful thing was happening, and I had over me a terrible dread that we should arrive too late.

[Pg 320]

CHAPTER XVII. THE CATASTROPHE.

As we drew closer to the mountain, and recognized our whereabouts by the various landmarks, my dread seemed to grow. The night was now well on, and there were signs of the storm abating; occasionally the wind would fall off a little, and the rain beat with less dreadful violence. In such moments some kind of light would be seen in the sky—or, to speak more correctly, the darkness would be less complete—and then the new squall which followed would seem by contrast with the calm to smite us with renewed violence. In one of these lulls we saw for an instant the mountain rise before us, its bold outline being shown darkly against a sky less black. But the vision was swept away an instant after by a squall and a cloud of blinding rain, leaving only a

dreadful memory of some field for grim disaster. Then we went on our way even more hopelessly; for earth and sky, which in that brief instant we had been able to distinguish, were now hidden under one unutterable pall of gloom.

On we went slowly. There was now in the air a [Pg 321] thunderous feeling, and we expected each moment to be startled by the lightning's flash or the roar of Heaven's artillery. Masses of mist or sea fog now began to be borne landward by the passing squalls. In the time that elapsed between that one momentary glimpse of Knockcalltecore and our arrival at the foot of the boreen a whole lifetime seemed to me to have elapsed, and in my thoughts and harrowing anxieties I recalled—as drowning men are said to do before death—every moment, every experience since I had first come within sight of the western sea. The blackness of my fears seemed only a carrying inward of the surrounding darkness, which was made more pronounced by the flickering of our lanterns, and more dread by the sounds of the tempest with which it was laden.

When we stopped in the boreen, Dick and I hurried up the hill, whilst Andy, with whom we left one of the lanterns, drew the horse under the comparative shelter of the wind-swept alders, which lined the entrance to the lane. He wanted a short rest before proceeding to Mrs. Kelligan's, where he was to stop the remainder of the night, so as to be able to come for us in the morning.

As we came near Murdock's cottage Dick pressed my arm.

"Look!" he called to me, putting his mouth to my ear so that I could hear him, for the storm swept the hill fiercely here, and a special current of wind came whirling up through the Shleenanaher. "Look! he is [Pg 322] up even at this hour. There must be some villainy afloat!"

When we got up a little farther he called to me again in the same way.

"The nearest point of the bog is here; let us look at it." We diverged to the left, and in a few minutes were down at the edge of the bog.

It seemed to us to be different from what it had been. It was raised considerably above its normal height, and seemed quivering all over in a very strange way. Dick said to me very gravely:—

"We are just in time. There's something going to happen here."

"Let us hurry to Joyce's," I said, "and see if all is safe there."

“We should warn them first at Murdock’s,” he said. “There may not be a moment to lose.” We hurried back to the breen and ran on to Murdock’s, opened the gate, and ran up the path. We knocked at the door, but there was no answer. We knocked more loudly still, but there came no reply.

“We had better make certain,” said Dick, and I could hear him more easily now, for we were in the shelter of the porch. We opened the door, which was only on the latch, and went in. In the kitchen a candle was burning, and the fire on the hearth was blazing, so that it could not have been long since the inmates had left. Dick wrote a line of warning in his pocket-book, tore out the leaf, and placed it on the table where it could[Pg 323] not fail to be seen by anyone entering the room. We then hurried out, and up the lane to Joyce’s.

As we drew near we were surprised to find a light in Joyce’s window also. I got to the windward side of Dick, and shouted to him:—

“A light here also! there must be something strange going on.” We hurried as fast as we could up to the house. As we drew close the door was opened, and through a momentary lull we heard the voice of Miss Joyce, Norah’s aunt:—

“Is that you, Norah?”

“No!” I answered.

“Oh! is it you, Mr. Arthur? Thank God ye’ve come! I’m in such terror about Phelim an’ Norah. They’re both out in the shtorm, an’ I’m nigh disthracted about them.”

By this time we were in the house, and could hear each other speak, although not too well even here, for again the whole force of the gale struck the front of the house, and the noise was great.

“Where is Norah? Is she not here?”

“Oh no! God help us! Wirrastru! wirrastru!” The poor woman was in such a state of agitation and abject terror that it was with some difficulty we could learn from her enough to understand what had occurred. The suspense of trying to get her to speak intelligibly was agonizing, for now every moment was precious; but we could not do anything or make any effort whatever until we had learned all that had occurred. At last, how[Pg 324]ever, it was conveyed to us that early in the evening Joyce had gone out to look after the cattle, and had not since returned. Late at night old Moynahan had come to the door half drunk, and had hiccoughed a message that Joyce had met with an accident and was then in Murdock’s house. He wanted Norah to go to him there, but Norah only was to go and no one else. She had at once suspected that it

was some trap of Murdock's for some evil purpose, but still she thought it better to go, and accordingly called to Hector, the mastiff, to come with her, she remarking to her aunt "I am safe with him, at any rate." But Hector did not come. He had been restless, and groaning for an hour before, and now on looking for him they had found him dead. This helped to confirm Norah's suspicions, and the two poor women were in an agony of doubt as to what they should do. Whilst they were discussing the matter Moynahan had returned—this time even drunker than before—and repeated his message, but with evident reluctance. Norah had accordingly set to work to cross-examine him, and after a while he admitted that Joyce was not in Murdock's house at all—that he had been sent with the message and told when he had delivered it to go away to mother Kelligan's and not to ever tell anything whatever of the night's proceedings—no matter what might happen or what might be said. When he had admitted this much he had been so overcome with fright at what he had done that he began to cry and moan, and say that Murdock would kill him for telling on him. Norah had told him [Pg 325] he could remain in the cottage where he was, if he would tell her where her father was, so that she could go to look for him; but that he had sworn most solemnly that he did not know, but that Murdock knew, for he told him that there would be no chance of seeing him at his own house for hours yet that night. This had determined Norah that she would go out herself, although the storm was raging wildly, to look for her father. Moynahan, however, would not stay in the cottage, as he said he would be afraid to, unless Joyce himself were there to protect him; for if there were no one but women in the house Murdock would come and murder him and throw his body into the bog, as he had often threatened. So Moynahan had gone out into the night by himself, and Norah had shortly after gone out also, and from that moment she—Miss Joyce—had not set eyes on her, and feared that some harm had happened.

This the poor soul told us in such an agony of dread and grief that it was pitiful to hear her, and we could not but forgive the terrible delay. I was myself in deadly fear, for every kind of harrowing possibility rose before me as the tale was told. It was quite evident that Murdock was bent on some desperate scheme of evil; he either intended to murder Norah or to compromise her in some terrible way. I was almost afraid to think of the subject. It was plain to me that by this means he hoped, not only to gratify his revenge, but to get some lever to use against us, one and all, so as to secure his efforts in searching for the treasure. In [Pg 326] my rage against the cowardly hound, I almost lost sight of the need of thankfulness for one great peril avoided.

