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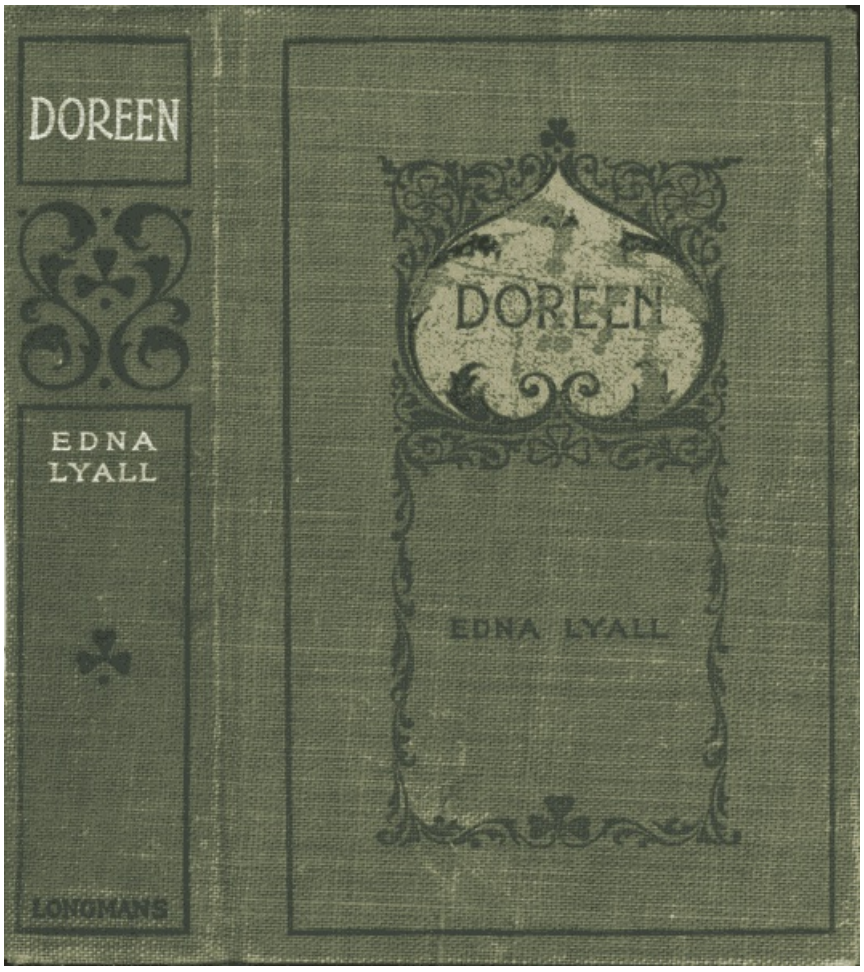

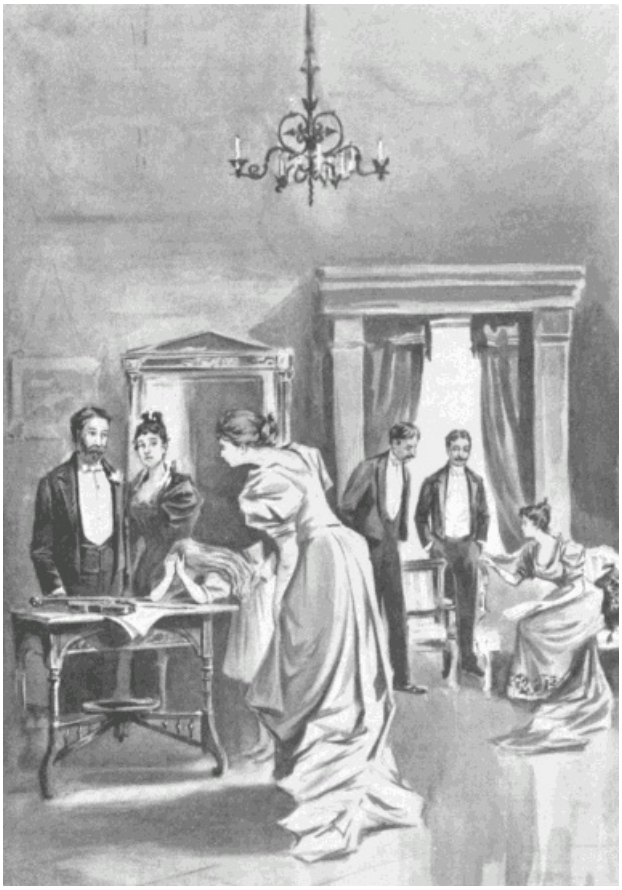

DOREEN

THE STORY OF A SINGER

BY

EDNA LYALL

AUTHOR OF "DONOVAN," "WE TWO," "IN THE GOLDEN DAYS," "KNIGHT

"What we wish is, that where there has been despondency there
shall be hope; where there has been mistrust there shall be confidence;
where there has been alienation and hate there shall be
woven the ties of a strong attachment between man and man"
THE RIGHT HON. W. E. GLADSTONE

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Dedicated

IN GRATITUDE AND REVERENCE

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE W. E. GLADSTONE.

"He might have had the World with him,
But chose to side with suffering men
And had the World against him."

CONTENTS.

DOREEN.

CHAPTER I.

"A voice of ... heavenly sweetness, with that reedy thrill in it which you have heard in the thrush's even-song."—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

"Her name is Doreen," said Max Hereford, laying emphatic stress on the last syllable. "Why do you insist on calling her the little Colleen Bawn?"

"Because she invariably wears that red 'Colleen Bawn' cloak," replied his cousin Miriam, with a gleam of amusement in her dark eyes. "Probably, like charity, it hides a multitude of sins, for I fancy the O'Ryans are very poor and of the shabby genteel sort. My old French governess would have called the cloak a '*Couvre douleur*.'"

"Who are you speaking about, my dear?" said Mrs. Hereford, looking up from her embroidery frame.

"Why, aunt, about the little Irish girl that Mr. Desmond and Max take such delight in studying. We found her in difficulties one day with Mr. Foxell's dog, which was frightening her small brother nearly into fits, and ever since Max has done nothing but rave about her charming little touch of the brogue and her bewitching voice. Several times she has been out in the boat with us, and I have been obliged, in consequence, to play the unpleasant part of second fiddle."

"She is a child of twelve years old, mother," said Max, leaving John Desmond, his tutor, to enter a protest against Miriam's last sentence, "the jolliest little girl you ever saw. She and her mother are lodging at that gray house not far from the lodge. Michael—that's the small boy—had been ill, and the mother seems to be half an invalid."

"You should have told me of her before," said Mrs. Hereford. "She might have been glad to borrow books, for this lonely country place must be dull for an invalid. Is she as Irish as her daughter?"

"No: on the contrary, she is English, and seems quiet and reserved, and as if she had lived through a lot of trouble. I can't make out much about the father, except that they are to join him in a few weeks' time; I fancy he is a literary man of some sort: Doreen spoke once about his writing."

"It is a very curious name," said Mrs. Hereford.

"It makes one think of a soup tureen," said Miriam, naughtily. "Though Max will declare that it is the most beautiful old Irish name in existence. Nothing offends him more than to lay the accent on the first syllable. If I call the child Dor-een, he says it sounds like the feminine of John Dory."

"She certainly has the most beautiful voice," said John Desmond. "Could we not make her sing to Mrs. Hereford?"

Miriam clapped her hands with delight at the suggestion.

"The very thing," she exclaimed, "to pass away this dull afternoon. See, it does not rain so very fast, and I am sure that cloak must be waterproof. Do go and fetch her, Max, and tell her that I am shut in with a bad cold, and want to be amused."

"Stay; I had better write to Mrs. O'Ryan. It is hardly civil not to explain to her that I am unable just now to call upon her; and, Max, you can take down the new 'Contemporary'; she might like to see it," said Mrs. Hereford, turning from her embroidery frame to a cosy little writing-table that stood by the hearth.

The mother and son were not unlike each other. Each had the same well-cut features, and warm English colouring; and though Mrs. Hereford's light brown hair was flecked with gray, her eyes were almost as bright and frank as her son's. They were eyes which, once seen, could never be forgotten, owing to their curious colour, which some people called light hazel, and others yellow, but which all agreed in praising. Mrs. Hereford had the ready wit and the strong character which not unfrequently accompany a delicate physique. She was often unable to take any part in active life, but she had never for a single day ceased to guide and influence Max, and had contrived somehow, during the long years of her widowhood, not to spoil him. Others had done their best, it is true, to flatter and make much of the young heir of Monkton Verney, but the mother had loved him well enough to deny herself the pleasure of indulging him to her heart's content, and had done her best to mitigate the flattery of others.

"You must not make him a prig," she had protested when his godmother had showered down upon him "treasuries of devotion" and manuals of self-examination.

"You shall not over-amuse him and make him *blasé* before he is of age," she had said plainly to Colonel Hereford, his uncle and guardian, whose idea of making a schoolboy happy was to fill his pockets with money, let him fare sumptuously every day, and take him to the play every night.

Max was now eighteen; in October he was to go up to Oxford, and for some months John Desmond had been coaching him. It was partly in order that he might have more time for reading that Mrs. Hereford had given up the usual summer visit to Switzerland, and had taken for three months an old castle in the South of Ireland, far removed from distractions of any sort, and in the heart of a wild, mountainous district. She had brought her niece with her as a companion; and Miriam, tired with her first London season, was glad enough to rest and read novels, to amuse herself in a cousinly fashion with Max, and to enjoy the tutor's silent admiration. Life, as yet, was not at all a serious thing to her; she was just playing with it in a happy, contented fashion, with a firm conviction that the future must infallibly be better than the present, and a comfortable sense of success and self-satisfaction to buoy her up.

The little, dreary, gray house at which the O'Ryans were staying stood at the foot of a mountain called Kilrourk, and was not more than five minutes' walk from the gates of Castle Karey. Max, having inquired for Mrs. O'Ryan, was ushered by the unkempt but pleasant-looking landlady into a room in which the chairs and tables were pushed about in wild disorder, while on the back of the old-fashioned horsehair sofa sat a little girl with her arms tied behind her and a pair of tongs uncomfortably dangling from them.

"God save Ireland!" she cried. Whereupon the small boy who mounted guard beside her, with a tin pot for a helmet and a brand-new sixpenny sword, silenced her in the most peremptory fashion.

"Faith, children, and whativer is it that you are afther, at all, at all!" exclaimed the landlady. "Here is a gintleman from the Castle come to see the misthress."

Doreen, who had been sitting with her back to the door, started up, the fire-irons about her hands and feet clanking dismally, while the dragoon, who was of a timid nature, drooped his head shyly, whereupon the tin pot fell with a clatter to the ground.

"I can't shake hands with you," said Doreen, her blue eyes dancing with merriment. "We are playing prisoners, and I'm heavily ironed."

"And who is this?" said Max, patting Michael's head reassuringly.

"He's an English dragoon guarding me. I'm John Mitchel, and have got fourteen years' transportation. This sofa is the prison van, and we are driving from the court, and just now I saw a great crowd and asked where the people were going, and he—the dragoon—told me they were going to a flower show. You know they really did say that to Mitchel; but it was a lie—the people had come because they loved him."

"My mother has sent a note to Mrs. O'Ryan, asking if you will come to the Castle," said Max. "Should you be afraid of the rain?"

"Oh, not of the rain," said Doreen, loftily; "but you see I can't very well leave home, for my mother is lying down with one of her bad headaches."

"But perhaps the house would be quieter if you came," said Max. Then, seeing that he had said quite the wrong thing, "I mean, of course, if you brought the dragoon with you."

"It's my birthday," said Michael, rather dismally, "and we was going to pop corn over the kitchen fire."

"We have a fire in the drawing-room, summer though it is," said Max; "that old place is as cold as a barn. Bring your corn with you, and you shall show me how to do it. And there are real helmets and swords there which you will like to see."

The armour settled the question, and before long Max and the two children were walking along the dripping avenue which led down to Castle Karey.

"Here they are, mother," he said, taking them straight into the drawing-room; and Mrs. Hereford, looking up somewhat curiously, saw a little red-cloaked figure, with a parcel tucked under one arm, and a small boy clinging to the other.

Doreen was small for her age; she scarcely looked more than ten years old. She had a little pale, winsome face, and a thick bush of dark brown hair; her blue eyes were shaded by long and singularly black lashes; and the face was of that pure Irish type, oval in shape, with rather high cheek-bones, finely moulded chin, and sweet but firm mouth, so often to be met with in the South and West.

"I am glad you could come," said Mrs. Hereford, greeting the little couple kindly; "I hope you did not get very wet."

"Thank you, no; it is such a little way: but if you will let me take Michael into the hall, I will change his boots; he had bronchitis last month, and we have to be careful with him."

There was something so captivating in the silvery voice, with its sweet modulations, and in the little motherly air with which the child glanced at Michael, that Mrs. Hereford bent clown and kissed her.

"I hope you have your own shoes, too, in that parcel," she said.

"No," said Doreen, "I forgot my own; but it doesn't matter, because I am quite strong, you see."

"Miriam, dear, you will take them both to your room," said Mrs. Hereford, "and see if you cannot find some slippers." And Miriam, who was the most good-natured person possible, took charge of the two children, and had soon made even shy Michael quite at his ease.

Doreen looked wonderingly around the great panelled drawing-room when she returned, never having seen before such quaint old oak furniture, such marvellous crewel work of ancient design, such stores of old-world china. Her little eager face delighted Mrs. Hereford.

"Do you like it?" she said. "We have all taken a fancy to this room."

"I never saw such a beautiful story-book place before," said Doreen, "and it all smells so lovely and old."

They laughed, but well understood what she meant; for, indeed, the whole Castle had that old-time atmosphere which, indescribable as it is, lends such a charm to the homes of generations gone by.

"Do you think you could sing to my mother?" said Max. "I want her very much to hear the song you gave us in the boat last week."

"You mean 'She is far from the land,'" said Doreen; "but the worst of it is, that is almost sure to make Michael cry: he seems to think it means I am going to die when that bit comes, 'Oh, make her a grave.' It is very funny, for he never cries at 'Kathleen O'More.'"

"You don't sing that with the tears in your voice," said Michael; "but I will promise not to cry, if directly after you will sing, "Tis no time to take a wife.'"

"What a lugubrious choice," said Miriam, laughing.

"Ah! but he did take a wife in spite of them all," said Doreen. "You will see."

And with a happy freedom from nervousness, partly caused by her youth and simplicity, and partly by the kindly, uncritical faces around her, she began to sing.

Her voice, though as yet untrained and immature, was clear and sweet as a bird's. It rang through the old room; it thrilled through Mrs. Hereford's heart with a strange inexplicable power, it softened Miriam's bright eyes, it lighted up John Desmond's thoughtful face, and it filled Max with exultation. It seemed to him that the voice was in some sense his; he delighted in having been the one to discover such a treasure in this lonely Irish hamlet.

No one was surprised that little Michael had to fight gallantly in order to keep his promise. He sat with his funny little face rigidly fixed, lips pressed together, eyes staring hard at the painting of the Battle of the Boyne on the opposite wall, while in his mind he was saying, "I'm six years old. I must give up crying."

But it was all very well to theorize in this fashion; the fact remained that most of the grown-up folk had tears in their eyes when Doreen sang,—

"She sings the wild song of her dear native plains,
Ev'ry note which he loved awaking:
Ah! little they think who delight in her strains
How the heart of the minstrel is breaking.

"He had lived for his love, for his country he died,
They were all that to life had entwin'd him;—
Nor soon shall the tears of his country be dried,
Nor long will his love stay behind him."

"Who is it all about?" asked Miriam, at the end.

"Father told me it was about Miss Curran who was betrothed to Robert Emmet," said Doreen.

"And who was Robert Emmet?"

The child opened her eyes wide, with an air of such naïve surprise that no one could possibly have been offended by the astonished question that escaped her.

"Didn't they teach Irish history at your school? Why, Robert Emmet was one of our greatest patriots! They hung him; Michael and I often go up the Castle steps at Dublin, and he is buried there behind a high wall on the left as you go up. Of course we can't see over, you know, and there would be nothing but grass to see if we could. It is waiting, as he wished, for its epitaph, till Ireland takes her place among the nations of the earth."

She paused, glanced anxiously at Michael's brimming eyes, and soon made them all laugh with the blithe song,—

"'Tis no time to take a wife, honest John O'Grady.
When the land is filled with strife, gallant John O'Grady.
Who can think of beauty's charms, in the midst of war's alarms?
'That can I, to be sure!' said fearless John O'Grady."

Her humour was equal to her pathos, and they all realized that a child with such gifts had in all probability a great career before her. And yet, somehow, it was hard to think of a public life for that little, simple, innocent-faced girl. She was so fresh and sweet and pure that Mrs. Hereford shrank from the thought of what she might become in that wearing struggle for fame which is the greatest test of character.

"Where do you get your voice from?" she asked, drawing the child down to the sofa beside her. "Is your mother musical?"

"No; but my father sings well, though he has never been taught. He says I shall be taught when we go to America."

"You are going to leave Ireland, then?"

"Yes," said Doreen, sighing. "As soon as father comes back."

"You will be sorry to leave your country, I am sure," said Mrs. Hereford. "But perhaps your father has been preparing a nice home for you over in America?"

Doreen's blue eyes opened wide, with a puzzled expression.

"I—I thought you knew," she said. "He is in Portland Prison."

There was a moment's silence. Then Max struck in quickly, to the relief of every one else.

"For his political views, no doubt," he said.

"Oh yes," rejoined Doreen quickly, her colour rising, "of course not for anything wrong. It is because he loved Ireland, and because he is a Fenian."

"And he will soon be with you again?" asked Mrs. Hereford gently, taking the child's hot little hand in hers, as she spoke, with a tender, comforting clasp that seemed like a caress.

"He will be free almost directly now," said Doreen, her eyes lighting up. "We are to meet him at Queenstown and to sail for New York. It seems such a long, long time since he went away, though. Of course we go to see him now and then, but it is, oh, so tantalizing. For the first few weeks we used to see him every day in Richmond Prison, and then in Kilmainham; but after the trial he was sent to England, for fear the Irish people should rescue him."