However, there was no time at present for further thought—action, prompt and decisive, was vitally necessary. Joyce was absent—we had no clue to where he could be. Norah was alone on the mountain, and with the possibility of Murdock assailing

her, for he, too, was abroad—as we knew from the fact of his being away from his house.

We lost not a moment, but went out again into the storm. We did not, however, take the lantern with us, as we found by experience that its occasional light was in the long run an evil, as we could not by its light see any distance, and the grey of the coming dawn was beginning to show through the abating storm, with a faint indication that before long we should have some light.

We went down the hill westward until we came near the bog, for we had determined to make a circuit of it as our first piece of exploration, since we thought that here lay the most imminent danger. Then we separated, Dick following the line of the bog downward whilst I went north, intending to cross at the top and proceed down the farther side. We had agreed on a signal, if such could be heard through the storm, choosing the Australian “coo-ee,” which is the best sound to travel known.

I hurried along as fast as I dared, for I was occasionally in utter darkness. Although the morning was coming with promise of light, the sea-wind swept inland masses of swiftly-driving mist, which, whilst they [Pg 327] encompassed me, made movement not only difficult and dangerous, but at times almost impossible. The electric feeling in the air had become intensified, and each moment I expected the thunderstorm to burst.

Every little while I called, “Norah! Norah!” in the vain hope that, whilst returning from her search for her father, she might come within the sound of my voice. But no answering sound came back to me, except the fierce roar of the storm laden with the wild dash of the breakers hurled against the cliffs and the rocks below.

Even then, so strangely does the mind work, the words of the old song, “The Pilgrim of Love,” came mechanically to my memory, as though I had called “Orinthia” instead of “Norah:”—

“Till with ‘Orinthia’ all the rocks resound.”

On, on I went, following the line of the bog, till I had reached the northern point, where the ground rose and began to become solid. I found the bog here so swollen with rain that I had to make a long detour so as to get round to the western side. High up on the hill there was, I knew, a rough shelter for the cattle; and as it struck me that Joyce might have gone here to look after his stock, and that Norah had gone hither to search for him, I ran up to it. The cattle were there, huddled together in a solid mass behind the sheltering wall of sods and stones. I cried out as loudly as I could from the windward side, so that my voice would carry:—

[Pg 328]

“Norah! Norah! Joyce! Joyce! Are you there? Is anyone there?”

There was a stir amongst the cattle and one or two low “moos” as they heard the human voice, but no sound from either of those I sought; so I ran down again to the further side of the bog. I knew now that neither Norah nor her father could be on this point of the hill, or they would have heard my voice; and as the storm came from the west, I made a zigzag line going east to west as I followed down the bog so that I might have a chance of being heard—should there be anyone to hear. When I got near to the entrance to the Cliff Fields I shouted as loudly as I could, “Norah! Norah!” but the wind took my voice away as it would sweep thistles down, and it was as though I made the effort but no voice came, and I felt awfully alone in the midst of a thick pall of mist.

On, on I went, following the line of the bog. Lower down there was some shelter from the storm, for the great ridge of rocks here rose between me and the sea, and I felt that my voice could be heard further off. I was sick at heart and chilled with despair, till I felt as if the chill of my soul had extended even to my blood; but on I went with set purpose, the true doggedness of despair.

As I went I thought I heard a cry through the mist—Norah’s voice! It was but an instant, and I could not be sure whether my ears indeed heard, or if the anguish of my heart had created the phantom of a voice to deceive me. However, be it what it might, it awoke me like a clarion; my heart leaped and the blood surged in my [Pg 329] brain till I almost became dizzy. I listened to try if I could distinguish from what direction the voice had come.

I waited in agony. Each second seemed a century, and my heart beat like a trip-hammer. Then again I heard the sound—faint, but still clear enough to hear. I shouted with all my power, but once again the roar of the wind overpowered me; however, I ran on towards the voice.

There was a sudden lull in the wind—a blaze of lightning lit up the whole scene, and, some fifty yards before me, I saw two figures struggling at the edge of the rocks. In that welcome glance, infinitesimal though it was, I recognized the red petticoat which, in that place and at that time, could be none other than Norah’s. I shouted as I leapt forward; but just then the thunder broke overhead, and in the mighty and prolonged roll every other sound faded into nothingness, as though the thunderclap had come on a primeval stillness. As I drew near to where I had seen the figures, the thunder rolled away, and through its vanishing sound I heard distinctly Norah’s voice:—

“Help! Help! Arthur! Father! Help! Help!” Even in that wild moment my heart leaped, that of all names, she called on mine the first—Whatever men may say, Love and Jealousy are near kinsmen!

I shouted in return, as I ran, but the wind took my voice away—and then I heard her voice again, but fainter than before:—

“Help! Arthur—Father! Is there no one to help me[Pg 330] now!” And then the lightning flashed again, and in the long jagged flash we saw each other, and I heard her glad cry before the thunderclap drowned all else. I had seen that her assailant was Murdock, and I rushed at him, but he had seen me too, and before I could lay hands on him he had let her go, and with a mighty oath which the roll of the thunder drowned, he struck her to the earth and ran.

I raised my poor darling, and, carrying her a little distance, placed her on the edge of the ridge of rocks beside us, for by the light in the sky, which grew paler each second, I saw that a stream of water rising from the bog, was flowing towards us. She was unconscious—so I ran to the stream and dipped my hat full of water to bring to revive her. Then I remembered the signal of finding her, and putting my hands to my lips I sounded the “Coo-ee,” once, twice. As I stood I could see Murdock running to his house, for every instant it seemed to grow lighter, and the mist to disperse. The thunder had swept away the rain-clouds, and let in the light of the coming dawn.

But even as I stood there—and I had not delayed an unnecessary second—the ground under me seemed to be giving way. There was a strange shudder or shiver below me, and my feet began to sink. With a wild cry—for I felt that the fatal moment had come—that the bog was moving, and had caught me in its toils, I threw myself forward towards the rock. My cry seemed to arouse Norah like the call of a trumpet. She leaped[Pg 331] to her feet, and in an instant seemed to realize my danger, and rushed towards me. When I saw her coming I shouted to her:—

“Keep back! keep back.” But she did not pause an instant, and the only words she said were:—

“I am coming, Arthur! I am coming!”

Half way between us there was a flat-topped piece of rock, which raised its head out of the surrounding bog. As she struggled towards it, her feet began to sink, and a new terror for her was added to my own. But she did not falter a moment, and, as her lighter weight was in her favour, with a great effort she gained it. In the meantime I struggled forward. There was between me and the rock a clump of furze bushes; on these I threw myself, and for a second or two they supported me. Then even these

began to sink with me, for faster and faster, with each succeeding second, the earth seemed to liquify and melt away.

Up to now I had never realized the fear, or even the possibility, of death to myself—hitherto all my fears had been for Norah. But now came to me the bitter pang which must be for each of the children of men on whom Death has laid his icy hand. That this dread moment had come there was no doubt; nothing short of a miracle could save me!

No language could describe the awful sensation of that melting away of the solid earth—the most dreadful nightmare would be almost a pleasant memory compared with it.

[Pg 332]

I was now only a few feet from the rock whose very touch meant safety to me—but it was just beyond my reach! I was sinking to my doom!—I could see the horror in Norah's eyes, as she gained the rock and struggled to her feet.

But even Norah's love could not help me—I was beyond the reach of her arms, and she no more than I could keep a foothold on the liquifying earth. Oh! that she had a rope and I might be saved! Alas! she had none—even the shawl that might have aided me had fallen off in her struggle with Murdock.

But Norah had, with her woman's quick instinct, seen a way to help me. In an instant she had had torn off her red petticoat of heavy homespun cloth and thrown one end to me. I clutched and caught it with a despairing grasp—for by this time only my head and hands remained above the surface.

“Now, O God! for strength!” was the earnest prayer of her heart, and my thought was:—

“Now, for the strong hands that that other had despised!”

Norah threw herself backward with her feet against a projecting piece of the rock, and I felt that if we could both hold out long enough I was saved.

Little by little I gained! I drew closer and closer to the rock! Closer! closer still! till with one hand I grasped the rock itself, and hung on, breathless, in blind desperation. I was only just able to support myself, for there was a strange dragging power in the viscous mass [Pg 333] that held me, and greatly taxed my strength, already exhausted in the terrible struggle for life. The bog was beginning to move! But Norah bent forward, kneeling on the rock, and grasped my coat collar in her strong hands. Love and

despair lent her additional strength, and with one last great effort she pulled me upward—and in an instant more I lay on the rock safe and in her arms.

During this time, short as it was, the morning had advanced, and the cold grey mysterious light disclosed the whole slope before us dim in the shadow of the hill. Opposite to us, across the bog, we saw Joyce and Dick watching us, and between the gusts of wind we faintly heard their shouts.

To our right, far down the hill, the Shleenanaher stood out boldly, its warder rocks struck by the grey light falling over the hill-top. Nearer to us, and something in the same direction, Murdock's house rose a black mass in the centre of the hollow.

But as we looked around us, thankful for our safety, we grasped each other more closely, and a low cry of fear emphasized Norah's shudder—for a terrible thing began to happen.

The whole surface of the bog, as far as we could see it in the dim light, became wrinkled, and then began to move in little eddies, such as one sees in a swollen river. It seemed to rise and rise till it grew almost level with where we were, and instinctively we rose to our feet and stood there awestruck, Norah clinging to me, and with our arms round each other.

[Pg 334]

The shuddering surface of the bog began to extend on every side to even the solid ground which curbed it, and with relief we saw that Dick and Joyce stood high up on a rock. All things on its surface seemed to melt away and disappear, as though swallowed up. This silent change or demoralization spread down in the direction of Murdock's house—but when it got to the edge of the hollow in which the house stood, it seemed to move as swiftly forward as water leaps down a cataract.

Instinctively we both shouted a warning to Murdock—he, too, villain though he was, had a life to lose. He had evidently felt some kind of shock or change, for he came rushing out of the house full of terror. For an instant he seemed paralyzed with fright as he saw what was happening. And it was little wonder! for in that instant the whole house began to sink into the earth—to sink as a ship founders in a stormy sea, but without the violence and turmoil that marks such a catastrophe. There was something more terrible—more deadly in that silent, causeless destruction than in the devastation of the earthquake or the hurricane.

The wind had now dropped away; the morning light struck full over the hill, and we could see clearly. The sound of the waves dashing on the rocks below, and the

booming of the distant breakers filled the air—but through it came another sound, the like of which I had never heard, and the like of which I hope, in God's providence, I shall never hear again—a long, low gurgle, with something of a sucking sound; something terrible—resistless—and with a sort of hiss in it, as of seething waters striving to be free.

Then the convulsion of the bog grew greater; it almost seemed as if some monstrous living thing was deep under the surface and writhing to escape.

By this time Murdock's house had sunk almost level with the bog. He had climbed on the thatched roof, and stood there looking towards us, and stretching forth his hands as though in supplication for help. For a while the superior size and buoyancy of the roof sustained it, but then it too began slowly to sink. Murdock knelt, and clasped his hands in a frenzy of prayer.

And then came a mighty roar and a gathering rush. The side of the hill below us seemed to burst. Murdock threw up his arms—we heard his wild cry as the roof of the house, and he with it, was in an instant sucked below the surface of the heaving mass.

Then came the end of the terrible convulsion. With a rushing sound, and the noise of a thousand waters falling, the whole bog swept, in waves of gathering size, and with a hideous writhing, down the mountain-side to the entrance of the Shleenanaher—struck the portals with a sound like thunder, and piled up to a vast height. And then the millions of tons of slime and ooze, and bog and earth, and broken rock swept through the Pass into the sea.

[Pg 336]

Norah and I knelt down, hand-in-hand, and with full hearts thanked God for having saved us from so terrible a doom.

The waves of the torrent rushing by us at first came almost level with us; but the stream diminished so quickly, that in an incredibly short time we found ourselves perched on the top of a high jutting rock, standing sharply up from the sloping sides of a deep ravine, where but a few minutes before the bog had been. Carefully we climbed down, and sought a more secure place on the base of the ridge of rocks behind us. The deep ravine lay below us, down whose sides began to rattle ominously, here and there, masses of earth and stones deprived of their support below where the torrent had scoured their base.

Lighter and lighter grew the sky over the mountain, till at last one red ray shot up like a crack in the vault of heaven, and a great light seemed to smite the rocks that glistened

in their coat of wet. Across the ravine we saw Joyce and Dick beginning to descend, so as to come over to us. This aroused us, and we shouted to them to keep back, and waved our arms to them in signal; for we feared that some landslip or some new outpouring of the bog might sweep them away, or that the bottom of the ravine might be still only treacherous slime. They saw our gesticulations, if they did not hear our voices, and held back. Then we pointed up the ravine, and signalled them that we would move up the edge of the rocks. This we proceeded to do, and they followed [Pg 337] on the other side, watching us intently. Our progress was slow, for the rocks were steep and difficult, and we had to keep eternally climbing up and descending the serrated edges, where the strata lapped over each other; and besides we were chilled and numbed with cold.