"Has he been in prison a long time?" asked John Desmond.

"About five years," said Doreen. "Michael can't remember the time when he lived at home. Of course he was quite a baby; but I was seven, and can remember just how he looked the morning they arrested him. He had not been to bed at all that night, because mother was ill, and he was too anxious to leave her. He had been writing letters in her room, and by and bye came downstairs to say she was asleep; and he let me seal his letters, and afterwards I sat on his knee, making patterns on my arm with the seal he wore on his watch-chain. It had a cross and an anchor, and was shaped like a shamrock leaf. I suppose we were talking and laughing together; for we never heard what was going on till all at once three men came into the room, and one of them strode up to my father, and thrusting his hand between us laid it on father's shoulder and told him that he arrested him, and showed him a paper. At first I wasn't frightened, only surprised. I didn't understand what they were talking about; but when I looked into father's face, I began to be terrified, for it had quite changed. I think he was full of anger and grief. They let him go upstairs with one of the men to say good-bye to my mother, and the men who were left took up all the letters that were on the table where I had been sealing them, and turned out father's desk and hunted everywhere for papers. But when I began to cry, one of them was very kind to me; he looked so sorry for me that I've always sort of liked policemen since. He said, 'Don't cry, my pretty little maid.'

"Then father came down once more, and his face was changed again—it looked very still and strong; he took me up in his arms and kissed me a great many times, and when he said, 'Take care of mother and little Michael till I come back,' his voice was changed, too, so that I hardly knew it."

Remembering the injunction to take care of Michael, she glanced round with an uneasy consciousness that he was too quiet, and began to make many apologies when she found that he had emptied his little paper bag of corn on to the hearth rug and was carefully choosing out the largest grains. It was something of a relief to turn from the startling story of the Fenian father to the children's funny explanation of the mysteries of corn-popping. "It's the way you find out if your friendships are going to last," said Doreen, as Miriam set on the fire the little copper skillet for which she had asked. "There is a grain of corn for each of us, and now we must choose pairs. You must choose first," and she looked up at her hostess, her blue eyes no longer sad with memories, but brimming over with laughter and enjoyment of the game.

"I will choose Michael," said Mrs. Hereford.

"And I will choose Mr. Desmond," said Miriam, with a coquettish glance at the tutor.

"Then that means that we two are together," said Doreen, composedly, drawing Max towards the hearth and making him drop his grain of corn into the skillet beside hers. "Now we must watch and see how they pop."

The first to go were Mrs. Hereford's and Michael's; they popped just as they should have done, inside the skillet.

"You and I will be friends for ever and ever," said the child, clapping his hands. "I wonder if you'll be so lucky, Doreen."

"No," said the little sister. "It hardly ever comes that more than one pair are lucky. Ah, there goes Mr. Desmond! Sure, and it's you that will be breaking your friendship; for it popped outside and flew right towards you, and there goes the other popping inside. It will be all your fault. What a long time ours do take. At last! there they go! Oh dear, dear! No luck at all for us; our grains both popped outside! That means that we shall both agree to separate. I'm never lucky at corn-popping unless I pair with Michael, and we always stay friends."

"Then I shall make hay while the sun shines," said Max, laughing. "And to-morrow you must come again with us in the boat."

CHAPTER II.

> "Rent in other countries means the surplus after the farmer has been liberally paid for his skill and labour; in Ireland it means the whole produce of the soil except a potato-pit. If the farmer strove for more, his master knew how to bring him to speedy submission. He could carry away his implements of trade by the law of distress, or rob him of his sole pursuit in life by the law of eviction."—CHARLES GAVAN DUFFY, *Young Ireland*.

After dinner that evening, the talk naturally enough turned upon the story which little Doreen had told. It was not difficult to fill in the gaps that had occurred in the child's account, and John Desmond seemed well up in all the details of the Irish troubles five years before.

"One has grown so accustomed to regard Fenian and fiend as equivalent terms," said Miriam, "that it almost took one's breath away to hear that pretty little girl talking of the arrest as she did, and counting the days till her father is released."

"Yet to Irish ears Fenian suggests all sorts of memories of the heroic deeds of the Feni, or companions of Finn, one of the noblest of all the warriors in Irish history," said Desmond. "I have no doubt Doreen O'Ryan could tell you plenty of the legends connected with his name."

"But her father," said Mrs. Hereford. "Do you imagine he is one of those desperate wretches who caused the explosion at Clerkenwell?"

"No; those were a few desperadoes, and the genuine Fenians utterly repudiated all connection with them. He must, of course, have been mixed up with the insurrection in some way—possibly was on the staff of that paper of theirs."

"'Tis almost enough to make one pardon the wildest schemes for reform to see the state of things in this place," said Max. "I wonder what sort of man Lord Byfield is to allow it."

"Oh, he is a good enough fellow," said Desmond. "But he detests this place. They say he hasn't been here for years, and leaves everything to that brute Foxell, his agent. I hate that man, with his arrogant manner, and his way of talking of the tenants as though they were pigs."

"The pigs that pay the rent!" said Max, with a laugh. "He is a bully, and the people detest him. I don't know which is the greater brute, himself or his dog."

"You are very rough on the dog," said Desmond; "the man's not worthy to be named in the same day with him!"

"Come, Max," said Mrs. Hereford, "let us have our game of backgammon; I must have my revenge on you for last night."

The tutor wandered away to the other end of the drawing-room, where Miriam was playing a sad little Polish melody of which he was specially fond. She looked up at his approach, with smiling welcome in her brown eyes. Her grandmother had been a Jewess, and Miriam had inherited her beauty: there was something very fascinating about her, and few could resist the spell. Max had been under it more or less all his life, though he knew Miriam's faults well enough; even Mrs. Hereford, though strongly disapproving of some of her niece's proceedings, clung to the girl with an affection which she could not feel towards some perhaps more deserving of favour. That Miriam after a brilliantly successful London season should be in danger of falling in love with the tutor never occurred to her aunt. Desmond was poor and plain,—a sallow man with a very high but somewhat narrow forehead, and dark wild-looking eyes, which seemed out of keeping with the quiet, sedate manner and ordinary face. "He is a mixture of the Quaker and the brigand," had been Miriam's naughty criticism when she had first met him. But little by little his silent admiration began to tell upon her; she began to look up to him, to value his opinion. A reverence which she had never before felt for any one took possession of her heart; she realized that his love for her was something more than admiration for her face, and that afternoon, as little Doreen had sung to them, she had known for the first time that she loved John Desmond. A sort of delicious, dreamy happiness filled her heart as he sat beside her in the dimly lighted room. She played, every now and then, quiet, dreamy music in accordance with her mood, but for a great part of the time they talked—that new, sweet, confidential talk that was infinitely more charming to her than the badinage and the compliments of which she had grown very weary in London.

She slept little that night, but kept living over again all the delicious hours of the afternoon and evening, so that naturally enough the morning found her worn and tired and quite in a mood to yield to her aunt's advice, and keep in bed for a few hours in the hope of curing her cold.

Desmond, finding that there was no chance of seeing her before five o'clock tea, proposed that he and Max should walk across the mountains to Lough Lee, where he had hopes of finding a certain rare plant for which he had long sought in vain.

"Let us at the same time keep our promise to Doreen, and take her with us on the pony," said Max. "The child is longing to see that lake about which she was telling us some old legend."

Doreen's delight when the tutor and his pupil arrived at the little gray lodging-house, leading a mountain pony for her special use, was pretty to see. She came running out to meet them.

"You are sure the day will not be too much for you?" asked Max; "the lake is many miles off, even by this short cut over the mountains."

"Oh no," she protested, "I could go all day long on a pony, it is only such a pity that it's too far for Michael; but I've promised to tell him all about it, and to bring him a great bunch of flowers. I believe he thinks Lough Lee is a sort of fairy place, and he will expect me to see Ugly Gilla Dacker and his horrible horse, or Dermot of the Bright Face, or some of those people."

Max made her tell them about the brave Feni, in the days of old. Her silvery voice would have made the dullest legend charming; and though Desmond was all the time longing for another voice and another face, he was fain to own that the child was a delightful companion.

The day was fine though somewhat gray; but as they climbed higher over the rock-strewn ground, the sun came out brightly for a time, glorifying the well-known outline of the range of hills which were seen from the Castle windows, and revealing exquisite glimpses of the Kerry mountains. By and bye they descended to the right, into a valley, and emerging upon a rough tract, wound down into the road which led to the gloomy and desolate lake.

Doreen's face was a curious study. Here was the place she had dreamed of so long, and it was not the least like her dreams. It was indescribably sad-looking; its very beauty seemed so steeped in melancholy, that all her romance of the past was stricken dead, and a sense of oppression fell upon her, sadly spoiling her happiness.

Max, to distract her attention, began to tell her about the walks near his home at Monkton Verney, of the little lake in the garden with its water-lilies, and the old ruined priory in the park, and of the heath hills and fir hills down which she would enjoy running.

And soon in the excitement of getting into the boat and of being allowed to steer, Doreen recovered her spirits and began to sing merry songs in spite of the excessive gloom of this desolate spot. It was impossible to be melancholy for any length of time with a companion like Max. It was not that he was specially witty, but his whole aspect was so full of cheerfulness, he so thoroughly enjoyed life, that he carried about him a sort of atmosphere of lightheartedness which insensibly affected his companions. They laughed and talked and sang and jested, while John Desmond, intent on spoils, made them land him every few minutes to search for that insignificant but rare plant which their careless eyes were little likely to discover. Doreen, cosily ensconced in the stern, looked with the innocent admiration of a child at the sunburnt, glowing face opposite her, with its light brown hair and the incipient moustache of which the owner was secretly vain, and the well-opened, fearless eyes which seemed full of sunshine. And Max felt strangely drawn to this merry little girl in the familiar red cloak; the sweet voice and the rippling laughter fairly bewitched him: little did he think that this hour on the lake was destined to be the last hour of her childhood and the last hour of his own careless youth.

"Let us row across to the further side," said Desmond; "steer for that cabin from which the smoke is rising."

Doreen glanced across the water and saw that from a little roughly built cabin the turf fire was sending up a curling column of blue smoke.

"What a dreary place to live in!" she exclaimed; "but see, there is a nice clearing all round it at the back. I don't see where you can land very well, for the rocks fall sheer away down to the water from the cabin."

Max turned, and descried a possible landing-place a few yards to the right of the hut, and Doreen, anxious to steer them with the utmost precision, broke off in the midst of singing the "Minstrel Boy," and concentrated her whole attention on her work. In the silence that followed, the sound of voices reached them distinctly from the shore.

"There is a woman crying!" exclaimed Doreen, a startled, pitying look stealing over her face.

Desmond turned round to see whence the noise proceeded, and they soon perceived two men standing on the little patch of ground before the cabin, while in the open doorway a woman, with her apron thrown over her head, was sobbing aloud with a wild, unrestrained grief that shook her from head to foot. The men were talking together, evidently on some vexed question.

"What's up, I wonder," said Max. "Why, look, 'tis Mr. Foxell, the agent; see how the fellow blusters, and how he threatens the old man!"

"It's old Larry, our potato man!" exclaimed Doreen. "He comes every week with his donkey-cart and sells us things. Oh, look! look! how angry he is with him!"

"Pull to shore as fast as you can," said Desmond, a look of fury in his dark eyes. He leapt out, and Max followed him, eager to see what was passing.

"You had better stay in the boat," he said to Doreen. "The agent seems in such a temper, I should not like you to come near him."

The child obeyed, not much liking to be left all alone, but too much absorbed in the loud altercation which she could plainly hear from the little plateau above her to have much leisure for fear. She let the boat drift out a little, so that she could see what was passing by the cabin. Max stood by the open door, among a whole litter of little pigs, talking to the woman, whose wailing had ceased; but John Desmond had stepped in between old Larry and the agent, and was vehemently arguing in the poor old peasant's defence.

"Because the man has made a garden out of a wilderness, because he has toiled while the landlord played, and starved while the landlord feasted, you double his rent. That is your devilish plan!" he cried, in a voice that appalled Doreen.

"Allow me to remind you, sir," said the agent angrily, "that 'tis not the part of a meddlesome tourist to interfere."

"Look at my petaty patch, yer honour," moaned old Larry. "Sure it was just a disused stone quarry, with niver a grain o' soil, till on me own back I carried the airth to it, little by little, and a mortal time it took, and now he asks rint for the land I made wid me own hands, and if I don't pay it,—and the blissed saints know it's just that I can't do that same,—he will pull down the cabin that I built myself. Sure, and I'm an ould man to begin all over again." He turned away and began to sob like a child.

"You d——d hypocrite!" said the agent. "Have done with that nonsense, and don't waste any more of my time. The place is worth double what it was, and you shall pay or go."

"I'll not go!" wailed the old man, facing round upon the agent, in a passion of wrath and grief. "It's bin my home long years before your cruel face was iver seen at Castle Karey, and I'm cursed if I'll lave it."

"Then I shall have it pulled about your ears," said the agent.

"Shame! Shame!" cried Desmond. "I'll have this case exposed in the papers—'tis not to be borne."

"No cockneys here, please," said Foxell insolently, his bull-dog face darkening with anger.

"I, too, am an Irishman," said Desmond, for the first time feeling that thrill of patriotism which reminded him that although English by education, he had yet Irish blood in his veins.

"Then one stick will serve for the two; for insolence there's not a pin to choose between you," said Foxell, irritated to the last degree; and, seizing Larry by his shirt collar, he was about to bring his knotted walking-stick down on the old man's bent shoulders, when Desmond, maddened by the sight, sprang forward and wrenched it from his hand. Both were now beside themselves with anger; they closed with each other and fought with a fury which terrified Doreen. She saw Max hurry down from the cabin door and try to induce them to stop. He might as well have spoken to two wild beasts; for their blood was up, and nothing now would quiet them. The fight, though it seemed long, was in reality brief enough; nearer and yet nearer the two struggling figures drew to the verge of the rock overhanging the lake: it seemed to Doreen that they would both be hurled over into the water, and in deadly terror she rowed close into the little cove where they had landed.

The combatants were still visible. She could plainly see Desmond's wild eyes with their horrible, gleaming light; then suddenly she saw the agent's grip relax; his hand fell back from Desmond's throat; she caught just one glimpse of a dreadful, distorted, blackened face, as he fell back from the rock. There was a splash, an exclamation of horror from Max; then the waters of Lough Lee closed over James Foxell.

For a minute Doreen sat motionless; she seemed paralyzed with horror; it was with intense relief that she saw Max plunging down between the arbutus trees that surrounded the landing-place.

"Steer to the place where he sank," he exclaimed, springing into the boat and pushing off from the shore. With trembling hands Doreen grasped the tiller, ashamed of the terror that seized upon her when she thought of again beholding that dreadful face. "Perhaps he is not really dead; perhaps we may save him," she said to herself, fixing her eyes steadily on the spot where the agent had disappeared, and putting force upon herself to steer to the very best of her ability. All at once a little cry escaped her; for, looking steadfastly at the water, she saw that dreadful vision rise again to the surface. Max made a desperate but ineffectual effort to lay hold of the body; for one moment he grasped the short wet hair, but it was dragged downwards; it slid through his fingers, and again the waters closed over Foxell. The boy—pale through all his sun-burning—dropped back into his place in the boat, panting for breath.

"He was quite dead," he said after a moment, glancing up at Doreen. "But perhaps he will rise again; we will wait and see."

They waited in silence for what seemed to Doreen a long time; the dreadful gloom of the place grew more and more intense. If she looked at the purple mountains surrounding them, she fancied fiends hideously staring at them from among the gray boulders; if she looked into the lake, its dark waters seemed as though peopled by endless repetitions of that dreadful, distorted face which must for ever haunt her memory.

"It's no use waiting longer," said Max at length. "I suppose it must have caught in the reeds at the bottom and will not float up again."

"But what will they do to Mr. Desmond?" cried Doreen, her eyes dilating, as a terrible thought for the first time occurred to her. "They will say he murdered that man; he will be hung or kept in prison!"

"They will probably call it murder," said Max with a shudder. "But, Doreen, if ever I saw a man mad,—for the time quite mad,—why, it was he. Did you see his eyes?"

"Yes," said Doreen, "they looked wild and dreadful; he was quite changed. If people ask us how it all happened, we can explain to them that he was mad. Oh, don't leave me alone in the boat," she added, as Max sprang ashore at the landing-place.

He was too much agitated to have very much thought for her just then, but he turned and held out his arms to her, and lifted her on to dry ground; then, with knees trembling beneath her, she toiled after him up the bank, among the holly bushes and the arbutus trees, and followed him across the open ground beyond, to the cabin. Every one had gone inside, even the pigs, and old Larry and his wife were talking fast and eagerly. John Desmond sat on a three-legged stool beside the turf fire; his face was flushed; there was a strange look in his dark eyes; he was quite silent, and took no notice of their entrance.

"He must have been unconscious when he fell," said Max to Larry. "The body only rose once to the surface, and I couldn't lay hold of it."

"All the better, sir," said Larry gravely. "'Tis eighty feet dape, and it do be makin' a safe grave. I take it he'll lie as aisy down there among the reeds as iver he'd a done in churchyard mould; and may God have mercy on his sowl!"

As he spoke, the old man thrust into the fire the knotted stick that the agent had let fall when he closed with Desmond.

"What do you do that for?" asked Max.

"Sure thin, yer honour, 'tis the last of the man that's lift," said Larry. "His hat was made fast with a string through his buttonhole and will tell no tales. And now this stick is kindlin' fine, and there won't be the laist little small bit to git his honour there into throuble."

Desmond looked up. "What is that you are saying?" he asked, as if his mind had just awaked to the present.

"We say, your honour, that we will niver spake one word of what we heard and saw awhile since. You stood by us, and, by the cras o' Christ, we'll stand by you. Norah, swear the same."

The old woman crossed her forefingers with a gesture which impressed Doreen strangely.

"By the cras o' Christ," she repeated solemnly, "neither to man, woman, nor child—no, nor even to the praist himself—will I tell what I saw and heard this day."

Desmond rose from his place by the fire. "Thank you," he said, in a voice unlike his own. Then, staggering a little as though seized by giddiness, he put his hand within his pupil's arm. "I must go away," he said; and with hurried farewells to the old peasant and his wife, they left the cabin and once more got into the boat.