At last, however, we passed the corner where was the path down to the Cliff Fields, and turned eastwards up the hill. Then in a little while we got well above the ravine, which here grew shallower, and could walk on more level ground. Here we saw that the ravine ended in a deep cleft, whence issued a stream of water. And then we saw hurrying up over the top of the cleft Joyce and Dick.

Up to now, Norah and I had hardly spoken a word. Our hearts were too full for speech; and, indeed, we understood each other, and could interpret our thoughts by a subtler language than that formulated by man.

In another minute Norah was clasped in her father's arms. He held her close, and kissed her, and cried over her; whilst Dick wrung my hand hard. Then Joyce left his daughter, and came and flung his arms round me, and thanked God that I had escaped; whilst Norah went up to Dick, and put her arms round him, and kissed him as a sister might.

We all went back together as fast as we could; and the sun that rose that morning rose on no happier group—despite the terror and the trouble of the night. Norah walked between her father and me, holding us both tightly, and Dick walked on my other side with his arm [Pg 338] in mine. As we came within sight of the house, we met Miss Joyce—her face grey with anxiety. She rushed towards us, and flung her arms round Norah, and the two women rocked each other in their arms; and then we all kissed her—even Dick, to her surprise. His kiss was the last, and it seemed to pull her together; for she perked up, and put her cap straight—a thing which she had not done for the rest of us. Then she walked beside us, holding her brother's hand.

We all talked at once and told the story over and over again of the deadly peril I had been in, and how Norah had saved my life; and here the brave girl's fortitude gave way. She seemed to realize all at once the terror and the danger of the long night, and

suddenly her lips grew white, and she would have sunk down to the ground only that I had seen her faint coming and had caught her and held her tight. Her dear head fell over on my shoulder, but her hands never lost their grasp of my arm.

We carried her down toward the house as quickly as we could; but before we had got to the door she had recovered from her swoon, and her first look when her eyes opened was for me, and the first word she said was—

“Arthur! Is he safe?”

And then I laid her in the old arm-chair by the hearth-place, and took her cold hands in mine, and kissed them and cried over them—which I hoped vainly that no one saw.[Pg 339] Then Miss Joyce, like a true housekeeper, stirred herself, and the flames roared up the chimney, and the slumbering kettle on the chain over the fire woke and sang again; and it seemed like magic, for all at once we were all sipping hot whiskey punch, and beginning to feel the good effects of it.

Then Miss Joyce hurried away Norah to change her clothes, and Dick and I went with Joyce, and we all rigged ourselves out with whatever came to hand; and then we came back to the kitchen and laughed at each other’s appearance. We found Miss Joyce already making preparations for breakfast, and succeeding pretty well, too.

And then Norah joined us, but she was not the least grotesque; she seemed as though she had just stepped out of a band-box—she seemed so trim and neat, with her grey jacket and her Sunday red petticoat. Her black hair was coiled in one glorious roll round her noble head, and there was but one thing which I did not like, and which sent a pang through my heart—a blue and swollen bruise on her ivory forehead where Murdock had struck her that dastard blow! She saw my look and her eyes fell, and when I went to her and kissed the wound and whispered to her how it pained me, she looked up at me and whispered so that none of the others could hear:—

“Hush! hush! Poor soul, he has paid a terrible penalty; let us forget as we forgive!” And then I took her hands in mine and stooped to kiss them, whilst the[Pg 340] others all smiled happily as they looked on; but she tried to draw them away, and a bright blush dyed her cheeks as she murmured to me:—

“No! no, Arthur! Arthur dear, not now! I only did what anyone would do for you!” and the tears rushed to her eyes.

“I must! Norah,” said I, “I must! for I owe these brave hands my life!” and I kissed them and she made no more resistance. Her father’s voice and words sounded very true as he said:-

“Nay, daughter, it is right that he should kiss those hands this blessed mornin’, for they took a true man out of the darkness of the grave!”

And then my noble old Dick came over too, and he raised those dear hands reverently to his lips, and said very softly:—

“For he is dear to us all!”

By this time Miss Joyce had breakfast well under way, and one and all we thought that it was time we should let the brightness of the day and the lightness of our hearts have a turn; and Joyce said heartily:—

“Come now! Come now! Let us sit down to breakfast; but first let us give thanks to Almighty God that has been so good to us, and let us forgive that poor wretch that met such a horrible death. Rest to his soul!”

We were all silent for a little bit, for the great gladness of our hearts, that came through the terrible remembrance thus brought home to us, was too deep for words. Norah and I sat hand in hand, and between us [Pg 341] was but one heart, and one soul, and one thought—and all were filled with gratitude.

When once we had begun breakfast in earnest a miniature babel broke out. We had each something to tell and much to hear; and for the latter reason we tacitly arranged, after the first outbreak, that each should speak in turn.

Miss Joyce told us of the terrible anxiety she had been in ever since she had seen us depart, and how every sound, great or small—even the gusts of wind that howled down the chimney and made the casements rattle—had made her heart jump into her mouth, and brought her out to the door to see if we or any of us were coming. Then Dick told us how, on proceeding down the eastern side of the bog, he had diverged so as to look in at Murdock’s house to see if he were there, but had found only old Moynahan lying on the floor in a state of speechless drunkenness, and so wet that the water running from his clothes had formed a pool of water on the floor. He had evidently only lately returned from wandering on the hillside. Then as he was about to go on his way he had heard, as he thought, a noise lower down the hill, and on going towards it had met Joyce carrying a sheep which had its leg broken, and which he told him had been blown off a steep rock on the south side of the hill. Then they two had kept together after Dick had told him of our search for Norah, until we had seen them in the coming grey of the dawn. [Pg 342] Next Joyce took up the running, and told us how he had been working on the top of the mountain when he saw the signs of the storm coming so fast that he thought it would be well to look after the sheep and cattle, and see them in some kind of shelter before the morning. He had driven all the

cattle which were up high on the hill into the shelter where I had found them, and then had gone down the southern shoulder of the hill, placing all the sheep and cattle in places of shelter as well as he could, until he had come across the wounded one, which he took on his shoulders to bring it home, but which had since been carried away in the bursting of the bog. He finished by reminding me jocularly that I owed him something for his night's work, for the stock was now all mine.

“No!” said I, “not for another day. My purchase of your ground and stock was only to take effect from after noon of the 28th, and we are now only at the early morning of that day; but at any rate I must thank you for the others,” for I had a number of sheep and cattle which Dick had taken over from the other farmers whose land I had bought.