"Steer for the landing-place," said Max; and poor little Doreen fixed her eyes bravely on the rude causeway at the far end of the lake, and tried not to let herself think of what lay beneath the cold gray waters over which they were gliding.

CHAPTER III.

" 'God of justice!' I sighed, 'send your spirit down
On these lords so cruel and proud,
And soften their hearts, and relax their frown,
Or else,' I cried aloud—
'Vouchsafe thy strength to the peasant's hand
To drive them at length from off the land!' "—THOMAS DAVIS.

They had rowed a quarter of a mile before any one spoke; at last John Desmond broke the silence.

"When does the next train leave Kilbeggan?" he asked.

"There is one at nine" said Max, with a startled look. "But you are surely not going?"

"I can't stay here to bring your mother into all this trouble, and your cousin," said Desmond, hoarsely. "Were it not for them I would wait and give myself up. 'Tis an hour's drive to the station, but that will leave me time to get my things together. I can say that I am hastily summoned home, owing to family trouble."

"Will not your leaving possibly lead to suspicion?" said Max.

"I think not," said the tutor. "And if it does, there is not a shred of evidence against me. Old Larry and his wife will not break that oath, and you—of course I can trust you."

"Of course," said the boy. "I give you my word that I will not tell."

Yet even as he spoke, he felt the awful burden that had been thrust upon him, and his heart sank as he reflected that all through life he must carry with him this terrible secret.

"There is that child," said Desmond. "What are we to do about her?"

"Leave her to me," said Max, with an inexpressible dislike to the thought of extorting a promise from their light-hearted little playfellow. Must she, too, be burdened with this horrible secret? It would be harder, infinitely harder, for her to bear!

"Somehow her lips must be closed, at any rate for the present," said Desmond. "Sooner or later 'tis bound to leak out through her—she has a ready tongue as a child, and will have it, you may be sure, as a woman. The fear that may restrain her now will have no power a few years hence. But somehow you must get her to swear secrecy, or I am undone."

Doreen had not heard the whole of this speech; they were nearing the landing-place, and she was intent on her steering; but a word or two had reached her, and she knew that before long she, too, would be asked to swear as Larry and Norah had done. The thought weighed upon her. But she was left unmolested for some little time.

Desmond was so much exhausted that he proposed trying to hire a car at the nearest inn, and Doreen herself was not sorry to lose the ride across the mountains. They gave the pony in charge to the landlord of the forlorn little hostelry not far from the lake, and with a fresh horse and a crazy and springless outside car made their way back to Castle Karey, by the more circuitous but easier high-road. A blight, however, seemed to have fallen upon all they saw, and Doreen shuddered as they drove through the narrow, rocky pass, with its threatening crags and its rugged gray and purple boulders, from which, ever and anon, it seemed to her that the agent's face looked fiercely forth. As they drew nearer home, the dreadful longing to rush straight to her mother and tell her everything, grew almost overpowering. But at the first of the gates leading into the Castle grounds Max Hereford paused.

"I promised once to show you the grotto," he said, feeling much as if he were trapping the poor little girl to her doom. "We will come now, while Mr. Desmond goes on to the Lodge and settles with the driver."

Desmond glanced at them in an abstracted way as they got down. Then, without a word, he drove on. The tears started to Doreen's eyes; she longed so very much to go with him, to sob out all her terror and misery on her mother's knee; if she could but do that, surely the horrible face would cease to haunt her?

With unwilling feet she walked beside Max through the wood; the winding path was cut through the undergrowth of nut trees which had clustered about some fine old oaks, and at any other time it would have been to her the most fascinating

place. Even now the beauty and the quiet, sheltered peace of the wood relieved her heavy heart, it made such a welcome contrast to the gloomy pass and the desolate Lough Lee, and the horrible scene which had taken place there. Presently an exclamation of delight escaped her, for in the heart of the wood they came upon a place which seemed to her like fairyland. Tiny paths and rustic steps led up the steep banks, gray boulders and quaintly shaped tree stumps and mysterious caves and arches formed the background, and on every side rose the most beautiful ferns she had ever seen, —graceful "ladies," sturdy male fern, dark-leaved holly fern, delicate oak and beech, feathery parsley, long, drooping hart's-tongues, and fringes of Killarney fern. At the far end of this fernery stood a miniature tower in gray stone, a summer house known as the "Keep." She had longed to see it; yet as Max took her in, she shivered, for the place, only lighted by two ivy-shaded windows, seemed dark and depressing; the horrible recollections that had for a minute been banished from her mind by the beauty of the fernery, came trooping back with double force.

"Do you think Mr. Desmond will get into trouble?" she asked.

"He most certainly will," said Max, "unless we all four keep silence. Will you promise never to tell what you know?"

"I would not hurt him for the world," said Doreen, "but please do let me tell my mother."

"'Tis already known to too many people," said Max; "if more are to be told, it will be quite impossible to keep the matter secret."

"If I might just tell mother," pleaded Doreen, "it would be so much less hard to bear."

"Yes, yes, I can understand that," he said, faltering a little as the blue eyes searched his face wistfully. "Yet she is not strong, and the telling her, though a relief to you, could do no real good,—could, in fact, only trouble her very much."

Doreen's face fell. "I had forgotten that," she said. "Then may I not tell my father when I see him? He would never betray Mr. Desmond. Do let me just tell him!"

"But surely that would be very unwise," said Max. "The disappearance of this agent will be talked of all over the country, and your father—a Fenian just released from prison—would be far safer if he knew absolutely nothing about the matter and could swear that he was ignorant."

"We must not let him run any risk," she said gravely. "I must just bear it alone."

Great tears gathered in her eyes, and Max, cut to the heart by the child's grief, and the thought of the dreadful burden that he was putting upon her, caught her hand in his and held it tenderly. But this proved fatal; for there are times when the mere touch of a hand will open the floodgates of emotion as no words could do. Doreen broke into a passionate fit of weeping.

"Oh," she sobbed, "I don't think I can ever be happy any more!"

"Don't cry, dear," he said, drawing her towards him. "You and I are in the same case, but perhaps in time the memory of to-day will fade and grow less horrible. After all, we have done no wrong. It is our misfortune, not our fault."

The sense of his companionship in her trouble began to comfort her, but it was her practical good sense that checked her tears.

"I mustn't cry," she said, "or mother will guess something by my red eyes. I can't think how Ellen Montgomery managed; she cried between two and three hundred times in the 'Wide, Wide World,' for I counted up once, but she always seems to have looked natural and pretty; it never says that her eyes were as red as ferrets'."

Max smiled. It was cheering to him to think that Doreen's sunny nature would triumph even over this dark shadow that had crossed her path.

"You will swear to keep silence?" he said presently.

"I swear it," said Doreen, "by the cross of Christ."

"I also swear to keep silence," said Max, still keeping her hand in his as he repeated the words of the oath. Then he stooped down and kissed her, and felt her childish lips softly pressed to his cheek in a shy response.

Half an hour later Doreen, with a very wan little face, but a sturdy determination to keep her secret, opened the door of her mother's sitting-room.

"Why, my child, you are late," said Mrs. O'Ryan. "And how very tired you look! It has been too long an excursion for you."

"Oh no, mother," said Doreen. "I am a little tired and hungry; but it wasn't such a very long way, and we came back on a car."

"Tell them to bring in tea at once," said her mother. And Doreen, glad to escape, ran away, and having taken off her cloak and hat, studied herself critically in the looking-glass, then, with a dissatisfied exclamation, plunged her face into a basin of cold water and vigorously scrubbed her white cheeks with a rough towel. The worst of it was that tears would keep stealing up into her eyes, even now, in a fashion hitherto unknown to her. Indeed, though she little dreamt it, years were to elapse before her nerves quite recovered from the severe shock of that afternoon.

"Doreen has so much spirit" reflected her mother, "she would go till she dropped. But the child is certainly over-tired. I must put a stop to these very long expeditions."

She had no idea that her simple questions about Lough Lee and the doings of that afternoon were taxing her little daughter's powers more than any number of additional miles could have done. No suspicion of any grave trouble was roused by Doreen's replies, and the two settled down to their usual game of cribbage, when the tea things were removed, as composedly as though Foxell's body was not lying at the bottom of the lake.

By nine o'clock the child was in bed, but her sleep was uneasy and troubled by dreams. She woke shuddering with terror as the clock struck eleven. All was dark and still; they were an early household, and by this time every one would be asleep. She sat up in bed, staring out into the darkness; had it, after all, been only a dream,—that frightful scene of a man falling back with distorted face, and sinking into the water, yet rising again close beside her? Alas! it was a dreadful reality. She remembered everything distinctly now, and fell back again on the pillow in a paroxysm of the most agonizing fear she had ever known. It was not the mere memory that terrified her, nor even the fear that John Desmond might be arrested; it was a wild, unreasoning fancy that the murdered man was close beside her. Every moment she dreaded to see his face looming out of the darkness, and she lay like one paralyzed, hearing nothing but the throbbing of her heart, and not daring to close her eyes. Some would have found relief in drawing up the bedclothes and cowering down beneath them; but Doreen always preferred to face her fears. In the extremity of her misery she began to think whether she could summon up courage to rush to her mother's room, as she had sometimes done before in moments of panic. Then she remembered her oath, and the terror of breaking it drove out, for a moment, all other terrors.

"I must not go to mother," she said to herself. "She would certainly guess something. And yet, oh! how lovely it would be to creep into her bed and feel her arms round me! I should be asleep in two minutes, just as I was last time I was frightened in the night. But what if I talked in my sleep? What if I told the secret in my sleep? Oh! I shall never feel safe all my life! What shall I do! What shall I do!"

Again the horrible fancy that Foxell was close by made her teeth chatter, until at last, in desperation, she summoned up all her courage, and springing from the bed began to grope her way across the room in search of matches. The light was a wonderful relief, but there was not more than an inch of candle left. She set it on the mantelpiece and prayed that it might last till daylight, with sad misgivings that she was asking an impossibility.

"I will think of other things," she said valiantly, and began to study with extreme care a marvellously worked sampler in a black frame which hung upon the wall. Hitherto she had only pitied the unlucky child who had been made to work it; now she set herself to read the words, which ran as follows:—

"In the glad morn of blooming youth
The various threads I drew,
And, pleased, beheld the finished piece
Rise glowing to the view.
Thus when bright youth shall charm no more,
And age shall chill my blood,
May I review my life and say,
Behold, my works were good!

"Bridget O'Brien's work, finished in her tenth year, 1844."

"I shall never be like Bridget O'Brien, whoever she was," reflected Doreen, sadly. "I don't feel as if I should ever be able to say—'Behold, my works were good!' And there will always be this dreadful memory at the beginning. The sampler wouldn't have looked very nice if some one had spilt a great blot of ink on it just as Bridget O'Brien had worked the first corner. There! I am thinking of it again! I will crowd it out. Let me see; I'll count the things in this sampler. There are rose-bushes up there, and trees like the ones in Michael's Noah's ark. And next come some queer-looking birds, grinning at each other across those pagodas. Then there's a brown cottage with a scarlet roof, and two great birds balancing on the two small chimneys, and looking down on that very green lawn strewn about with red, white, and blue flowers. Then there's a pink bridge leading to a green hill, and on the top of the hill a blue and brown castle, and the Union Jack a great deal smaller than that enormous light blue bird with a dark blue head. Next there's a row of trees and flowers,—horrid to work, I'm sure. And down below there's a large brown house—poor Bridget, how she must have hated it! There are seven windows, a blue roof, a green door, and a yellow knocker. On the roof sit four big birds. To the right and left are apple trees and rose-bushes, flanked by four cows, a dog, and a stag, all worked in sky-blue."

The clock in the kitchen struck twelve. Doreen shivered a little, and wished she had never read the lines about—

> "'Tis now the very witching time of night,
> When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
> Contagion to this world."

Suddenly she remembered that under her pillow there was a little Irish book of prayers, called "The Key of Heaven," which she was in the habit of taking to bed with her because it belonged to her father and seemed like a link with him. Perhaps there might be something in that to quiet her fears. She seldom opened it, but now in her terror she drew it out, and, in turning over the pages, was, not unnaturally, arrested by the words, "Litany for the Dead." Surely it would be well to pray for the man who had gone with such awful suddenness to his doom. She knelt up in bed, using such of the sentences as pleased her best.

"Be merciful, O Lord, and pardon their sins. From the shades of death, where the light of Thy countenance shineth not, deliver them, O Lord. By the multitude of Thy mercies, ever compassionate to human frailties, deliver them, O Lord.

"We sinners beseech thee to hear us.

"That the blessed view of Jesus may comfort them, and His unfading glory shine upon them. That the whole triumphant church may soon celebrate their deliverance, and the choirs of angels sing new hymns of joy on their never-ending happiness."

Then she lay down again and tried to sleep, but in vain. The clock struck one. The candle flared in its socket, then once more darkness reigned. "If only the light would have lasted till dawn!" she thought, as the horror of her loneliness began again to overwhelm her.

But her prayer was, nevertheless, answered; for it was in the darkness and terror of that night that her spirit awoke to the recognition of all that had hitherto been to her mere matter of belief. Mrs. Hereford had sighed to think of the difficult life which probably lay before the sweet-voiced little girl. Max was even now chafing at the thought of the burden which Desmond's rash act had brought upon one so young and innocent. They both forgot that with need comes power, and that to those of whom much is required, much is also given.

A whole night without sleep seems long to every one, but to a child it seems well-nigh endless. Doreen no sooner heard the landlady stirring in the room above, than she sprang up and dressed, glad to remember that it was the day on which the washing was done and that Mrs. Keoghn would be hard at work at her wash-tub before sunrise. She had a craving to get out into the open air, and astonished the good landlady by appearing at the kitchen door in her cloak and hat as the clock struck five.

"Sure, and whativer is it that you are afther, me dear?" she exclaimed.

"I was awake, and the morning is so fine that I mean to go up Kilrourk," said Doreen. "Please will Dan lend me the loan of his stick? The long one with the hooked handle."

"Sure, and it's proud he'll be if you'll use it," said Mrs. Keoghn, drying her hands on her apron. "And just you wait a bit, the while I cut you a little, small slice of bread; 'tis ill faring on an empty stomach."

Doreen thanked her, and running out at the back of the house, began slowly to make her way up the steep, grassy ascent, eating the bread as she walked. But the ground was wet with dew, and somehow the climb seemed toil-some; before she was a quarter of the way up she began to grow tired, and finding a plateau of smooth, short turf from which the gray rock cropped out here and there, she thought she would rest there, at any rate for the present. To the left there was a little group of oaks and arbutus, while a few hundred yards in advance, on the extreme verge of the rocky summit of this first spur of the mountain, stood a solitary fir tree, its gaunt trunk and storm-twisted branches glowing ruddily in the light of dawn. She lay down among the rocks at the foot of an arbutus tree, watching the tall fir with its dark green foliage standing out clearly against the strip of sky. Down below, among its verdant woods, she could see the gray turrets of Castle Karey, and the silvery brightness of the calm water, and the glorious peaks of the mountains rising like the wings of guardian angels on the further shore. Far away, in the opposite direction, there lay, as she well knew, the gloomy Lough Lee; the light was breaking there too. She turned away with a shudder at the thought, and looked instead at all the lovely things close at hand,—the green turf and the little yellow tormentilla twisting about in all directions, and the tall, brown grasses with their shimmering spikes waving in the breeze, and the soft feathery moss half veiling the gray rocks. Then she noticed that the dark holly-bush close by had been suddenly glorified, every shining leaf becoming a mirror for the sun, as it rose majestically above the crest of the mountain. The beauty of the country seemed to steal into her heart as it had never done before; for the first time she fully realized that the land was her own.

"If only I can be worthy of it!" she thought to herself. "If only I can serve it! Keeping this secret is dreadful. I wish I had lived in the times of the Rebellion, or in '48; there were lovely secrets to keep then, and real patriots to save and shelter. Yet Mr. Desmond was kind to poor Larry; he meant to help. How strange it seems that if only the agent had been just to old Larry, it never would have happened. Why are they so unwilling to be just to us Irish?"

But musing over that problem proved too much for the tired little brain. Doreen's head sank lower and lower, till in a few minutes she was sleeping, like Jacob, with a stone for a pillow, and, doubtless, with angels to guard her, though she was too weary to dream of them.

CHAPTER IV.

"A man must grab whatever he can get;
We human creatures are not angels yet.
You must not stab, nor strangle, a poor neighbour,
For, if you did, why you would lose his labour;
No, take advantage of his cramped position
To mangle him with your cruelest condition.
Rob soul and body by superior wit
And fortune; ignorant hunger will submit.
If he should gash you, that were ugly murder:
Dribble his life-blood slowly—you're in order."— HON. RODEN NOEL.

When John Desmond had dismissed the car at the Lodge on the previous afternoon, he made his way quickly to Castle Karey and went straight to the drawing-room, with the intention of telling Mrs. Hereford that he was obliged to go home that very evening. He found, however, that Miriam was the sole occupant of the room; she was leaning back in a great armchair, with "Vanity Fair" in her hand.

"You see," she said, "I am dutifully obeying you and beginning to read Thackeray to improve my mind. But what is the matter?" for suddenly she observed the great change that had come over his expression, and she glanced from his troubled eyes to the letter which he held—a bill from Oxford, as it happened, but a missive which exactly suited his purpose.

"I have bad news," he said hoarsely, "and am obliged to go home at once. The Lodge people put this letter into my hands as I passed,—they had been to Kilbeggan and had called for the afternoon post. Do you know where Mrs. Hereford is? Can I speak to her?"

"Aunt has gone out," said Miriam. "As the afternoon kept fine, she drove to the Glebe House to see the Macgregors. Oh, I am so sorry for your trouble! Is it illness?"

"No," he said, his brow contracting. "A worse trouble, and one which will not bear talking of. It will force me to go; it will cut me off from you for ever."

The wild look in his eyes terrified Miriam.

"You must not say that!" she cried. "Nothing could do that, for we are—friends."

Her voice faltered; she laid her hand pleadingly on his arm, but he shrank away as if the touch were torture to him.

"There is one thing that must part us," he said vehemently, "and that is disgrace. Since you have been here, since I learned to love you, my life has been a dream of happiness. That is all over now. I must go home, and I beg you just to forget me."

"I cannot forget," said Miriam faintly.

"I implore you not to waste another thought on me!" he replied, with a vehemence which alarmed her. Then turning abruptly away he strode out of the room, leaving the girl perplexed and greatly troubled, almost inclined to think that the tutor must be going out of his mind. She went slowly upstairs to dress for dinner, and on returning to the drawing-room found her aunt full of concern about the news that Max had just brought to her.

"I have ordered dinner somewhat earlier, dear," she said as Miriam crossed the room. "You have heard perhaps that Mr. Desmond is obliged to catch the nine o'clock train to-night."

"Does he go to-night?" said Miriam, her heart sinking.

"He is packing now; it is some family trouble, I am afraid, from the message he sent me," said Mrs. Hereford. She broke off as the butler approached her with something a little unusual in his well-regulated expression.

"If you please, ma'am, can Baptiste speak to you?"

"Certainly; send him in here," said Mrs. Hereford, and the next moment the French valet entered. He was a new

acquisition and had won much favour in the household by his extreme good-nature; but he could neither speak nor apparently understand a word of English. With much excitement he now announced that his master begged Mrs. Hereford to come upstairs at once, for Mr. Desmond was seriously ill.

And so after all the flight from Castle Karey had to be abandoned; for by the time the nine o'clock train steamed out of Kilbeggan station the local doctor had pronounced without the least hesitation that the tutor was suffering from inflammation of the brain, probably caused by the shock he had undergone in receiving bad news from his home.

Max had insisted on sharing the night watch with his valet; and since Baptiste was known to have some experience of nursing, and proved extremely handy in the sick-room, the doctor seemed content, and left them with strict orders to keep the room perfectly quiet and to exclude all other people.

This was an injunction that the boy was ready enough to obey; for he was in deadly terror lest Desmond should, in his delirium, let fall some word which would betray the secret of Foxell's death. He never stirred from his post till, at six the next morning, the doctor looked in again to see how his patient was progressing, and, finding Desmond asleep, took a cheerful view of the attack and spoke hopefully of the future.

"And now, sir," he said, laying a kindly hand on the boy's shoulder, "as you will be wanted when your friend wakes, I advise you to go and rest. Baptiste will keep out all intruders, and you look to me very much fagged."

Max was fain to own that he was tired, though not sleepy; his head ached miserably, and seeing that the day was bright and clear, he said he would walk up the avenue with the doctor. His companion put several questions to him, but they were all easy enough to answer, since they concerned Desmond's previous health.

They were so much absorbed in their talk, that they passed the Lodge and walked a little way along the high-road until Max was recalled to the present by the sight of the little gray lodging-house and of the landlady in her garden hanging up clothes to dry.

Mrs. Keoghn seemed delighted to catch sight of them; she came to her gate, without even pausing to hang up the wet shirt she held in her hands.

"Good morning to ye, gintlemen," she said. "Have ye heard the news that's goin' round about the agent?"

"What news?" said the doctor. Max struggled desperately to express nothing but a half-careless curiosity, though his heart beat like a sledge hammer.

"They say he never came back yesterday, and his wife is onaisy in her mind, and thinks he has been made away with; and for the matther of that, it's well hated he is by many a one, the cold-hearted crathur! She will have it that the Fenians have been and murthered him."

"Pooh!" said the doctor. "There are no Fenians about here. Are the police taking it up yet?"

"Sure, and they are, sir. The country is to be searched for him, and all the village is astir about it. Mrs. Foxell won't give them a moment's peace till he's found; one would think they had been the best o' friends, but sure and I've heard the folk say they were a rare quarrelsome couple, and that she had a scolding tongue. Maybe that soured the agent's temper and made him harder to the tenants."

"I must go and hear about it," said the doctor cheerfully. "But depend upon it, the fellow will turn up all right. When was he last at the Castle, Mr. Hereford?"

"I heard that he was there in the morning," said Max. "I believe my mother saw him."

"Well, good morning to you," said the doctor. "Why, your hand is cold; you are not so used to being up all night, as I am. Take a brisk walk,—nothing like a walk before breakfast for the circulation."

He turned away, but Max lingered a moment longer beside the gate. "Miss Doreen was not over-tired yesterday, I hope?" he asked.

"Bless you, no, sir," replied the landlady. "Why, she was off at five o'clock this morning, runnin' up the mountain yonder as brisk as could be."

With a strong desire to know how the sharer of his miserable secret was bearing her burden, Max followed the direction which Mrs. Keoghn had indicated and began to climb Kilrourk. He had not gone far when he descried the red cloak among the moss-grown rocks to the left, and, stealing quietly over the dewy turf, saw that the child was fast asleep. Her little peaceful face touched his heart strangely; he bent down and kissed her softly and reverently on the forehead. Doreen smiled in her sleep and, feeling for his hand, held it closely in both her own. The clasp of her fingers on his had a curious effect on him; spite of all the misery and fear which had oppressed him only a few minutes before, Doreen seemed witching him into a content as blissful and dreamlike as her own. Just at that moment, a thrush alighted on the arbutus tree above them, and his song roused the child. Her dark blue eyes looked right into Max Hereford's with a smile of recognition.

"I was dreaming of you," she said, with a direct simplicity which confused him a little.

"I found you sleeping on the mountain with your crook at your side, like Little Bo-Peep," he replied laughing.

Doreen, with a puzzled face, looked at the crooked stick lying on the turf among the little yellow flowers of the tormentilla; she looked at the storm-twisted boughs of the fir tree, she looked across the glen to the mountains beyond, and then with a shudder and a sudden look of dismay and fear, she sprang to her feet as the recollection of Lough Lee and the sinking agent returned to her.

"Oh!" she said, with a sob in her throat, "will it always come back to one like that? Is it only in dreams that we can be quite at rest?"

"I am so sorry for you, dear," he said, taking her hand in his as they climbed higher up the mountain. "Has the night been very hard for you, too?"

"I couldn't sleep," said Doreen. "And the dark was dreadful! I kept on thinking I should see—you know what."

"Poor little soul! you were quite alone, then?"

"I thought of going to mother; but then, you know, she might have guessed, or I might have told the secret in my sleep. Afterwards God talked to me, and it was better," she concluded abruptly, with the instinctive reserve which veils all that is most sacred. There was a pause. Max looked down at the little, tired, white face with a sort of wondering admiration. "Then," continued Doreen, "I climbed up here and saw the sunrise for the first time, and the country looked so beautiful! I never knew before how much I loved it. Oh! I am so glad God made me Irish, but I do wish He had made me a boy; then when I grew up, I could serve the country."

"What would you do?" asked Max, smiling at her eagerness.

"I would speak," she cried, her eyes flashing; "I would make the English understand how different things are over here—would make them long to see justice shown to Ireland, as mother says they longed to see justice shown to Italy. They were ready enough, mother said, to make much of Garibaldi; but my father, only for what he had written and for belonging to the Fenians, was thrust into prison."

"If you can't be a second Daniel O'Connell, you can, I should think, be the national singer," said Max.

Doreen sighed. "Do you think I could?" she said. "Yet, even if it were possible, all that is so indirect. How I wish I were you—rich, and a man, and with the power to speak."

"How do you know I have the power?" asked the boy, half amused, half startled by her tone of conviction.

"I have known it ever since that day you took me first in your boat; don't you remember how after the picnic you and Mr. Desmond and Miss Hereford made speeches for fun? The others were as silly as could be, but you made us really laugh and really cry; and when you told the legend of the Castle, it made me shiver all down my back like lovely music. Why should we not have a nice secret between us, and a nice promise!" she exclaimed, her face lighting up. "Let us plan that you shall go into Parliament when you are older, and promise me that you will speak for Ireland."

He smiled at her enthusiasm.

"My mother would like nothing better than that I should stand a few years hence for Firdale; but if I adopt your principles, there would be small chance of my getting in. I will promise, though, to speak for Ireland if ever I have the

power and the chance."

And vague dreams of a far-away future began to float before him as Doreen climbed Kilrourk at his side, chanting to herself her favourite song,—

" 'God save Ireland,' said the heroes;
'God save Ireland,' said they all;
'Whether on the scaffold high,
Or the battle-field we die,
Oh, what matter, when for Erin dear we fall!' "

"Why, in England they call your heroes the Manchester murderers," said Max.

"Yes," said Doreen. "But we Irish call it murder to hang three men because one policeman was accidentally shot. Had a policeman burst open a lock with a pistol, and an Irishman chanced to be behind the door, would they have called *that* a murder, do you suppose? How well I remember walking in the funeral procession in Dublin that was got up in their honour! There were two thousand of us children, and in the whole procession twenty-five thousand people."

"Then they were buried in Ireland?"

"Oh no! in quicklime in the prison graveyard," said Doreen. "But that doesn't matter at all; your own great patriots were mostly dishonoured after death—dug up, you know, by their opponents and gibbeted. The Manchester martyrs live on in the hearts of the Irish people."

Max had been diverted for the time from his anxieties by the little girl's eager words, but a cloud of care settled down upon him as once more he reached Castle Karey.

That afternoon when, after spending many hours with his tutor, he had just had the satisfaction of seeing him fall asleep, a low knock was heard at the door, and Baptiste, who had been dozing for a few minutes, stole with cat-like tread across the room to ask what was needed. Looking up, Max saw that his mother stood in the doorway, beckoning to him.

"I want you down in the library for a few minutes," she said, as he joined her in the passage, noiselessly closing the door behind him. "A most extraordinary thing has happened. Mr. Foxell, the agent, disappeared yesterday, and not a trace of him is to be found. Two constables and a detective are down below, and they want to put a few questions to you as to when you last saw the poor man. It is thought likely that he has been murdered."

Max made an inarticulate exclamation. To one of his highly nervous temperament the prospect of the interview was appalling; the dread of ruining his friend and the dread of lying made his heart throb with a horrible anxiety such as he had never before known. He walked on steadily, trying to think that he was going to shield the man who had been to him friend as well as tutor, yet with a faint perception even then that John Desmond's noblest course of action would have been to surrender himself, and plead guilty to manslaughter in a moment of frenzy. They could scarcely have called the affair wilful murder, and the tutor's impulse to disappear and save Mrs. Hereford and Miriam from all the wretchedness of being mixed up in such a case was perhaps more chivalrous than wise or honest. Doreen's talk about the men who had been hung for rescuing the Fenian prisoners returned to him, however, unpleasantly.

"At least my part is clear," he said to himself, as these thoughts rushed through his mind. "I have sworn secrecy, and must at all costs hold my tongue, however much I may wish that he would have confessed to it himself."

By this time they had reached the library; he opened the door for his mother, and followed her into the room, nodding to the constables, whom he knew by sight, and bowing to the keen-eyed, somewhat cadaverous-looking man in plain clothes, to whom Mrs. Hereford introduced him. The detective was disappointed to find such a very young, boyish-looking Mr. Hereford. A fresh-faced, genial, good-tempered school-boy, he thought to himself, imagining as he looked into Max Hereford's well-opened, fearless eyes, that he could read him like a book.

"I need not trouble you with many questions, sir," he said; "you will have heard from Mrs. Hereford of the disappearance of Lord Byfield's agent, Mr. James Foxell?"

"Yes," said Max. "My mother has just been telling me about it."

"You had heard nothing of it before, I suppose?" He looked him through and through as he put this question.

"Yes," said Max; "I was walking outside the grounds early this morning with the doctor, and Mrs. Keoghn told me that the village was all astir about it."

"And yet you said nothing about it on returning home? How was that?" said the detective.

"I purposely said nothing," said Max steadily. "My mother is not strong, and I knew the story would trouble her and make her nervous."

"I see that this boy is older and more thoughtful than I imagined at first sight of him," thought the detective. "By the bye, Mr. Hereford," he said, "can you throw any light on Foxell's movements yesterday?"

"I heard that he was here at the Castle at nine o'clock," said Max, marvelling at his own composure. "But you have probably been able to trace him later than that?"

"Yes; his wife saw him at ten, but further than that we can get no clue. He told her to expect him at seven in the evening, and, as you know, never returned. Did you see him yesterday?"

"When he was here? No; I merely heard that he had called to speak to my mother."

"When did you last have speech with him?"

Max paused for a moment; his breath came fast, but he still maintained a sort of ghastly composure; then remembering that on the fatal afternoon he had only exchanged words with old Larry and his wife, and that it had been Desmond who had remonstrated throughout with the agent, he said quietly, "I don't think I have spoken to him since Sunday as we came out of church."

With that his ordeal ended, and with relief he found that his mother was urging him to go out, and speaking of some commission which she wanted him to see to at Kilbeggan.

"I will order the car to be brought round at once," she said. "You will be doing a service to Mr. Desmond by fetching this medicine, and already you look quite ill with sitting so much in his room."

Max made no objection to the plan, and as he drove along the mountain road, the difficult problem filled his mind, was it a greater evil to tell a lie or to break an oath? He was thankful that by the wording of the detective's questions he had just been able to steer clear of either course, and yet to keep the man at bay, but the strain of the interview had been great, and he dreaded above all things to be put through a second examination. Little Doreen would at any rate be saved from that. And as his thoughts turned to her once more, an idea struck him and he drove to no less than three shops in Kilbeggan in search of a certain present which he had set his heart on giving her.

The nightly game of cribbage was going on in the little parlour that evening, when Mrs. Keoghn entered with the lamp in one hand and a parcel in the other.

"Nothing has been heard of the agent, ma'am," she remarked. "I make no doubt he's come to some dreadful end."

"Oh, I hope not," said Mrs. O'Ryan, endeavouring to hush up the good landlady, as she noticed that Doreen's eyes had a startled look in them, and that her lips grew white. "What is that parcel?"

"Sure, thin, ma'am, 'tis for Miss Doreen; Mr. Hereford has just left it; he's been to Kilbeggan."

"See, mother," said Doreen, recovering her self-possession. "It is the present he owed me. We had a double cherry at the picnic last week, and I was the first to speak the next day."

Hastily unfolding the paper, she saw with delight a bronze crucifix, and beneath it, hanging by chains to the two arms of the cross, a tiny bronze lamp, with the wick already prepared, and a slip of paper with the comforting assurance that when filled the lamp would burn seven hours. The dread of a second night which had been weighing upon her all day passed away now; and perhaps no gift ever given her brought such a rapture of relief and pleasure, or filled her with such intense gratitude to the donor.

CHAPTER V.

"Be my epitaph writ on my country's mind,
'HE SERVED HIS COUNTRY, AND LOVED MANKIND.' " —THOMAS DAVIS.

"How much time do you give me, doctor?"

The questioner lay in one of the berths of a stateroom on an Atlantic steamer; he was a man of sixty, though his deeply lined face and silvery hair made him look older. His hollow cheeks and emaciated form told their own tale, and so did the over-bright eyes, which now looked keenly into the doctor's embarrassed face.

"I fear, Mr. O'Ryan, that the time is but short,—that you can scarcely hope to reach England."

The sick man laughed.

"And I don't know that I should break my heart about that," he said in a tone free from all bitterness, and full of a humour which at such a time struck the doctor as pathetic. "England, you know, was my prison house for five years. Will I live to reach Queenstown, do you think?"

The doctor shook his head.

"My dear sir, if you will have the plain truth, I fear that it is but a question of hours. Is there anything I can do for you?"

The dying man sighed. "Send Doreen to me," he said, "and tell my wife that I am now free from pain. Is there no possibility of letting me see her?"

"I am sorry, but it is out of the question," said the doctor decidedly. "For the children's sake, you would not let her run any risk. I will send your daughter to you."

Patrick O'Ryan thanked him courteously, and lay with closed eyes, musing over the past, certain lines of patient endurance first traced by the years in Portland Prison becoming more distinctly visible about his mouth. He had faced death too often to fear it, and the manner of his death pleased him well enough. He knew that he should take his place in that long line of patriots who have laid down their lives for Ireland. Nearly six years ago he had come out of gaol with his health undermined,—now with unexpected suddenness the end had come, just as he was leaving America for London, there to embark on fresh and congenial work, and to enjoy Doreen's first appearance as a public singer.

The sound of some one at the door made him open his keen blue eyes. He saw at a glance that the doctor had told his daughter the truth; for Doreen's face, which had been singularly young and girlish for her eighteen years, had strangely altered; it was stamped now with a look of grief and care which went to his heart.

"Child," he said, taking her hand in his, "you must not fret over me. Is there a priest on board?"

"No, father," she said, with deep regret; for she knew that he, as a devout Roman Catholic, would feel the deprivation in a way which she, who had been brought up to share her mother's opinions, could not fully enter into.

"Well, it can't be helped," he replied. "It sometimes happens on the battle-field that two soldiers have to confess to each other." And with his hands folded between hers he made his shrift.

"Oh, if I, too, could tell father what happened at Lough Lee!" thought Doreen. "Might I rightly break my oath to ask advice of one who is leaving the world?"

The temptation was strong, but she thought of Max Hereford's words in the fernery, and was silent. Gradually, too, all her thoughts became absorbed in her father's words; when he had ended, there was a long silence. Nothing was to be heard save the swish of the waves against the steamer, and the ceaseless throbbing of the engine, which to her fancy seemed eternally playing the tune of "God save Ireland." There had been something pathetic in the extreme simplicity of the confession to which she had listened. This rebel, who had twice tried unsuccessfully to free his country from oppression, failing because he had tried in mistaken ways and before the times were ripe,—had not only the devoted courage which characterizes the pioneers of all great movements, but he had, what is much more rare, a perfectly childlike faith.

"I have been thinking," he said, "it will save much trouble if my funeral be at sea. Don't shrink so, mavourneen. What does it matter? I would sooner lie at the bottom of the Atlantic than in an English grave, and it would be but an ill opening for your public career, to have all the Irish in Liverpool trooping to the funeral of O'Ryan the ex-convict."

"We shall touch at Queenstown," she faltered.