Then I told over again all that had happened to me. I had to touch on the blow which Norah had received, but I did so as lightly as I could; and when I said “God forgive him!” they all added softly, “Amen!”

Then Dick put in a word about poor old Moynahan:—

“Poor old fellow, he is gone also. He was a drunkard, but he wasn't all bad. Perhaps he saved Norah last[Pg 343] night from a terrible danger. His life mayhap may leaven the whole lump of filth and wickedness that went through the Shleenanaher into the sea last night!”

We all said “Amen” again, and I have no doubt that we all meant it with all our hearts.

Then I told again of Norah's brave struggle and how, by her courage and her strength, she took me out of the very jaws of a terrible death. She put one hand before her eyes—for I held the other close in mine—and through her fingers dropped her welling tears.

We sat silent for a while, and we felt that it was only right and fitting when Joyce came round to her and laid his hand on her head and stroked her hair as he said:—

“Ye have done well, daughter—ye have done well!”

[Pg 344]

CHAPTER XVIII. THE FULFILMENT.

When breakfast was finished, Dick proposed that we should go now and look in the full daylight at the effect of the shifting of the bog. I suggested to Norah that perhaps

she had better not come as the sight might harrow her feelings, and, besides, that she would want some rest and sleep after her long night of terror and effort. She point blank refused to stay behind, and accordingly we all set out, having now had our clothes dried and changed, leaving only Miss Joyce to take care of the house.

The morning was beautiful and fresh after the storm. The deluge of rain had washed everything so clean that already the ground was beginning to dry, and as the morning sun shone hotly there was in the air that murmurous hum that follows rain when the air is still. And the air was now still—the storm seemed to have spent itself, and away to the West there was no sign of its track, except that the great Atlantic rollers were heavier and the surf on the rocks rose higher than usual.

[Pg 345]

We took our way first down the hill, and then westward to the Shleenanaher, for we intended, under Dick's advice, to follow, if possible, up to its source the ravine made by the bog. When we got to the entrance of the Pass we were struck with the vast height to which the bog had risen when its mass first struck the portals. A hundred feet overhead there was the great brown mark, and on the sides of the Pass the same mark was visible, declining quickly as it got seaward and the Pass widened, showing the track of its passage to the sea.

We climbed the rocks and looked over. Norah clung close to me, and my arm went round her and held her tight as we peered over and saw where the great waves of the Atlantic struck the rocks three hundred feet below us, and were for a quarter of a mile away still tinged with the brown slime of the bog.

We then crossed over the ravine, for the rocky bottom was here laid bare, and so we had no reason to fear waterholes or pitfalls. A small stream still ran down the ravine and, shallowing out over the shelf of rock, spread all across the bottom of the Pass, and fell into the sea—something like a miniature of the Staubach Fall, as the water whitened in the falling.

We then passed up on the west side of the ravine, and saw that the stream which ran down the centre was perpetual—a live stream, and not merely the drainage of the ground where the bog had saturated the earth. As we passed up the hill we saw where the side of the slope had been torn bodily away, and the great chasm [Pg 346] where once the house had been which Murdock took from Joyce, and so met his doom. Here there was a great pool of water—and indeed all throughout the ravine were places where the stream broadened into deep pools, and again into shallow pools where it

ran over the solid bed of rock. As we passed up, Dick hazarded an explanation or a theory:—

“Do you know it seems to me that this ravine or valley was once before just as it is now. The stream ran down it and out at the Shleenanaher just as it does now. Then by some landslips, or a series of them, or by a falling tree, the passage became blocked, and the hollow became a lake, and its edges grew rank with boggy growth; and then, from one cause and another—the falling in of the sides, or the rush of rain storms carrying down the detritus of the mountain, and perpetually washing down particles of clay from the higher levels—the lake became choked up; and then the lighter matter floated to the top, and by time and vegetable growth became combined. And so the whole mass grew cohesive and floated on the water and slime below. This may have occurred more than once. Nay, moreover, sections of the bog may have become segregated or separated by some similarity of condition affecting its parts, or by some formation of the ground, as by the valley narrowing in parts between walls of rock so that the passage could be easily choked. And so, solid earth formed to be again softened and demoralized by the later mingling with the less solid mass above it. It is [Pg 347] possible, if not probable, that more than once, in the countless ages that have passed, this ravine has been as we see it—and again as it was but a few hours ago!”

No one had anything to urge against this theory, and we all proceeded on our way.

When we came to the place where Norah had rescued me, we examined the spot most carefully, and again went over the scene and the exploit. It was almost impossible to realize that this great rock, towering straight up from the bottom of the ravine, had, at the fatal hour, seemed only like a tussock rising from the bog. When I had climbed to the top I took my knife and cut a cross on the rock, where my brave girl's feet had rested, to mark the spot.

Then we went on again. Higher up the hill we came to a place, where, on each side a rocky promontory, with straight deep walls, jutted into the ravine, making a sort of narrow gateway or gorge in the valley. Dick pointed it out:—

“See! here is one of the very things I spoke of, that made the bog into sections or chambers, or tanks, or whatever we should call them. More than that, here is an instance of the very thing I hinted at before—that the peculiar formation of the Snake's Pass runs right through the hill! If this be so!—but we shall see later on.”

On the other side was, we agreed, the place where old Moynahan had said the Frenchmen had last been seen. Dick and I were both curious about the matter, and we

agreed to cross the ravine and make certain,[Pg 348] for, if it were the spot, Dick's mark of the stones in the Y shape would be a proof. Joyce and Norah both refused to let us go alone, so we all went up a little further, where the sides of the rock sloped on each side, and where we could pass safely, as the bed was rock and quite smooth with the stream flowing over it in a thin sheet.

When we got to the bottom, Joyce, who was looking round, said suddenly:—

“What is that like a square block behind the high rock on the other side?” He went over to it, and an instant after, gave a great cry and turned and beckoned to us. We all ran over—and there before us, in a crescent-shaped nook, at the base of the lofty rock, lay a wooden chest. The top was intact, but one of the lower corners was broken, as though with a fall; and from the broken aperture had fallen out a number of coins, which we soon found to be of gold.

On the top of the chest we could make out the letters R. F. in some metal, discoloured and corroded with a century of slime, and on its ends were great metal handles—to each of which something white was attached. We stooped to look at them, and then Norah, with a low cry, turned to me, and laid her head on my breast, as though to shut out some horrid sight. Then we investigated the mass that lay there.

At each end of the chest lay a skeleton—the fleshless fingers grasping the metal handle. We recognized the whole story at a glance, and our hats came off.

[Pg 349]

“Poor fellows!” said Dick, “they did their duty nobly. They guarded their treasure to the last.” Then he went on. “See! they evidently stepped into the bog, straight off the rock, and were borne down at once, holding tight to the handles of the chest they carried—or stay”—and he stooped lower and caught hold of something:—

“See how the bog can preserve! this leather strap attached to the handles of the chest each had round his shoulder, and so, willy nilly, they were dragged to their doom. Never mind! they were brave fellows all the same, and faithful ones—they never let go the handles—look! their dead hands clasp them still. France should be proud of such sons! It would make a noble coat of arms, this treasure chest sent by freemen to aid others—and with two such supporters!”

We looked at the chest and the skeletons for a while, and then Dick said:—

“Joyce, this is on your land—for it is yours till to-morrow—and you may as well keep it—possession is nine points of the law—and if we take the gold out, the government can only try to claim it. But if they take it, we may ask in vain!” Joyce answered:—

“Take it I will, an’ gladly; but not for meself. The money was sent for Ireland’s good—to help them that wanted help, an’ plase God! I’ll see it doesn’t go astray now!”

Dick’s argument was a sensible one, and straightway we wrenched the top off the chest, and began to remove[Pg 350] the gold; but we never stirred the chest or took away those skeleton hands from the handles which they grasped.

It took us all, carrying a good load each, to bring the money to Joyce’s cottage. We locked it in a great oak chest, and warned Miss Joyce not to say a word about it. I told Miss Joyce that if Andy came for me he was to be sent on to us, explaining that we were going back to the top of the new ravine.

We followed it up further, till we reached a point much higher up on the hill, and at last came to the cleft in the rock whence the stream issued. The floor here was rocky, and it being so, we did not hesitate to descend, and even to enter the chine. As we did so, Dick turned to me:—

“Well! it seems to me that the mountain is giving up its secrets to-day. We have found the Frenchmen’s treasure, and now we may expect, I suppose, to find the lost crown! By George! though, it is strange! they said the Snake became the Shifting Bog, and that it went out, by the Shleenanaher!—as we saw the bog did.”

When we got well into the chine, we began to look about us curiously. There was something odd—something which we did not expect. Dick was the most prying, and certainly the most excited of us all. He touched some of the rock, and then almost shouted:—

“Hurrah! this a day of discoveries.—Hurrah! hurrah!”

[Pg 351]

“Now, Dick, what is it?” I asked—myself in a tumult, for his enthusiasm, although we did not know the cause, excited as all.

“Why! man, don’t you see! this is what we have wanted all along.”

“What is? Speak out, man dear! We are all in ignorance!” Dick laid his hand impressively on the rock:—

“Limestone! There is a streak of it here, right through the mountain—and, moreover, look! look!—this is not all nature’s work—these rocks have been cut in places by the hands of men!” We all got very excited, and hurried up the chine; but the rocks now joined over our heads, and all was dark beyond, and the chine became a cave.

“Has anyone a match—we must have a light of some kind here,” said Joyce.

“There is the lantern in the house. I shall run for it. Don’t stir until I get back,” I cried; and I ran out and climbed the side of the ravine, and got to Joyce’s house as soon as I could. My haste and impetuosity frightened Miss Joyce, who called in terror:—

“Is there anything wrong—not an accident I hope?”

“No! no! we only want to examine a rock, and the place is dark. Give us the lantern quick, and some matches.”

“Aisy! aisy, alanna!” she said. “The rock won’t run away!”

I took the lantern and matches and ran back. When [Pg 352] we had lit the lantern, Norah suggested that we should be very careful, as there might be foul air about. Dick laughed at the idea.

“No foul air here, Norah; it was full of water a few hours ago,” and taking the lantern, he went into the narrow opening. We all followed, Norah clinging tightly to me. The cave widened as we entered, and we stood in a moderate sized cavern, partly natural and partly hollowed out by rough tools. Here and there, were inscriptions in strange character, formed by straight vertical lines something like the old telegraph signs, but placed differently.

“Ogham!-one of the oldest and least known of writings,” said Dick, when the light fell on them as he raised the lantern.”

At the far end of the cave was a sort of slab or bracket, formed of a part of the rock carven out. Norah went towards it, and called us to her with a loud cry. We all rushed over, and Dick threw the light of the lantern on her; and then exclamations of wonder burst from us also.

In her hand she held an ancient crown of strange form. It was composed of three pieces of flat gold joined all along one edge, like angle iron, and twisted delicately. The gold was wider and the curves bolder in the centre, from which they were fined away to the ends and then curved into a sort of hook. In the centre was set a great stone, that shone with the yellow light of a topaz, but with a fire all its own!

[Pg 353]

Dick was the first to regain his composure and, as usual, to speak:—

“The Lost Crown of Gold!—the crown that gave the hill its name, and was the genesis of the story of St. Patrick and the King of the Snakes! Moreover, see, there is a

scientific basis for the legend. Before this stream cut its way out through the limestone, and made this cavern, the waters were forced upwards to the lake at the top of the hill, and so kept it supplied; but when its channel was cut here—or a way opened for it by some convulsion of nature, or the rending asunder of these rocks—the lake fell away.”

He stopped, and I went on:—

“And so, ladies and gentlemen, the legend is true, that the Lost Crown would be discovered when the water of the lake was found again.”

“Begor! that’s thrue, anyhow!” said the voice of Andy in the entrance. “Well, yer ’an’r, iv all the sthrange things what iver happened, this is the most sthrangest! Fairies isn’t in it this time, at all, at all!”

I told Andy something of what had happened, including the terrible deaths of Murdock and Moynahan, and sent him off to tell the head constable of police, and any one else he might see. I told him also of the two skeletons found beside the chest.

Andy was off like a rocket. Such news as he had to tell would not come twice in a man’s lifetime, and would make him famous through all the country-side.[Pg 354] When he was gone, we decided that we had seen all that was worth while, and agreed to go back to the house, where we might be on hand to answer all queries regarding the terrible occurrences of the night. When we got outside the cave, and had ascended the ravine, I noticed that the crown in Norah’s hands had now none of the yellow glare of the jewel, and feared the latter had been lost. I said to her:—

“Norah, dear! have you dropped the jewel from the crown?”

She held it up, startled, to see; and then we all wondered again—for the jewel was still there, but it had lost its yellow colour, and shone with a white light, something like the lustre of a pearl seen in the midst of the flash of diamonds. It looked like some kind of uncut crystal, but none of us had ever seen anything like it.

We had hardly got back to the house when the result of Andy’s mission began to be manifested. Every soul in the country-side seemed to come pouring in to see the strange sights at Knockcalltecore. There was a perfect babel of sounds; and every possible and impossible story, and theory, and conjecture was ventilated at the top of the voice of every one, male and female.