"Yes; and were Ireland freed from her chains, I might feel differently. As it is—let me be buried at sea. Some day when this new scheme ripens, and Home Rule brings peace to our land, why, you can build me a fine monument at Glasnevin in the O'Connell circle." He smiled and stroked her cheek. "Oh, it's great things I expect of you," he added tenderly, while her tears fell fast. "Your voice and your good courage will serve the children in this strait, and will serve old Ireland, too, if I mistake not. Do you remember the last time we were together at Glasnevin? It was but a few days before my arrest; I taught you to know the blackbird's note, and we looked together at the graves of the patriots, and you learnt Ellen O'Leary's poem and said it to me once when you came to see me at Kilmainham; don't you remember it?—

> "I'm very sure, if right took place, we'd all have full and plenty;
> The landlords live upon our toil, and leave us bare and empty."

There followed some hours of great weakness and weariness, in which the sweet-natured patience which had always characterized Patrick O'Ryan's personal character, shone out radiantly. Early in the morning, when the doctor had paid his visit and had gone to report progress to the poor invalid wife, who was too ill to be moved, Doreen and Michael, who were keeping watch beside the dying man, heard him make a faint request.

"Something of Newman's," he said dreamily.

And Doreen, taking up a book from the open portmanteau close at hand, read a poem which she knew to be a favourite with her father,—a poem which perhaps naturally appealed to one whose life had been made up of hard fighting and crushing disappointment, ending with a far-distant yet confident hope.

> "When I sink down in gloom or fear,
> Hope blighted or delay'd,
> Thy whisper, Lord, my heart shall cheer,
> ' 'Tis I, be not afraid!'
>
> "Or startled at some sudden blow,
> If fretful thoughts I feel,
> 'Fear not, it is but I,' shall flow
> As balm my wound to heal.
>
> "Nor will I quit Thy way, though foes
> Some onward pass defend;
> From each rough voice the watchword goes,
> 'Be not afraid!...a friend!'
>
> "And oh! when judgment's trumpet clear
> Awakes me from my grave,
> Still in its echo may I hear,
> ' 'Tis Christ; He comes to save.'"

As she ended, his eyes opened for a minute, and Doreen bent down to listen to a brief whispered message for her mother; then, having kissed them both, he lay at rest for some time, a sort of drowsiness stealing over him till just as eight bells rang his lips moved, and Doreen again bent forward, thinking that he wanted something.

She caught the words,—"God save Ireland!"

They were the last he spoke.

For the next few days Doreen felt like one in a horrible dream. But the glimpse of the beautiful harbour at Queenstown, with its wide welcoming shores, its indescribable look of home, roused her and drew her back to the actual needs of the present. As they approached England, she became more and more absorbed in the manifold arrangements for her mother's comfort, and in the care of Dermot, Mollie, and the baby,—the three little ones who had been born during those happy years at New York.

Already it seemed to her a long, long time since she had stood with Michael on the deck, listening to the words of the

burial service read by the captain, and watching the great Atlantic waves as they surged over her father's coffin and hid it from view.

Sorrow and anxiety, and long nights of watching with her mother, had robbed her cheek of its colour and sobered the dancing blue eyes; nevertheless there was still a look of unquenchable youth and spirit in the face, which made the careworn lines about the lips seem nothing but a mistake.

"How soon shall we be in, dear?" asked Mrs. O'Ryan faintly, from her berth, glancing a little anxiously at the wild confusion which prevailed in the stateroom.

"They said it would be half an hour just now, mother," said Doreen, seizing on books, clothes, and music, and crowding them into a much-enduring carpet-bag; then, pausing to catch up little Bride, the baby of six months old, she hastily averted an impending cry with a snatch of "The Meeting of the Waters."

She sang brightly, so brightly that one might have fancied her heart was as light as it had been six years before when she sang to the Herefords at Castle Karey.

"Little time-waster!" she said tenderly, as she put the child down on the floor again between two small people of five and three. "Now play with Dermot and Mollie, there's a doat, and leave me the use of my hands, for in truth they've enough to do."

Just then there came a tap at the cabin door, and a brisk, cheery-looking American woman entered. She must have been about forty, but looked younger, owing to her trim figure, and fresh, rosy cheeks with their high cheek-bones; her hard, shiny, bright face always reminded Doreen of a well-polished apple, while her eyes, small, dark, and twinkling, were like the eyes of a robin.

"Can I help you, miss?" she asked; and scarcely waiting for permission or thanks she began to do everything that had to be done, strapping bags and portmanteaux, dressing the baby, and chatting to little Dermot and Mollie, while Doreen was set free to wait on her mother, who looked very unfit for the move on shore.

Hagar Muchmore was migrating from her New England home to Liverpool to visit her only son, who, somewhat to his mother's dismay, had married on his twenty-first birthday a woman several years his senior. The news had perturbed Hagar, and she had resolved to cross the Atlantic and see for herself whether the match were satisfactory or not. The villagers at Salem had remonstrated with her for wasting her money on such an expedition, but Hagar thought peace in the heart was worth more than gold in the bank; she drew out her savings and started for England, enjoying the thought of the pleasant surprise she was preparing for her boy.

The crossing would, however, have been both dull and lonely for her had it not been for the great interest she had taken in the O'Ryans. Many people had sympathized with them, had patted the children on the head, or filled Michael's pockets with chocolate, or said kind words to Doreen. But Hagar Muchmore had thrown her whole heart into the sorrows of these fatherless children, had identified herself with them, had waited on Mrs. O'Ryan as though she had been her own maid, and had learnt to love them almost as much as though she had nursed them and cared for them all their lives.

"The doctor says my mother must not travel to London yet," said Doreen. "He has told us of rooms in Grove Street, where the terms would not be very high. Do you know whether it is far from the landing-quay?"

"No, miss," said Hagar; "I'm as new to this country as you are. But I can find out from the stewardess. And I'm thinking I would just as soon come round with you there and settle you in before going to my son; for he'll not be back from his work till night, I guess, and I'm in no such haste to see his wife."

Doreen's face lighted up.

"Oh, what a comfort you will be!" she said. "I was wondering how I should ever manage with the little ones and yet be free to help my mother. How kind every one is!"

She took little Mollie in her arms and carried her on deck, receiving friendly farewells from several of the passengers, and soon descrying Michael, not as she had expected, however, among his friends the sailors, but standing apart looking with wistful eyes at the crowded landing-quay.

"Will you mind Mollie for a minute, while I see to the others?" she said, noticing that there were tears in the brown eyes that looked anxiously up at her.

"Doreen!" he exclaimed. "I heard that old lady with the curls telling her husband that mother would never be better; she said it would be a dreadful thing for you to be—to be left—with all those children on your hands."

"Nonsense!" said Doreen hastily, yet with an odd choking in her throat. "She knows nothing about it. Mother may be much the better for the change, and for seeing auntie. I shall write to auntie to-night and beg her to come to Liverpool, as we can't go straight to London."

Michael looked relieved, but his burden seemed to have transferred itself to Doreen, who went back to the stateroom with an aching heart and a mind full of heavy fore-bodings. She seemed to see her mother now with different eyes, for the first time fully realizing how worn and thin her face had become during the last few days, and how slight a hold she seemed to have of the world.

"People always look worse when they first wear their walking-things," she said to herself. "It is the bonnet that makes her look so ill, and the excitement of landing that has brought that horrid little flush to her cheeks. Oh, Dr. Lewis, have you come to help us? That is very good of you!" she exclaimed, as the ship's doctor entered with the steward's mate behind him.

"We'll get Mrs. O'Ryan on shore if you will see to your little people on deck," said the doctor. "Young Vanheim is attending to your luggage, so you need not have any anxiety about that."

"And I'll see to the baby," said Hagar Muchmore, skirmishing round the stateroom in search of anything that might be left, like a kindly bird of prey.

So with good-natured help and friendly farewells and much sympathy the sad little group was set on shore, and Doreen, looking at the busy streets of Liverpool, fancied that, after all, this strange country had a sort of homelike air, and that she should soon grow to love it. Thanks to the doctor's recommendation, they had no difficulty in getting rooms, and before long Hagar Muchmore had settled the four children round a comfortable tea-table, which, as she remarked, would keep them quiet for a good half-hour; and Doreen, having helped her mother to bed, was able to write to her aunt, Mrs. Garth. She snatched up pen and paper, but somehow to begin was a difficult matter. Some letters are hard to write, from dearth of anything to say; others are hard because there is so much that must be said,—such ill news to convey, such sorrow to restrain, such fear for the future that must be hinted at, yet not too clearly expressed. Doreen opened her inkstand, then she sat with her head resting on her hands, vainly struggling to clothe her thoughts in words. Roused at length by the remembrance that there was no time to be lost, she forced herself to write the brief lines which should summon Mrs. Garth to Liverpool.

> "MY DEAR AUNTIE:—We have just arrived in England and are in sad trouble. My father had an attack of spasms of the heart and died two days after leaving New York; and mother, who was never very strong, and who has been, as you know, since Bride was born, quite an invalid, seems as if she could not rally from this great shock. The doctor will not hear of letting her travel to London, but she has counted very much on seeing you, and begs that, if possible, you will come to us here. I think she will not rest till she has seen you; so that if you could come at once, it would be a great comfort. Your affectionate niece, DOREEN O'RYAN."

Hagar Muchmore posted the letter when she set off in search of her son's home, and poor Doreen, feeling very desolate and burdened, despatched Michael to keep guard in his mother's room, and set to work to put the three little ones to bed, having desperate hunts for straying nightgowns and lost brushes and combs, and sighing many a time and oft, to think that in the matter of orderliness she should have failed to inherit the least trace of her mother's nature, and should have been wholly Irish.

"But at any rate I can keep them in good humour by singing," she reflected, and spite of all the sorrow that filled her heart she sang whatever Dermot and Mollie begged for, from "Come back to Erin" to "Kate O'Shane," and finally left them sleeping as happily as though one great sorrow had not just passed into their lives while a fresh one stood waiting at the threshold.

But when her own work was done, when the landlady had been interviewed and provisions ordered, and Michael cheered with hopeful words and tucked up in bed, proud to think himself in charge of the little ones, Doreen was so weary that to sleep was impossible. She lighted her little night-lamp and then lay down beside her mother, aching in every limb and with ears still on the alert to catch any sounds from her small charges in the next room, yet afraid in her

restless wakefulness to stir, lest the sleep into which the invalid had fallen should be broken. It was all very well to speak hopefully to Michael, but the fears that had troubled the boy's heart began now to trouble her, to force themselves upon her notice, to refuse to be stifled as she had hitherto contrived to stifle them.

And then all the dreams, the ambitious plans, of her girlhood came back to her with a bitter sense that just as they were beginning to become practical possibilities, her desire for them had faded utterly away. What did she care now for the chance of becoming a great public singer? The mother who was to have enjoyed her triumph was dying. What could she care now for the rights of Ireland, when the father whose sufferings had wrung her heart would not be there to rejoice in the progress of the cause? The rain came driving against the window, the wind howled drearily down the narrow street, and Doreen lay looking at the familiar shadow cast by the crucifix on the wall and wondering if all her life it would happen that the good things so long waited, so eagerly hoped for, should come invariably hand in hand with sorrow. Very vividly she remembered how, when at length her father's imprisonment had ended and they had met him once more, the happiness of the reunion had been most sadly marred by the dreadful secret that had been weighing on her heart. Time had softened to some extent the misery of the remembrance of that afternoon on Lough Lee; it had ceased to be a continual burden to her, for her nature was too buoyant to be crushed for very long, and, fortunately, she was not given to brooding over anything. Still, there were times when the past became fearfully vivid, times when she was filled with a most dreadful craving to see Max Hereford once more,—the one person in the world to whom she might speak of what had passed on that last day of her childhood.

"My darling," said Mrs. O'Ryan, opening her eyes and taking the girl's hand in hers, "I am afraid you have not slept. You are sadly tired. What is the time? I am feeling so much better."

"The clock has just struck two, mother; you have had a longer sleep than usual."

"I thought so," said the invalid. "Lie still, dear; I want nothing. What was the name, Doreen, of those people at Castle Karey? I have been dreaming about them."

"Their name was Hereford," said Doreen, glancing at the crucifix. "Mr. Hereford always sends Christmas cards to Michael and me. I believe he must still think I am quite a little girl, for last year it was a picture of a robin singing to a harp; just an absurd thing, more fit for Dermot or Mollie than for me!"

"Where did they live in England?" asked Mrs. O'Ryan.

"Somewhere in the South, I think," said Doreen. "Firdale was the name of their nearest town."

"I had a dream that they were very good to you," said her mother. "I wish it may come true, for I am leaving you with but few friends and with many cares."

"Oh, mother, don't talk like that!" said Doreen, tears choking her voice.

"I should like to be spared to my children; but, in any case," (she stroked Doreen's hand tenderly,) "it does not bring death nearer to speak of what may happen. Your father has left Donal Moore his sole executor; he will help and advise you about the children: there is not a kinder, better man living. It would, of course, be possible for me to leave your uncle and aunt co-guardians, but I think it will be better not. To them Donal Moore is no doubt only a dangerous agitator, newly released from prison; they might not work well together. I would rather that you and Donal shared the guardianship of the little ones, though I know auntie will always be ready to help you, and you will naturally turn to her in any trouble."

"What is Uncle Garth like?" asked Doreen. "I can't recall him well."

"I know very little of him, save that he is a good, honest man, clever and very silent. The Garths were Tories of the old school, a delightful family, full of old-fashioned hospitality; they sadly disapproved of my marriage, but were very kind to me, for all that. Yet, somehow, I cannot think that Uncle Garth and Donal Moore could ever pull together, specially as your uncle is a strong Protestant, and as the boys must be brought up in their father's faith according to our agreement. If they do come across each other, you will have to play the part of peacemaker."

"My temper is too hot for that part," said Doreen. "It is you, mother, who will manage to bring them together and smooth the rough places."

Mrs. O'Ryan sighed.

"If I live," she said, "I doubt whether I can be anything but a burden and an expense, and God knows there is little enough for you all to live upon."

"Oh, mother, mother, don't!" sobbed Doreen. "Have I not got my voice that the maestro told us would some day make our fortune? And what do I care for it if you are not here?"

"The thought that at least you have that is my great comfort," said Mrs. O'Ryan. "A sweet voice, a good training, and a brave heart,—with these you are left to face the world and to support four children. Michael is but twelve, and can be nothing but an expense to you for many years. It is a terrible burden to leave to a girl of eighteen."

"It would be far worse without the children, mother; at least I shall have them to work for: it will seem worth while," said Doreen. "Besides, father said something of money invested in some railway."

"It is very little," said Mrs. O'Ryan; "it would not realize more than four hundred pounds. Donal Moore will see to that for you, and God grant it may keep you until you begin to earn money enough for your needs. It is strange how vividly I dream now. It still seems almost like something that really happened, that talk with Mrs. Hereford and her son; I should like to think you would come across them again. It must have been, I suppose, some remembrance of the old days when he used to come and persuade me to let you go with them on some expedition, but I seemed to hear his voice saying, just as he used to then: 'I will take such care of her.' What became of that tutor who was taken ill with brain fever?"

"He was getting better when we left, they said," replied Doreen; "but since then I have heard nothing about him."

She pressed her lips tightly together, for once more there came upon her the old, burning desire to tell everything to her mother. The unreasoning wish was all the more difficult to resist because of her exhausted state, while the sense that the time left to her was short, that soon all chance of unburdening her mind would be over, weighed upon her with an intolerable oppression. Could it be wrong to tell now, to unburden her soul to one who was leaving the world, to win that counsel and sympathy for which she craved so terribly?

The temptation was strong, so strong that again and again it nearly overmastered her. Was she to fight so desperately all for the sake of a stranger who, for aught she knew, might be dead? Was she to be silent now when probably all danger was over? Had she, indeed, ever been right to keep such a thing from her mother? "Help me, God! Help me, God!" she cried desperately; and, as if in answer, there rose before her a vision of the lovely fernery at Castle Karey, and of the little Keep, and of Max Hereford's clear, truthful eyes, as he repeated the words of the oath, and, stooping down, kissed her for the first time.

"I will be true," she said, and, venturing to raise herself a little on her elbow, she looked at her mother and found that in the long silence she had again fallen asleep quite tranquilly. Into the girl's sanguine heart there instantly rushed a glad thought: "I have been true to God; perhaps—oh, perhaps—He will, after all, spare mother to us."

CHAPTER VI.

"Sweet thoughts, bright dreams, my comforts be,
All comfort else has flown;
For every hope was false to me,
And here I am alone.
What thoughts were mine in early youth!
Like some old Irish song,
Brimful of love, and life, and truth,
My spirit gushed along."—THOMAS DAVIS.

Doreen's letter arrived in Bloomsbury the next morning, and lay on the breakfast table to greet the mistress of the house, without any black border to herald its contents. At sight of the Liverpool postmark, Aunt Garth caught it up eagerly, and over her worn and somewhat sad face there flitted a smile of content.

"They have landed, then!" she exclaimed, "and to-day I shall see Mary again after all these years of separation!"

In outward appearance the two sisters were much alike; but Mrs. Garth, though her life had apparently been much less trying, looked, nevertheless, sadder than Mrs. O'Ryan, who, spite of poverty and sorrow, and the long imprisonment of her husband, had retained a marvellous youthfulness and buoyancy which was lacking in her sister. There was something very winning, however, in Aunt Garth's face; a sort of quiet strength was the first thing that impressed all who observed her, but scarcely any one really knew her: she lived a life apart, even while forming the very centre and main-spring of her household. Some people were bold enough to question whether even Uncle Garth himself really understood her, and perhaps he did not, being a man who accepted the great facts of life with the unquestioning faith of a child, and probably troubling himself very little about them. He was a good man and a good husband, but the enthusiasm of his nature spent itself in his daily work at the British Museum, and ancient Egypt was far more real to him than modern England, while as to Ireland, it was to him as Prince Metternich would have said,—merely "a geographical expression." Egyptology, however, had not at all interfered with his kindliness of heart; absent and preoccupied he might be, but if once roused to the perception that other people needed his help, nothing could exceed his readiness to serve them.