The head constable was one of the first to arrive. He came into the cottage, and we gave him all the required details of Murdock’s and Moynahan’s death, which he duly wrote down, and then went off with Dick to go over the ground.

Presently there was a sudden silence amongst the [Pg 355] crowd outside, the general body of which seemed to continue as great as ever from the number of new arrivals—despite the fact that a large number of those present had followed Dick and the head constable in their investigation of the scene of the catastrophe. The silence was as odd as noise would have been under ordinary circumstances, so I went to the door to see what it meant. In the porch I met Father Ryan, who had just come from the scene of the disaster. He shook me warmly by the hand, and said loudly, so that all those around might hear:—

“Mr. Severn, I’m real glad and thankful to see ye this day. Praise be to God, that watched over ye last night, and strengthened the arms of that brave girl to hold ye up.” Here Norah came to join us; and he took her warmly by both hands, whilst the people cheered:—

“My! but we’re all proud of ye! Remember that God has given a great mercy through your hands—and ye both must thank Him all the days of your life! And those poor men that met their death so horribly—poor Moynahan, in his drunken slumber! Men! it’s a warning to ye all! Whenever ye may be tempted to take a glass too much, let the fate of that poor soul rise up before ye and forbid ye to go too far. As for that unhappy Murdock, may God forgive him and look lightly on his sins! I told him what he should expect—that the fate of Ahab and Jezebel would be his. For as Ahab coveted the vineyard of his neigh [Pg 356]bour Naboth, and as Jezebel wrought evil to aid him to his desire, so this man hath coveted his neighbour’s goods and wrought evil to ruin him. And now behold his fate, even as the fate of Ahab and Jezebel! He went without warning and without rites—and no man knows where his body lies. The fishes of the sea have preyed on him, even as the dogs on Jezebel.” Here Joyce joined us, and he turned to him:—

“And do you, Michael Joyce, take to heart the lesson of God’s goodness! Ye thought when yer land and yer house was taken that a great wrong was done ye, and that God had deserted ye; and yet so inscrutable are His ways that these very things were the salvation of ye and all belonging to ye. For in his stead you and yours would have been swept in that awful avalanche into the sea!”

And now the head constable returned with Dick, and the priest went out. I took the former aside and asked him if there would be any need for Norah to remain, as there were other witnesses to all that had occurred. He told me that there was not the slightest need. Then he went away after telling the people that we all had had a long spell of trouble and labour, and would want to be quiet and have some rest. And so, with a good feeling and kindness of heart which I have never seen lacking in this

people, they melted away; and we all came within the house, and shut the door, and sat round the fire to discuss what should be done. Then and there we decided that the very next day Norah should start with [Pg 357] her father, for the change of scene would do her good, and take her mind off the terrible experiences of last night.

So that day we rested. The next morning Andy was to drive Joyce and Norah and myself off to Galway, en route for London and Paris.

In the afternoon Norah and I strolled out together for one last look at the beautiful scene from our table-rock in the Cliff Fields. Close as we had been hitherto, there was now a new bond between us; and when we were out of sight of prying eyes—on the spot where we had first told our loves, I told her of my idea of the new bond. She hung down her head, but drew closer to me as I told her how much more I valued my life since she had saved it for me—and how I should in all the two years that were to come try hard that every hour should be such as she would like me to have passed.

“Norah, dear!” I said, “the bar you place on our seeing each other in all that long time will be hard to bear, but I shall know that I am enduring for your sake.” She turned to me, and with earnest eyes looked lovingly into mine as she said:—

“Arthur! dear Arthur, God knows I love you! I love you so well that I want to come to you, if I can, in such a way that I may never do you discredit; and I am sure that when the two years are over—and, indeed, they will not go lightly for me—you will not be sorry that you have made the sacrifice for me. Dear! I shall [Pg 358] ask you when we meet on our wedding morning if you are satisfied.”

When it was time to go home we rose up, and—it might have been that the evening was chilly—a cold feeling came over me, as though I still stood in the shadow of the fateful hill. And there in the Cliff Fields I kissed Norah Joyce for the last time!

The two years sped quickly enough, although my not being able to see Norah at all was a great trial to me. Often and often I felt tempted almost beyond endurance to go quietly and hang round where she was so that I might get even a passing glimpse of her; but I felt that such would not be loyal to my dear girl. It was hard not to be able to tell her, even now and again, how I loved her, but it had been expressly arranged—and wisely enough too—that I should only write in such a manner as would pass, if necessary, the censorship of the schoolmistress. “I must be,” said Norah to me, “exactly as the other girls are—and, of course, I must be subject to the same rules.” And so it was that my letters had to be of a tempered warmth, which caused me now and again considerable pain.

My dear girl wrote to me regularly, and although there was not any of what her schoolmistress would call “love” in her letters, she always kept me posted in all her doings; and with every letter it was borne in on me that her heart and feelings were unchanged.

[Pg 359]

I had certain duties to attend to with regard to my English property, and this kept me fairly occupied.

Each few months I ran over to the Knockcalltecore, which Dick was transforming into a fairyland. The discovery of the limestone had, as he had conjectured, created possibilities in the way of building and of waterworks of which at first we had not dreamed. The new house rose on the table-rock in the Cliff Fields. A beautiful house it was, of red sandstone with red tiled roof and quaint gables, and jutting windows and balustrades of carven stone. The whole Cliff Fields were laid out as exquisite gardens, and the murmur of water was everywhere. None of this I ever told Norah in my letters, as it was to be a surprise to her.

On the spot where she had rescued me we had reared a great stone—a monolith whereon a simple legend told the story of a woman’s strength and bravery. Round its base were sculptured the history of the mountain from its legend of the King of Snakes down to the lost treasure and the rescue of myself. This was all carried out under Dick’s eye. The legend on the stone was:—

Norah Joyce
a Brave Woman
on this spot
by her Courage and Devotion
saved a man’s life.

At the end of the first year Norah went to another school at Dresden for six months; and then, by her own request to Mr. Chapman, was transferred to an[Pg 360] English school at Brighton, one justly celebrated amongst Englishwomen.

These last six months were very, very long to me; for as the time drew near when I might claim my darling the suspense grew very great, and I began to have harrowing fears lest her love might not have survived the long separation and the altered circumstances.

I heard regularly from Joyce. He had gone to live with his son Eugene, who was getting along well, and was already beginning to make a name for himself as an engineer. By

his advice his father had taken a sub-section of the great Ship Canal, then in progress of construction, and with the son's knowledge and his own shrewdness and energy was beginning to realize what to him was a fortune. So that the purchase-money of Shleenanaher, which formed his capital, was used to a good purpose.