He was in a particularly absent mood that morning, his mind being full of some recent discoveries made at Alexandria, and his wife knew that it would be of no use attempting to make him listen to anything until he had opened the letter with the Egyptian stamp which awaited him. His dreamy gray eyes lighted up as he caught sight of the little view of the pyramid and the Sphinx upon his plate, and Aunt Garth went quietly about the table, cutting bread and putting eggs in the egg-boiler and pouring out coffee, with now and then a rather wistful glance towards the gray head bent over the sheets of large foreign paper. There is a popular notion that antiquarians and men of science are all shaggy, wild-looking, and unkempt; but Uncle Garth—possibly owing to his wife's exertions—was a particularly well-clothed, well-brushed man, and had an indefinable air of good preservation, from his closely cropped gray head and short gray beard to his faultless boots.

"I have had a letter from Doreen, dear," said Mrs. Garth, when at length the letter from Egypt was folded up and a possible pause in Uncle Garth's reflections arrived, owing to the necessity of decapitating an egg,—a ceremony which he always performed with scrupulous care after a peculiar method of his own invention. "She writes from Liverpool in great trouble, for her father died during the voyage."

"What! Patrick dead!" exclaimed Uncle Garth, with a look of concern. "Poor fellow,—poor fellow! What a wasted life! And your sister and those five children but ill provided for, I am afraid."

"I should fear there can be very little for them, though I know they left America free from debt and were hopeful about some appointment which he had got in London as correspondent to one of the Irish papers," said Mrs. Garth. "Several times Mary has written of his failing health; he has never really been well since he was in prison," she said; "being ill-fitted to stand the rough work he had to do, and fretting his heart out all those five years about her and the little ones. There were only the two of them then,—Doreen and little Michael. I remember staying with them just after Michael's birth, when you were in Egypt,—it must have been the year before he was arrested,—and his devotion to the children was wonderful to see. Doreen used to follow him about everywhere like a little shadow."

"It's a sad business," said Uncle Garth reflectively. "He was a very good fellow and pleasant enough to talk with, but with this unlucky craze about Irish rights. I remember well the very last talk I had with him when he was full of the

national rights and the national duties, and I plainly pointed out to him that Ireland being wedded to England had ceased to be a nation, that it had no separate rights, that it was in fact in the position of a wife. But these Irish fellows are so impracticable, one might as well have talked to the winds. Hopelessly perverse and headstrong, the whole race of them!"

Aunt Garth smiled ever so little, having divined the weak point of his argument with its frank admission of the essential difference between the two nationalities. Then she thought of her sister, and her face grew sad once more.

"I fear Mary is very ill, from what Doreen says," she remarked, handing the letter across the table to her husband. "If you don't mind, dear, I think I must go to them to-day, and see what can be done to help them."

"It is a very damp day for you to risk a journey," said Uncle Garth, looking up from the letter. "But still, this seems urgent. If you go to-day, I might run down from Saturday to Monday, and see what can be done to help them. Poor things! it is a sad lookout for those children."

So Aunt Garth, who was scarcely allowed out of the house in cold weather, owing to her delicate chest, set off by the morning express to Liverpool, and arrived in Grove Street that afternoon, tired and anxious, and chilled to the bone, in spite of the sable cloak wrapped closely about her. She asked for Doreen, and was ushered by a shabby maid-of-all-work up the narrow staircase. At the foot of the second flight, however, their way was blocked by a little blue-eyed dreamy-looking boy with sunny brown hair cut across his forehead and hanging in short, tangled curls about his neck. He was entirely absorbed in the story of "Rumpelstiltskin" which a boy some years his senior was reading aloud to him, the book lying on the top stair and the reader extended at full length, in a position which displayed to the best possible advantage his well-patched knickerbockers and his thin legs.

"Master Michael," said the servant, "get up quick, there's a good boy; here's a lady a comin' up."

Michael was on his feet in a minute.

"Oh, auntie!" he cried. "How glad mother will be to see you! We were afraid it would be too cold for you to come. Shall I carry your bag for you?"

Mrs. Garth, wondering to find the little fellow who used to visit them, on his way to Portland, grown into this well-mannered boy, followed him as he led the way into a bedroom close by. The light was growing dim, and the comfortless look of the lodgings struck her painfully. A pale, slim girl, with her head well set upon her shoulders, and a dignity that seemed beyond her years, came quickly forward with eager greetings, carrying in her arms a fretful baby, while on the bed, she caught sight of another child sitting beside the motionless figure that lay there unheeding all that passed in the room.

"How sweet of yon to come at once," said Doreen, with a warmth of welcome which made Mrs. Garth's sad eyes shine. "Mother is not exactly asleep, I think, but all day she has lain like that, only rousing up when we actually speak to her."

Mrs. Garth moved quietly across to the bedside, and stood for some moments, looking at the fragile face which yet was less changed than she had feared.

"I will take off my bonnet," she said, "and then come back to stay with her. Don't disturb her just yet."

"Michael will take care of them here for a minute, and I will show you your room," said Doreen. "Oh, Mrs. Muchmore!" she exclaimed, as they passed out on to the staircase. "Have you come back to us again?"

"Should have been round before," said Hagar, who seldom employed a pronoun if she could help it, "but there was no leavin' my son and his wife. Guess the marriage will turn out well, after all, though it did seem a flyin' in the face of Providence which ordained that man should be created before his wife. How's Mis' O'Ryan?"

"She has been drowsy all day," said Doreen. "This is my aunt, Mrs. Garth, who has just arrived. I wish you would order tea to be brought up quickly; perhaps mother would take a little."

"Will see to it," said Hagar, bustling off, while Doreen, still carrying the baby, took Mrs. Garth to her room, talking as they went of Hagar's goodness to them on board.

"They were all kind to us," she said, "but Mrs. Muchmore was our good angel." Then, laughing a little at the idea, "She is not much like the conventional angel with yellow ringlets and a doll's face, is she? But that brisk, cheery way of hers

kept us all going through that dreadful time."

She broke off abruptly. Some day, perhaps, she might speak freely of all that had passed at the time of her father's death, but now her lips were locked, not only by the sense that all her powers were needed to cope with the present trouble, but by that curious barrier which generally, to some extent, exists between those of different generations.

When they returned they found that Hagar Muchmore had lighted the candles and drawn down the blinds, contriving by a few rapid and dexterous touches to give a somewhat more comfortable air to the whole place. Then she carried off all the children to tea in the lower regions, promising that some should be sent up in a few minutes to the sick-room.

"Mother," said Doreen, bending down to kiss the invalid, "there is good news for you. Auntie has come; see, she is waiting to speak to you."

For the first time since her husband's death a gleam of pleasure lit up Mrs. O'Ryan's face; for a little while she was quite roused, and lay with her hand clasped in her sister's, listening eagerly to all that she had to tell, and to Doreen's great delight seeming even to enjoy the tea when it came. The poor girl had no experience to warn her that this was but the last faint flicker of the flame, and that death was close at hand. Once more her buoyant nature began to hope, and to weave countless plans for the future. She laughed and chatted with the children as she put them to bed, and consented without hesitation to lie down for a while herself, and leave the first watch of the night to Mrs. Garth. Her aunt was loath to disturb her; but about midnight so unmistakable a change set in that she dared not hesitate, and candle in hand she glided into the quiet room, glancing first at Michael and little Dermot sound asleep in their bed in the corner, with "Rumpelstiltskin" ready for an early morning hour, then crossing the room to the other bed, where, with the baby's cradle within reach, and with little Mollie's arms clasped about her, lay Doreen. The girl looked far younger asleep than awake; the curve of her cheek against the pillow, the dimple near the mouth, the untroubled calm of the whole face, told of youth and health. She yawned with the abandon of a sleepy child when her aunt roused her.

"What, time to get up already!" she exclaimed drowsily; then, suddenly noticing the strange voice, she started up with dilated eyes. "How is mother?" she cried.

"She is asking for you,—for you and Michael," said Mrs. Garth. "But she does not want the others to be disturbed."

With a sudden, terrible realization of what it all meant, Doreen, like one blind, groped her way across the room to rouse Michael,—no easy task. Then, together, they stole into the dimly-lighted room, awe-stricken and trembling, though there was nothing of what they had expected,—no painful struggle, no effort to say last words, no anxiety for the children she was leaving,—nothing but a tender embrace and a murmured blessing, then a peaceful sliding away into unconsciousness.

And even in the midst of her bitter sorrow Doreen was comforted to think that this was the sort of death her mother had always hoped for, an undisturbed death, with neither doctor nor clergyman, nor professional nurse, nor many friends standing by; but with the bustle of the working-day ended, and with the darkness revealing the presence of other worlds.

It was not until her aunt had left her, and until she had soothed Michael and settled him off to sleep again, that she altogether gave way. But as she once more lay down between the two youngest children, the sight of the little unconscious sisters to whom she had to play the part of second mother utterly overcame her. She buried her face in the pillow and wept as though her heart would break.

"I shall never, never be able to do it," she sobbed. "And they are too young to remember!"

How she lived through the days that followed, Doreen never quite knew, but probably the haunting consciousness of their poverty, and the urgent need that she should have all her wits about her, kept her from breaking down under the double shock she had undergone. People must either use their sorrows as stepping-stones, or be crushed beneath the weight of them. Doreen belonged to the climbers; a difficulty stimulated her and called out all that was best in her nature.

The very first sight of her raised Uncle Garth's spirits, when, on Saturday, he arrived, much perturbed to think of the responsibility that had been cast upon him by the death of his sister-in-law, and wholly at a loss to know how to dispose of her five children, who were so much less easy and pleasant to deal with than his beloved mummies. Uncle Garth did not like responsibility; he was ready to sacrifice anything except his peace of mind, but he guarded that jealously; the children might if they pleased look to him for food or clothing, but to spend his time about their affairs, to be expected to

start the boys in life, to take, in any sense, the position of a father towards them, was quite another matter. He felt unequal to such a task; it had been difficult enough in the case of his own two sons, and having just started them in life,—the one in Canada, the other in India,—and experienced the blissful relief of having such cares and anxieties at an end, he was not at all inclined to embark upon a whole family of Irish orphans, who, as he reflected with some irritation, need never have been orphans at all, had it not been for the headstrong folly—miscalled patriotism—of their unfortunate father.

It was a shock, certainly, to a man of his secluded habits, to be shown into a room where children seemed to abound in so strange a way; but Doreen, quickly guessing that their presence would fatigue him, sent Dermot and Mollie away under Michael's care directly the greetings were over, marshalling her little flock so quietly, and taking such pains to make the newcomer comfortable, that Uncle Garth at once realized that he had to do with a woman, not with a mere school-girl, as he had anticipated. Even her slight Irish accent did not annoy him, and he watched with a vague admiration the understanding way in which she handled the baby,—for a baby had always been to him a fearful and wonderful thing, "not by any to be enterprised nor taken in hand unadvisedly." Bride, to be sure, was a plump and comfortable-looking infant, but he preferred to regard her from a distance.

"We have been talking, dear, about the future," began Mrs. Garth quietly. "Doreen has had a very kind letter this morning from one of her father's friends, offering to make a home for them in Ireland; but as it is necessary for her to be in London, if she is to become a public singer, we think the offer had better be refused."

"A singer?" said Uncle Garth. "Ah, yes, I remember hearing something to that effect."

"I have had a thoroughly good training in New York," said Doreen, "and have brought over a letter of introduction from my old maestro, which will, I hope, help me in getting engagements. But he advises me to have a course of lessons in oratorio singing from Rathenow, and that will, of course, be an expense. When everything is paid for here, I shall have scarcely anything in hand; and though Donal Moore will sell out the money that father had in the London and North Western, it will not realize more than four hundred pounds, mother thought. We must live upon that until I begin to earn money, and perhaps you would be willing to lend us some if my engagements do not at first come in very quickly. I am afraid all artistes have a hard struggle at first."

She sighed a little, with the impatience of one who feels a great power within himself doomed for a time at any rate to inaction.

"I shall most willingly help you, my dear, as far as money can help," said Uncle Garth. "But I should fancy the life of a professional singer is full of difficulty, and where one succeeds hundreds are fated to fail."

But Doreen was not to be daunted by this somewhat damping speech. "I must sing," she said simply. "I have intended to be a singer ever since I was ten years old."

"My dear, many people form wishes early in life which have, nevertheless, to be abandoned," said Uncle Garth. "Both of my boys vowed they would go to sea, but here is one of them farming in Canada, and the other in the Indian Civil Service, and happy enough in their work,—happy enough."

"Yes, perhaps," said Doreen, smiling ever so little. "But I am going to be a singer."

Her resolute voice made further argument impossible; and, fearing that she had spoken too vehemently, she added:—

"As to this offer of a home in Ireland, why, it is impossible to accept it; for Donal is a great deal too poor, and we have no real claim upon him. It is just his good-heartedness; he would give away the very clothes from his back if they would fit us! Donal Moore is a sort of primitive Christian, born by mistake in the nineteenth century, and awfully puzzled to find that orthodox people don't understand his notions of sharing."

"Donal Moore, did you say!" exclaimed Uncle Garth. "You don't mean Donal Moore the Nationalist?"

"Sure, then, but I do," said Doreen, instantly becoming a little more Irish in accent. "Donal is the kindest man alive; he lived for a whole year with us in America, and the boys just worship him. He is but lately married and settled in Dublin, and it would not be fair for us to take him at his word and quarter ourselves upon him. If you knew how full of suffering his life has been, and of all that he went through in prison, you would understand just how I feel about it."

"I quite think," said Uncle Garth hastily, "that it would be a most undesirable arrangement, and I hope, my dear, you will come to us. Now that my sons have left home, there is plenty of room, and I am sure it is the arrangement that your poor mother would have desired."

"We spoke of it together," said Aunt Garth, in her quiet voice; "and it seemed to set her mind quite at rest. Doreen need not feel that she is thrusting a burden upon you; when her reputation is made, she will be able to repay anything that you advance for the children; in accepting this offer she will in no way sacrifice her independence."

"It was not so much of the money that I was thinking, auntie,—that, of course, I could repay,—but it is the trouble to you and the change in your household, and all the coming and going and bustle that it must involve. They are good children; but of course where there are children there is bound to be noise, to say nothing of all my practising, which will, I am afraid, be tiresome for you."

"My dear," said Mrs. Garth, "has it never struck you that a house may be too quiet?"

And as she took her niece's hand in hers, Doreen guessed by the little tremor which she felt in it, that Aunt Garth was fretting sorely for the two sons who were supposed to be so happily settled abroad. Her heart went out to the patient, uncomplaining, reserved woman; it would be easy to respect Uncle Garth, to be very grateful to him for his kindness, and to put up with his hundred and one crotchets, but already she had learned to love her aunt, and to feel that she belonged to her.

"You must let me know," said Uncle Garth, "of any expenses that you are unable to meet here; there will be, of course, the mourning for yourself and the children: that alone will be a heavy tax on your purse."

"Thank you," said Doreen. "But I do not mean to wear black or to put the children into it. I am sure my father and mother would rather we did not run into debt. And what do we want to be thinking of dressmakers and milliners at such a time as this?"

"I am afraid people may misunderstand you," said her uncle hesitatingly. "You see it is the custom."

"Yes; but a heathenish custom, to my mind," said Doreen. "If for protection it is necessary to have some badge of grief, why, a black rosette fastened to one's jacket would answer the purpose quite as well."

"One would shrink from the talk it would inevitably make," said Uncle Garth.

"Yes," said Doreen wearily. "But some one must go first in every reform."

Her mind was so evidently made up that he ventured no more remonstrances, though in his secret soul he hankered sorely after an entirely proper equipment, with the orthodox depth of crape, the black veils, the black-bordered handkerchiefs, and the black kid gloves.

"The poor child is evidently born with revolutionary tendencies," he thought to himself. "It's a sad inheritance!—a sad inheritance!"

Spite of it all, however, there was something in Doreen that he cordially liked and respected. The quiet courage with which she bore up in this time of grief and overwhelming sorrow, the buoyant hopefulness with which she faced her future, most of all, perhaps, her devotion to her little brothers and sisters, impressed the Egyptologist not a little. For her sake he made heroic efforts to hide the disgust he felt at the prospect of having to meet Donal Moore, the Nationalist, and on the Sunday morning spent a considerable time in debating how he could best combine courtesy to the man with a certain unresponsive stiffness which should betoken loathing of his principles. It was, after all, natural enough that Patrick O'Ryan's old friend and executor should run over from Dublin to the funeral; his kindly offer to the children must also be borne in mind, and severity must be tempered with all due hospitality. The Irishman must, however, be made to feel that though with them, he was not of them.

With these thoughts in his mind, Uncle Garth returned from his Sunday morning walk and entered the sitting-room; Doreen, with her white face looking a degree less sad than he had yet seen it, sat on a low stool warming her hands at the fire. Opposite her, in the depths of a big armchair, with Michael on one side and Dermot on the other, and with little Mollie perched on his knee, sat a fair-skinned, broad-browed man, whose kindly blue eyes and peculiarly gentle face looked too young for his grizzled hair.

"Mr. Moore has just come, uncle," said Doreen; and Uncle Garth, with a murmured greeting, put a limp hand into the hand of the ticket-of-leave man, permitting him to shake it or not, as he pleased. Donal Moore, who never did things by halves, gave it a hearty grip, just as though they had been the warmest friends; and, in truth, he was thinking that he liked the look of Mr. Garth, and felt sure that the children were in good hands. He was not a self-conscious person, and it did not occur to him that the Englishman was at that moment thinking, "So, this is the notorious ex-Fenian! This the ardent Home Ruler!"

In spite of his prejudices, Uncle Garth was obliged to own that there was something singularly attractive about the newcomer. Years of suffering and imprisonment had, strangely enough, only elevated Donal Moore's noble nature. Forced into gaol amongst criminals of the lowest type and treated with greater severity than the vilest murderer, this man had somehow managed to retain his faith in human nature, and he had come out into the world again full of eager plans for coping with the evils which tend to produce criminals.

"Evidently he might have been a most useful member of society," reflected Uncle Garth regretfully, "had he not had the misfortune to be born in Ireland. Strange, that so thoughtful and sensible a man can yet be such a fool as to throw away the best years of his life on a mere visionary idea, a hare-brained scheme for recovering the land for the people."

Donal Moore, in the mean time, had somehow managed to discover Uncle Garth's hobby, and as they sat down to luncheon he skilfully drew the Egyptologist towards the subject that he loved; being resolved to help Doreen as much as possible, and guessing well enough how sore a heart lay beneath her quiet manner. She looked as though all the sparkling, radiant, joyous nature had been crushed out of her. He wondered whether she could ever again be the same light-hearted girl whose rippling laughter and merry talk had been wont to keep the whole household gay in New York.

It was not until they were actually driving to the cemetery that he had any chance of talking to her alone, and then, strangely enough, the least flicker of amusement passed over her face as the door was closed upon them.

"Uncle Garth will think me more unorthodox than ever," she said, "for arranging to come in the second carriage with you. But by this time you have exhausted Egypt, and who knows what unlucky topic he might have chanced upon. It is very good of you, Donal, to come to us in our trouble. It does make such a difference to have you. Have you ever been to a Protestant funeral before?"

"Only once," he replied; "and that was during my sixth year in Dartmoor Prison. Park, the well-known burglar died, and I was one of the prisoners told off to dig his grave and to carry the coffin."

"How horrible!" said Doreen with a shudder; "that wretch who had robbed and wounded so many people!"

"Well, God rest his soul," said Donal; "he was about as bad a man as could well be, but then you must remember he had been bred up in a sort of Fagin's school of crime. And as for the task of digging his grave, why, that is a piece of work most eagerly coveted by all convicts, for the vicar of Princetown has a kindly practice of giving the prisoners something to eat when their task is over; and I well remember, that bitter, cold day, what it was to get the rare treat of a good cup of tea and a decent slice of bread and meat after all those years of prison fare. There was a pretty little child who came out to look at us when the servant brought us the food, and a hideous lot we must have been in our convict garb, with our faces blue with the cold, and the damp, churchyard earth still clinging about us.

"'Why have they dug that hole?' asked the child.

"'Well,' said the servant, 'one of the prisoners is dead, my dear.'

"'Dead!' said the child. 'Why, then he'll be going up to heaven, you know; oh, do let me stay and see him go up.' And she looked at the sky, as if she fully expected to see it opening in preparation."

"It makes my blood boil, when I think of you in that horrible prison," said Doreen. "Oh, Donal! just think how different things might have been, if England had but shown us justice! When one looks at those smug, comfortable people, walking along so unconcernedly, it is hard not to grow bitter. It was the prison life that killed my father, and it was the shock of his death that killed my mother."

"Don't think of what might have been," said Donal Moore quietly. "Think of what may be, what assuredly will be won by the sufferings of all the thousands of Irish patriots. Do you think because people forget them that God forgets?"

"No," said Doreen, sighing. "I believe it all, and yet this apparent waste of so much sacrifice and devotion sometimes seems unendurable. If one could see the least reason or purpose in this long delay of justice, it would be less hard to bear. I am like the little child in the Princetown churchyard, and want to see the heavens opened, and know the 'Why' of everything."

Donal Moore was silent; he thought sadly of the family whose warm welcome to him in America had made so delicious a contrast with his dreary years of imprisonment; and that saddest thought of "Sweet households overthrown," carried him back to his own childhood, and to the remembrance of an eviction which had ruined his parents, and brought them all to the verge of starvation.

"Doreen," he said, in his simple, kindly fashion, taking the girl's hand in his, "many's the time that I have grown bitter and wrathful, thinking over the wrongs and cruelties of the past. And then there comes to my mind the saying of a good old priest,—'twas Father Flynn, whom you'll have heard your father speak of;—and when I told him of the blind rage and the vindictive hatred that seized me when I remembered certain scenes, he said to me: 'Donal, you were made to play a better part than that of cat's-paw to the devil. It's a good knight of Christ's that you're called to be, and this memory of the injustice is to spur you on to help your suffering countrymen.'"

"I should like this grief to spur me on to help," said Doreen. "But the sight of comfortable, ignorant, callous indifference, like Uncle Garth's, just maddens me. I know I will begin to hate the English, now that my mother is no longer here to keep me gentle-hearted."

"No, no," said Donal Moore; "haters can't be helpers. We shall hinder our cause if we fight with the devil's weapons. I am no longer a believer in physical force, but in moral compulsion. And you,—why there is a great career before you! Your voice ought to do much for Ireland."

And so with kindly words of good cheer, and even more by the perception that came to her of her companion's noble character, Doreen was helped through that long drive to Sefton Park cemetery. The sting of her sorrow seemed gone; she was able to look at the future with Donal Moore's eyes, and through all the grievous pain of the next half-hour she felt the strong support of his presence.

The ticket-of-leave man, the ardent reformer and agitator, was somehow the only man living who could have made that funeral service anything but a time of torture to her. But as she stood with Michael's hand in hers, at the foot of the open grave, she looked not down into the dreary depth at the coffin lid, but up to where Donal Moore stood at the further side, his grizzled head uncovered, his strong, gentle face outlined against the pale blue of the wintry sky; and she saw how his sufferings had helped, and for a moment she had her wish,—heaven was opened.

The fresh west wind blew upon her face; it seemed to brace her, to fill her with new life. Her spirit rose up bravely to meet the future. When the grace had been spoken, she turned promptly away, and, with her face lighted up by that wonderful spiritual beauty which now and then startles the dwellers upon this earth, she slipped her free hand into her aunt's. Together they walked slowly back to the gate, while Donal Moore and Uncle Garth followed behind.

CHAPTER VII.

"December days were brief and chill;
The winds of March were wild and drear;
And, nearing and receding still,
Spring never would, we thought, be here.
The leaves that burst, the suns that shine,
Had, not the less, their certain date:—
And thou, O human heart of mine,
Be still; refrain thyself, and wait."—CLOUGH.

Rathenow, the celebrated singing-master, was at first almost as depressing as Uncle Garth himself.

"The market is sadly over-crowded," he said, when at her first lesson Doreen showed him the letter of introduction from her old maestro in America. "You had better employ an agent, but you must not be over-sanguine."

"Which agent do you advise me to try?" said Doreen, her heart sinking a little.

"I should advise you to go to Freen, in New Bond Street, and have your name put down in his office; then, if anything turns up, he will let you know." As he spoke, he opened the copy of the "Elijah" which Doreen had brought, and began half dreamily to play the beautiful little fragment of chorus, "Open the heavens and send us relief: help thy servant now, O God!" Then, to her dismay, he turned the leaf and, playing the few bars of Elijah's part, bade her take the trying bit of recitative sung by the Youth—quite the last thing she would have chosen to begin with. However, Doreen had happily grown up with an innate tendency to grasp her bull by the horns. She conquered her nervousness, and her voice rang out gloriously toward the end of the brief dialogue. A curious change came over Rathenow's dark features. "You will succeed," he said quietly, glancing up at the girl's eager face. And then for the rest of the lesson he made her work hard at "Hear ye, Israel," bestowing no single word of praise, but parting with her at the end with a smile benignant enough to send her away in the seventh heaven of happiness. Sorrow and loneliness and anxiety were for a time non-existent; as if treading on air, she hurried away to New Bond Street, Mendelssohn's perfect music still ringing in her ears, and the exultant sense of the good gift that had been bestowed on her filling her with an exquisite happiness.

The agent was civil, business-like, and brisk; he might have been a clerk in a counting-house; there was nothing artistic about him; he seemed a combination of all those virtues of punctuality, despatch, appreciation of the worth of money, and capacity for bargaining in which artistes of all kinds are generally lacking. Though managing the affairs of most of the greatest singers of the day, Mr. Freen frankly owned that he was not musical. He was ready enough to admit a pupil of Rathenow's upon his books, and to accept the verdict of the American maestro as to her powers; but he himself could only judge that she was a blue-eyed Irish girl, winsome and attractive, without being strictly pretty, and with that terrible eagerness for work which distinguished almost all the younger portion of his visitors.

The next time Doreen visited the office, however, her face was less bright; no engagement had turned up. She went sorrowfully away, to wait as patiently as might be for that work which she so sorely needed. But the days passed into weeks, the weeks into months, and still Freen found nothing for her. When she had finished her course of twelve lessons she told Rathenow that she could at present afford no more.

"As to engagements, I begin to despair of them," she said, with a sound as of repressed tears in her voice, which made her teacher glance at her keenly.

"Oh, you must not be impatient," he said. "A year of waiting and practising will do you no harm at all. You are young and can afford to wait."

"But that is just what I cannot do," said Doreen. "How is it possible to afford a year's delay when I have myself and four children to support? We are orphans, and I, being far older than the rest, must, somehow, make enough to keep them."

"I have heard it rumoured that Madame De Berg is going next autumn to America, and if so, that will be very much in your favour. I think there would be some likelihood that Boniface might engage you for his series of concerts during her absence. I will mention your name to him. For the present, however, there is nothing for it but patience."

Unfortunately, patient perseverance in waiting was precisely the most difficult thing in the world to the girl's Keltic nature, and at this part of her life she was intensely lonely. Aunt Garth, though extremely kind, was too reserved to be

quickly known, and far too quiet and self-contained to understand Doreen's more stormy temperament. Uncle Garth seemed to her overwrought and severely taxed brain the most intolerable combination of dulness and fussiness. The silence and the lack of mirth and light-heartedness in the Bloomsbury household weighed upon her like a pall; and the extraordinary contrast between this death in life and the scrambling, merry, happy-go-lucky home in America was too great to be wholesome. There was nothing to divert her attention from her sad memories, and her great anxiety as to the future; for Uncle Garth, like many antiquarians, was also a recluse. He found his friends in the strange hieroglyphic records of the past, and hated any interruptions, so that of society there was absolutely none in the Bernard Street home.

"Instead," wrote Doreen to Donal Moore, "of the perpetual coming and going of my father's friends, and of all the mirth that even in spite of trouble was seldom absent for long, we live through dreary, silent days. Aunt Garth is a great reader, and has learnt to make books her friends, and Uncle Garth has his mummies and things, and once or twice two old fossils have dined with us, but they could talk of nothing but Egyptology; otherwise he wouldn't have asked them, for he cares for nothing more modern than Moses."

When she had written this her conscience began to prick her, and she reflected that her unmethodical ways must be extremely trying to the Egyptologist, and that a girl who sang as she ran up and downstairs and who had a fatal readiness to chatter upon the smallest provocation, who laughed when she should have merely smiled, and wholly declined to take Uncle Garth's decisions as being unquestionably right, must be a very disturbing element. Happily, they had two bonds of union: one was their mutual devotion to little Mollie, whose sweet, sunshiny nature had made her the darling of the whole house. The other was Uncle Garth's love of ballads. He was not a musical man; elaborate music was to him a weariness of the flesh; but Doreen's beautiful rendering of her own native songs and of many of the old English ballads delighted him, and more than once had lured him from his study to the drawing-room, to Aunt Garth's surprise and satisfaction.

Then again, when all four of the children fell ill with the measles, Uncle Garth showed in his best colours. He never once grumbled at having his house turned into a hospital, but went to and from the Museum every morning, and worked in his study all the evening, just as if nothing unusual had been going on. Many men would have murmured, but the Egyptologist never made a single complaint, and looked distinctly pleased when the invalids began to come downstairs. Perhaps, in his quiet fashion, he had missed them a little.

One bleak day when, what with the trying spring weather, the fatigue she had undergone during the children's illness, the grief of her bereavement, and the wearing disappointment of each day of expectation, Doreen was feeling more than usually depressed, it chanced that she had to take a note to her uncle at the Museum. The sight of Mr. Garth's absorbed, happy face awakened in her a sort of envy. She paced miserably through the long galleries, conscious of being a mere unit in the great realm of Art, yet hungering with an indescribable hunger to "make good" her "standing-place, and move the world."

Crossing the great entrance hall, she pushed open the swing door impatiently, and made her way past the drinking-fountain and the great dingy columns, pausing for a moment at the top of the steps to watch the pigeons as they swooped gracefully down into the gravelled inclosure. Just then a young man strode quickly up the broad flight. Something in the girl's attitude and in the outline of her slim figure arrested his attention; he glanced at the pale, wistful face,—surely he had somewhere before seen those pathetic blue eyes, and the white skin, which contrasted so curiously with the dark hair and humorous-looking dark brows?

Meanwhile, the pigeons flew off, and Doreen, glancing at the passer-by, encountered his eyes, and instantly recognized Max Hereford. Her whole face lighted up,—had she not been longing to meet this sharer of her secret ever since they quitted America?

"You will hardly remember me, Mr. Hereford," she said, greeting him warmly; "I am Doreen O'Ryan."

"I was certain I knew your face," he said, taking her hand in his. "It was your height which puzzled me."

"Yes, yes, I knew quite well you thought I was still a child," said Doreen, her eyes dancing with fun. "Did I not have your fat robins and your Father Christmas cards every year? Confess now that you thought I was still a little girl with a bush of hair and short skirts?"

"I plead guilty," said Max, laughing, "to invariably picturing you in a little red cloak. But tell me, are you living in London? Has your career begun? and when am I to have the pleasure of hearing you sing at St. James' Hall?"

"Oh," said Doreen, "I begin to despair of ever getting a hearing. I was going to New Bond Street now to see if my agent has heard of anything, but always there is disappointment."

"Will you let me walk with you there?" said Max, quickly falling back into the frank and friendly tone of intimacy which they had gained in Ireland.

"It will seem very natural," replied Doreen, "to be walking once more with you, though Oxford Street is but a poor exchange for our mountains and valleys. But were you not just going to the Museum?"

"I can go later on," said Max. "I had only to verify one or two quotations in the Reading Room."

"Then your career has begun?"

"Yes, after a fashion. I am chosen as the Liberal Candidate for Firdale at the next election, and in the mean time am working my own particular hobby, and speaking now and then when there is a chance."

"What is your hobby? What do you speak about?"

"Temperance," he replied.

"I wish it were Ireland," said Doreen.

"Well, that is to come," he said, smiling. "At least, I hope so. You have my promise. And, as to temperance, why, you ought to be enthusiastic about that, for one of the pioneers of the movement was your fellow-countryman, Father Matthew,—the noblest worker the cause has ever seen. How is little Michael, by the bye? I suppose he is at school now?"

"Not yet," she replied. "I am too poor to send him. We have been in such great trouble. My father and mother died just after Christmas, within a few days of each other, and Michael and I and the three little ones whom you have not seen are living with my uncle and aunt in Bernard Street. In time, no doubt, I shall be able to support and educate the children, but this dreadful struggle for fame must come first, and it is so hard to be patient."

Max, for whom such an easy lot had been provided, felt aghast at her description of the plight in which she had been left.

"Have you no friends to help you?" he asked, looking at the girlish profile beside him, and marvelling how, with such a load of care, she endured life at all.

"Oh yes," replied Doreen brightly. "Not rich friends, but very good ones. My uncle, Mr. Garth, has a post at the British Museum, and the house in Bernard Street is his own property, so that he can at any rate put a roof over our heads; and then there is father's friend and executor, Donal Moore,—he would take good care that we did not actually starve. And perhaps the greatest help of all is a most quaint American woman who crossed over in the same steamer with us. Her name is Hagar Muchmore. She grew so fond of us all, and specially of the baby, that when my mother died she offered to stay with us for a year without thinking of wages. I don't know how the children would have fared without her."

The relief of having a good talk with any contemporary was so great that the walk from the Museum to New Bond Street seemed far too short. At the door of Freen's office she paused to take leave of Max, but he was not so easily dismissed.

"Let me at any rate hear the result," he pleaded. "If the news is good, you will want some one to share it with; and if bad, why then, perhaps, all the more you will have some use for me."

She laughed, and entered the office with the same eager hope which had so often been doomed to bitter disappointment.

"I suppose you have not heard of anything yet?" she said wistfully, to the brisk Mr. Freen.

"I was just about to write to you," he said. "It is not much of an engagement. You must not raise your expectations; but Warren, the tenor, who is arranging the music for one of the city dinners the day after to-morrow, has just been in to inquire for some one to fill the place of Miss Latouche, who is suddenly indisposed. The fee for your services would be three guineas. I should advise you to accept it."

"Why, yes, to be sure," said Doreen, smiling. "I would sing in the street if any one promised me three guineas."

The agent smiled.

"Oh, you will get on; you have a career before you, and spirit enough to win through the struggle."

"So every one tells me," said Doreen, with a little sigh. "I hope it is true. What shall I have to sing?"

"The solo in 'God save the Queen,' the soprano part in the Grace,—here is a copy which Mr. Warren left for you,—and two other songs, whatever you yourself prefer. Mr. Warren will be here at twelve o'clock to-morrow to hear you sing through your part."

In the highest spirits Doreen quitted the office, and Max Hereford, by the merest glance at her face, knew that she had heard of work.

"And where are you to make your first appearance?" he inquired, as they walked back together to Bernard Street.

"You will never guess," she said, laughing. "Not as you predicted, at St. James' Hall, before a crowded and appreciative gathering, but just to a lot of city dignitaries, after they have been feasting on turtle soup."

"No!" he said, in deep disgust. "You surely are not going to do that?"

"Why, yes, I am," she said. "Who am I to pick and choose,—I, who have four children to support! Oh, I dare say you know a great deal about temperance, but you know just nothing at all about poverty. It is a highly respectable dinner at the Grocer's Hall, and the great contralto, Madame St. Pierre, is the star of the evening. I shall be just a nobody; you seem to think I am doing them an honour in going at all!"

"So you are," he muttered, looking positively out of temper. "I hope they pay you well."

"Oh, the dignitaries have nothing to do with the music; all that is managed by Mr. Warren. I forget whether he is one of St. Paul's choir or Westminster Abbey; it's one or the other. He will give me three guineas. I am so glad it is guineas, not pounds. The three shillings will buy my white gloves, and the sovereigns can all go to the children. Why do you look so grave? Are you unhappy to think that you'll never know the bliss of earning money which you really need?"

"I am afraid I grudge you to the aldermen," he said, his eyes resting tenderly on her bright face, just for a minute.

"For my part, I think they are a very good old institution," she said gaily. "And think how inexpressibly funny it will be to sing the Grace when we have had just no dinner at all!"

"You can think of your guineas," said Max, laughing. "What other songs shall you sing?"

"I wish you would come home and help me to decide," said Doreen. "I should like very much to introduce you to my aunt."