At last the long period of waiting came to an end. A month before Norah's school was finished, Joyce went to Brighton to see her, having come to visit me beforehand. His purpose and mine was to arrange all about the wedding, which we wanted to be exactly as she wished. She asked her father to let it be as quiet as possible, with absolutely no fuss—no publicity, and in some quiet place where no one knew us.

“Tell Arthur,” she said, “that I should like it to be somewhere near the sea, and where we can get easily on the Continent.”

I fixed on Hythe, which I had been in the habit of visiting occasionally, as the place where we were to be [Pg 361] married. Here, high over the sea level, rises the grand old church where the bones of so many brave old Norsemen rest after a thousand years. The place was so near to Folkestone that after the wedding and an informal breakfast we could drive over to catch the mid-day boat. I lived the requisite time in Hythe, and complied with all the formalities.

I did not see my darling until we met in the church-porch, and then I gazed on her with unstinted admiration. Oh! what a peerless beauty she was! Every natural grace and quality seemed developed to the full. Every single grace of womanhood was there—every subtle manifestation of high breeding—every stamp of the highest culture. There was no one in the porch—for those with me delicately remained in the church when they saw me go out to meet my bride—and I met her with a joy unspeakable. Joyce went in and left her with me a moment—they had evidently arranged to do so—but when we were quite alone she said to me with a very serious look:—

“Mr. Severn, before we go into the church answer me one question—answer me truthfully, I implore you!” A great fear came upon me that at the last I was to suffer the loss of her I loved—that at the moment when the cup of happiness was at my lips it was to be dashed aside—and it was with a hoarse voice and a beating heart I answered:—

“I shall speak truly, Norah! What is it?” She said very demurely:—

[Pg 362]

“Mr. Severn! are you satisfied with me?” I looked up and caught the happy smile in her eyes, and for answer took her in my arms to kiss her: but she said:—

“Not yet, Arthur! not yet! What would they say? And besides, it would be unlucky.” So I released her, and she took my arm, and as we came up the aisle together I whispered to her:—

“Yes, my darling! Yes! yes! a thousand times. The time has been long, long; but the days were well spent!” She looked at me with a glad, happy look as she murmured in my ear:—

“We shall see Italy soon, dear, together. I am so happy!” and she pinched my arm.

That was a very happy wedding, and as informal as it was happy. As Norah had no bridesmaid, Dick, who was to have been my best man, was not going to act; but when Norah knew this she insisted on it, and said sweetly:—

“I should not feel I was married properly unless Dick took his place. And as to my having no bridesmaid, all I can say is, if we had half so good a girl friend, she would be here, of course!”

This settled the matter, and Dick with his usual grace and energy carried out the best man’s chief duty of taking care of his principal’s hat.

There were only our immediate circle present, Joyce and Eugene, Miss Joyce—who had come all the way from Knocknagar, Mr. Chapman, and Mr. Caicy—who had also come over from Galway specially. There was one[Pg 363] other old friend also present, but I did not know it until I came out of the vestry, after signing the register, with my wife on my arm.

There, standing modestly in the background, and with a smile as manifest as a ten acre field, was none other than Andy—Andy so well dressed and smart that there was really nothing to distinguish him from any other man in Hythe. Norah saw him first, and said heartily:—

“Why, there is Andy! How are you, Andy?” and held out her hand. Andy took it in his great fist, and stooped and kissed it as if it had been a saint’s hand and not a woman’s:—

“God bless and keep ye, Miss Norah darlin’—an’ the Virgin and the saints watch over ye both.” Then he shook hands with me.

“Thank you, Andy!” we said both together, and then I beckoned Dick and whispered to him.

We went back to breakfast in my rooms, and sat down as happy a party as could be—the only one not quite comfortable at first being Andy. He and Dick both came in quite hot and flushed. Dick pointed to him:—

“He’s an obstinate, truculent villain, is Andy. Why, I had to almost fight him to make him come in. Now, Andy, no running away—it is Miss Norah’s will!” and Andy subsided bashfully into a seat. It was fully several minutes before he either smiled or winked. We had a couple of hours to pass before it became time to leave for Folkestone; and when breakfast was over, one and then another said a few kindly words. Dick opened the[Pg 364] ball by speaking most beautifully of our own worthiness, and of how honestly and honourably each had won the other, and of the long life and happiness that lay, he hoped and believed, before us. Then Joyce spoke a few manly words of his love for his daughter and his pride in her. The tears were in his eyes when he said how his one regret in life was that her dear mother had to look down from Heaven her approval on this day, instead of sharing it amongst us as the best of mothers and the best of women. Then Norah turned to him and laid her head on his breast and cried a little—not unhappily, but happily, as a bride should cry at leaving those she loves for one she loves better still.

Of course both the lawyers spoke, and Eugene said a few words bashfully. I was about to reply to them all, when Andy got up and crystallized the situation in a few words:—

“Miss Norah an’ yer ’an’r, I’d like, if I might make so bould, to say a wurrd fur all the men and weemen in Ireland that ayther iv yez iver kem across. I often heerd iv fairies, an’ Masther Art knows well how he hunted wan from the top iv Knocknacar to the top iv Knockcalltecore, and I won’t say a wurrd about the kind iv a fairy he wanted to find—not even in her quare kind iv an eye—bekase I might be overlooked, as the masther was; and more betoken, since I kem here Masther Dick has tould me that I’m to be yer ’an’r’s Irish coachman. Hurroo! an’ I might get evicted from that same houldin’ fur me impidence in tellin’ tales iv the Masther before[Pg 365] he was married; but I’ll promise yez both that there’ll be no man from the Giant’s Causeway to Cape Clear what’ll thry, an’ thry hardher, to make yer feet walk an’ yer wheels rowl in aisy ways than meself. I’m takin’ a liberty, I know, be sayin’ so much, but plase God! ye’ll walk yer ways wid honour an’ wid peace, believin’ in aich other an’ in God—an’ may He bless ye both, an’ yer childher, and yer childher’s childher to folly ye. An’ if iver ayther iv yez wants to shtep into glory over a man’s body, I hope ye’ll not look past poor ould Andy Sullivan!”

Andy’s speech was quaint, but it was truly meant, for his heart was full of quick sympathy, and the honest fellow’s eyes were full of tears as he concluded.

Then Miss Joyce's health was neatly proposed by Mr. Chapman and responded to in such a way by Mr. Caicy that Norah whispered me that she would not be surprised if Aunt took up her residence in Galway before long.

And now the hour was come to say good-bye to all friends. We entered our carriage and rolled away, leaving behind us waving hands, loving eyes, and hearts that beat most truly.

And the great world lay before us with all the possibilities of happiness that men and women may win for themselves. There was never a cloud to shadow our sun-lit way; and we felt that we were one.



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