Max was not slow to avail himself of the suggestion; for Doreen fascinated him, and he recognized the same curiously winsome nature that had so greatly taken his fancy years ago. Since then, he had been courted and made much of by dozens of far prettier, far richer, far better-dressed girls, but to none of them had his heart responded in the same way. Doreen, with her varying Irish nature, now sad, now gay, and invariably warm-hearted and courageous, fairly bewitched him.

Mrs. Garth seemed a little startled when her niece appeared in the drawing-room with Max in attendance; however, she quickly realized that to a girl brought up in America all seemed natural enough, and then, moreover, this handsome Mr. Hereford was an old friend and had known her as a child. She had not talked with him for ten minutes before she was fully satisfied that he was the sort of a man her sister would have approved of. Together they discussed the important question of what songs should be sung, and Aunt Garth having counselled something tolerably well known, Max turned over the songs in the portfolio, till he came to Bishop's "Tell me my Heart," and protested that it was precisely the song to suit the audience, who would be sure to like what they remembered in the days of their youth. He was intensely eager to know how Doreen's voice had developed, and his face, as she sang the song, was a study. Was it, Mrs. Garth wondered, merely admiration of her singing, which brought the glow to his cheeks and the light to his eyes, or was it some deeper feeling? The great charm of Doreen's voice lay in its mellow sweetness; she had no very great compass, but her notes had that fresh purity which one hears now and then in the voice of a boy, while she had gained from her woman's heritage of pain and sorrow a depth of expression to which no boy chorister could possible attain.

"That is perfect," said Max, at the close.

"I was afraid you were going to make the remark that I am weary of hearing," said Doreen, laughing. "Every one says, 'Ah, what a great career you have before you!' and the wretched thing will not begin."

"It is to begin the day after to-morrow," said Max; "and you must certainly give them something Irish."

"The 'Minstrel Boy,' perhaps," she said. "It ought to be something familiar,—something to which they will wag their feet in time, you know, which is always a soothing sensation, and conducive to applause at the end."

Mrs. Garth left them for a while, and Doreen eagerly availed herself of the chance of asking a question which had just occurred to her.

"There is one thing I have been longing to know all these years," she said; "have you heard anything more about the search for Lord Byfield's agent? or has it now passed out of memory?"

"I have heard nothing more of it since we left Ireland," said Max; "the affair caused great commotion just at the time, and every effort was made to get some clue to the mystery; but it has fairly baffled them all."

"Do you remember," said Doreen, with a shudder, "how they said his wife had vowed that she would never rest until she had brought some one to the gallows for it?"

"Yes, poor creature; I heard that her grief had taken the form of a thirst for vengeance, but the secret has been faithfully kept, you see, and she is baffled."

"What became of Mr. Desmond?"

"I have lost sight of him. He recovered from his attack of brain fever, or insanity,—for undoubtedly it amounted to that,—and while I was at Oxford I saw him once or twice; then he went abroad, and for the last five years I have been unable to learn his whereabouts."

"Do you know," said Doreen musingly, "since I have grown older, I have often thought it was very wrong of him to let four people bind themselves by such an oath. You would never have done such a thing,—you would have gone straight to the nearest magistrate and told the whole truth; that it was just a quarrel, and that the provocation had been intense; and you would have gone to prison for manslaughter, and borne it all nobly. And then you would have come out again stronger than ever to help Ireland."

"I am not so sure," said Max; "your ideal is a high one. I should probably not have done anything so heroic. As for poor Desmond, we must not forget the state of mind he was in,—utterly bewildered by the shock, and incapable of judging. He meant to shield my mother and Miriam from discomfort, and he sacrificed us. I have often been miserable enough at the thought of what had been forced upon you."

"When I feel very wretched about it all," said Doreen, "I think how it was a little like Moses killing the Egyptian and burying him in the sand. It was the wrong way of delivering his countrymen from the oppressors, and yet God let him afterwards become a true deliverer. Perhaps even our mistakes will teach us."

"You must have longed for some one to speak to about it."

"Yes; I can't tell you how terrible the craving was. The worst of all was just before my father and mother died."

"Had your father any sort of guess, do you think, as to the affair?"

"Never," she said. "Once he asked a few questions as to the condition of the tenants on Lord Byfield's estate, and actually inquired what the missing agent was like. But they say every girl with a secret becomes a good actress; I described that dreadful face, which you and I shall always be able to see, and he knew nothing from my look or tone that I did not wish him to learn. I still burn your little lamp," she concluded, looking with a smile into his face; "nothing would induce me to be without it; it has been my good friend all these years. The other night when Brian Osmond, our young Irish doctor, came to see Mollie, who sleeps in my room, he was quite taken with it, and vowed that he should get one like it when next he goes to Ireland."

"Who is Mr. Osmond?" asked Max, with an unreasonable pang of jealousy. "Is he a friend of Mrs. Garth's?"

"Yes, and of mine; that is, of course, a new friend," she added, colouring a little, as she realized how much more Max Hereford was to her. "He was very good when the children were ill, and I like him; but he is rather too grave and silent; I take great pleasure in obliging him to laugh."

"You leave me jealous, both of doctors and aldermen," said Max, rising to take leave as Mrs. Garth returned. "I must tell my mother that you are in London, and if you will allow it, we will come the day after the concert to inquire after you."

"I should so much like to show Mrs. Hereford the children," said Doreen; "and Michael has never forgotten the corn-popping over the fire at Castle Karey."

"But our kernels behaved badly, if I remember right," said Max, taking a long look into the merry blue eyes.

"Yes; it was foretold that we should agree to part," said Doreen, her face assuming a comical expression of mock gravity. "Good-bye."

"May the aldermen value their privileges," said Max. "I wish you good luck."

CHAPTER VIII.

"Young hearts are free: the selfish world it is
That turns them miserly and cold as stone,
And makes them clutch their fingers on the bliss
Which but in giving truly is their own:—
She had no dreams of barter, asked not his,
But gave hers freely as she would have thrown
A rose to him, or as that rose gives forth
Its generous fragrance, thoughtless of its worth."—LOWELL.

Warren the tenor seemed greatly pleased with the substitute the agent had found him, and Doreen acquitted herself well, as even the unmusical Freen could guess. Her eagerness to do everything in the best possible way was satisfactory. "It was not every one," he reflected, "who took so much pains for a city dinner."

"Come a little early to-morrow night," he said, "and we will run through the Grace and the national anthem in the artistes' room with the other parts. I will ask Madame St. Pierre to be kind enough to come a few minutes beforehand for your sake."

Doreen could talk of nothing else when she got home, and the children shared in her excitement; yet when the day actually came, the poor girl felt sad enough, for the craving for her mother's presence returned with overwhelming force, reaching its height when she unfolded the white silk dress, embroidered with shamrocks, which had been the last work that her mother had done before leaving New York. More than one hot tear fell as she put it on, and it was well that Dermot and Mollie came trotting up to beg to be her page and her maid; for nothing but their childish gaiety and their delight in the new dress could have cheered her. All too soon Hagar Muchmore came to carry them off to bed.

"It's much too early," protested Dermot, prepared to offer a stubborn resistance; "the clock only stroke six just now; I *heared* it."

"That's so," said Hagar, quietly; "but I guess you'll always have to be in bed early the nights your sister sings, for I must go and take care of her."

"Why?" asked Dermot. "I thought grown-up people took care of their own selves, and Doreen is awfully old."

This set them all laughing, and in her heart Doreen rather wondered how Mrs. Muchmore would comport herself in the artistes' room. Her presence, however, was decidedly comforting, when, having left the children safely in bed, taken a hurried farewell of Aunt Garth and Michael, over their game of draughts, and of Uncle Garth, buried in papyrus documents, she stepped forth into the cold night, and leaning back in the cab saw the gas-lit streets and the busy passengers flitting past as they rolled swiftly away to the city. Arrived at the Grocer's Hall, she was taken upstairs to the room set apart for the performers, and having taken Warren's injunction to come early in the most literal sense, she waited through what seemed an eternity before any one else appeared, growing more and more nervous every minute. At last Warren himself came in, accompanied by the pianist, who was introduced to her; then, after an interval, a very fat, heavy bass, with an enormous black beard, stalked in with his music under his arm. Finally, with a little bustle of arrival, which seemed to betoken her celebrity, there entered the great Madame St. Pierre, with her French maid in attendance. Warren treated her with the greatest deference, while Doreen, feeling horribly young and inexperienced, watched the great lady as she was divested of a magnificent plush cloak, bordered with the most costly fur, and contemplated with awe the regal gown of ruby velvet and the diamonds that flashed upon the ample white neck of the great contralto. Beside such assured grandeur, such queenly composure, she felt like a wretched little white ghost; she was conscious, too, of being decidedly hungry after her long waiting and her very frugal four-o'clock dinner. Her knees trembled beneath her when Warren said, "May I introduce Miss Doreen O'Ryan to you, Madame St. Pierre, a *débutante* from America, and a pupil of Rathenow's."

Madame St. Pierre gave her a stately, somewhat frigid greeting,—novices from America were not popular. She consented, however, to run through the Grace, and the national anthem; and at the close there was a distinct change in her manner. "Oh, you will get on very nicely; you need have no fear about that," she said good-naturedly. "By the bye, Mr. Warren, have you heard anything about Madame De Berg's projected tour in America? I hope it is not true that she intends to take with her that unlucky little violinist, a mere baby of seven, who ought to be in the nursery."

"No; her father will not permit her to appear as yet in public, and is taking her to Germany to study there till she is ten or

eleven."

"That's the most sensible thing Harry Kingston ever did in his life," said Madame St. Pierre, approvingly. "It went to my heart to think of that unfortunate child being dragged through the United States in the company of Madame De Berg."

"She is Kingston's cousin," said the tenor.

"Yes, and has a most unlucky influence over him. It will be well for the child if her kinswoman's career is over before her own begins. I should like to have invited Una to play with my own children, but I assure you it was out of the question; the child is a perfect little heathen, and lies as glibly as a hardened woman of the world. It's easy to see who has had the training of her."

Doreen listened to the conversation with some interest, feeling not a little compassion for the infant violinist who was too depraved to meet Madame St. Pierre's children; and while she was still wondering what sort of person this Madame De Berg could be, the summons came for the performers to go down to the banqueting-hall.

A brilliant scene was disclosed as they emerged from the staircase into the gallery at one end of the building; down below were the gorgeously decorated tables, with their lavish display of flowers and rich plate, their tempting fruit and dainty sweetmeats darkly outlined by the prosperous-looking diners in their sombre evening dress. At the other side of the gallery sat a few magnificently attired ladies, the wives of the city magnates and of the most distinguished guests of the evening. And now the dreaded moment had actually arrived, and above the subdued roar of conversation rose the stentorian voice of the toast-master who stood behind the chairman.

"Gentlemen, pray silence for Grace!"

It was a voice that made one feel as if the Day of Judgment had come.

Doreen tried to forget the great hall and the glaring lights; she thought of the dim nursery at home, and of the children asleep. She tried to pretend that she was singing in the drawing-room to Max Hereford once more, and her voice rang out clearly as she sang:—

> "For these and all Thy mercies given,
> We bless and praise Thy name, O Lord;
> May we receive them with thanksgiving,
> Ever trusting in Thy word.
> To Thee alone be honour, glory,
> Now, and from henceforth for evermore. Amen. Amen."

The ordeal was over; and while the toast-master shouted out, "Gentlemen, be pleased to fill your glasses! bumpers, if you please," Doreen was able to sit down, and was glad enough to do so; for the floor of the gallery seemed rocking beneath her. The thought of her solo made her shudder, and it was not till the whole assembly rose loyally shouting, "The Queen! The Queen!" that she forgot her fears. But when, as the four performers stood up, a hush instantly fell upon the great gathering, a sense of power and of keen delight in the power came to her. The pianist led off, and the first verse of the national anthem was sung as a quartette. Then Doreen's fresh young voice rang through the building, and she first realized what it meant to rouse and stir an audience. In her rendering of the verse

> "Thy choicest gifts in store,"

there was such ardour, such contagious enthusiasm, that not only the professional singers, but the whole assembly joined in the chorus,—joined not formally or frigidly, but with purpose and intention.

"I call that pretty good for a Fenian's daughter," observed the fat bass to Warren, as the singers left the banqueting-hall for a time.

His voice had been insufficiently lowered, and Doreen, who was a little in advance, turned to confront him.

"I am a Home-Ruler," she said, her colour rising a little, "not a Separatist. There is no one I reverence and admire more than the Queen. But when I pray that she may 'defend our laws,' I assuredly don't mean the countless coercion acts under which my country has groaned, but the just laws our Parliament of the future will pass. Even rebels know how to honour goodness. Meagher once thrashed a man who spoke disrespectfully of Her Majesty."

The fat bass stared; he did not in the least understand her; but Warren, the tenor, liked her spirit, and with a kindly word or two turned the talk to some other subject.

After this came an interval when she was glad to sit quietly by Hagar Muchmore in the artistes' room. A strangely dreamy feeling crept over her; she forgot her present surroundings, and fell to thinking of Max Hereford. Why had his eyes rested so tenderly on her as he said that he grudged her to the city aldermen? Why had he professed to be jealous of Brian Osmond, the doctor? Why had he, at parting, taken her hand right into his, and held it for a minute, as if he would fain protect her? Not one of her New York admirers had been capable of reaching her heart. They had been charmed by her singing and by her amusing talk; but Max Hereford, by a mere look, a mere touch, had, in a single afternoon, outstripped them all. She turned over the leaves of her next song by way of checking her thoughts, but to little purpose; for was not the song "Tell me my Heart"? And what was it that her heart was telling her? It was silent, quite silent, about that great career which every one prophesied for her; it was not the very least elated by the consciousness of her power, or the knowledge that she had succeeded well. It held only one image,—that frank, open, English face, with its warm colouring, its genial expression, its light brown hair, and well-opened hazel eyes. If any one had given her the choice at that moment of all that she most desired, she would unhesitatingly have said,—the presence of Max Hereford.

"Time for your song, Miss Doreen," said Hagar; "and you'd best be careful of your dress on the stairs; for those waiters, they've dropped gravy and custard, and I don't know what all, upon them."

Doreen laughed; as she gathered up her train, she wondered what had come over her, that all at once she should feel so strong to face the world. Only a little while ago she had stood like a forlorn little ghost beside the great contralto, and had glanced with timid awe at those marvellous silk dresses of the city ladies, which looked as if they would stand alone, from the inherent virtue of their extra super-fine quality. There was surely, too, a new power in her rendering of Bishop's song. Never before had she attained such pathos as in the first verse, or such joyous, irrepressible happiness as in the second part of the song. The audience heartily approved of her, and she went home with Hagar Muchmore, holding the three sovereigns and the three shillings in her hand, with a glad consciousness that they were but the earnest of much more to follow. It was not until the quiet of the house in Bernard Street once more surrounded her, that she realized how lonely she was. Uncle and Aunt Garth were the kindest people in the world, but they had singularly little power of expression, and went on the principle of "Deeds, not words." Now Doreen was one of those who disputed the truth of this saying, stoutly maintaining that deeds without words were as dull as bread without butter. She sorely missed the genial flow of talk which her father had accustomed her to; she longed with an intolerable longing for her mother's sweet face and ready sympathy. Half the pleasure of success would have been in the joy it would have given to her parents; and somehow it was impossible to give a graphic description of the evening at the supper-table, where Uncle Garth sat with his newspaper before him, or to respond very much to Aunt Garth's low-toned questions. The profound gravity of the atmosphere seemed to strangle all natural mirth; moreover, there was something trying in the very small appetites of the host and hostess, to this hungry girl of eighteen, who, after her very early dinner and the hard evening's work, could have eaten a far more substantial meal than the one prepared. It was inevitable that in the silence her thoughts should wander back again to Max Hereford,—Max, who had somehow helped her that night to sing as she had never sung before, and whose life, for weal or for woe, was irrevocably bound up with her own.

It seemed the most natural thing in the world that he and his mother should call the next day; the house grew brighter at once, to her fancy, and with an almost motherly pride she enjoyed showing the children to Mrs. Hereford, whose heart was touched by the little pale faces which showed evident signs of recent illness.

"They want country air, my dear," she said. "You had better send them down to Monkton Verney; we would take every care of them; have you a nurse you could trust to take them there?" "Yes; Mrs. Muchmore is the most trustworthy being in the world," said Doreen. "But there are so many of them, it would be giving so much trouble in your house."

"The place is just standing empty," said Mrs. Hereford, "and a month in the country would do them all the greatest good. As to trouble, you need not be afraid in the least; the servants will be thankful to have them, for they find the months of our absence dull enough. Come, let us arrange to send them down next week. It is such an easy journey; and then in Easter week, when we intend to spend a few days there ourselves, you will, I hope, come with us: the country will be looking very pretty by that time. To my mind, there are great advantages in a late Easter, and you will be able to see how your little folks are getting on."

Doreen's heart bounded with pleasure at the suggestion; she could only gladly consent to a plan so entirely in accordance with her own feelings, and as Mrs. Hereford turned to talk to Mrs. Garth, she looked up half shyly at Max.

"Do you remember," she said, "how long ago in Ireland you told me all about your home, and about the old priory, and the fir hills, and the heather?"

"Ah, we shall just be too early for the heather," said Max. "You must come again later on for that. There are dozens of places I want to take you to. We must climb Rooksbury together, and you shall wish for a prosperous career at the wishing-tree, and we will row on Trencham Lake, and fancy that we are once more at Castle Karey, and—happy thought—we will have the grand opening of the new Firdale Coffee Tavern while you are there."

"After last night, I feel more than half inclined to turn teetotaler," said Doreen. "What an atmosphere it was to sing in! And then, when I got back to the artistes' room, with my throat all on fire with the smoke, and the concentrated essence of the dinner which floated up to us in the gallery, there was all the difficulty in the world to get just a glass of water; there was any amount of champagne, but a glass of water seemed unattainable, until Hagar Muchmore, who is not easily beaten, went down herself to forage for it."

"Who will go about with you, if this Mrs. Muchmore is down at Monkton Verney with the children?"

"Well, if I am lucky enough to get any engagements, I shall have to go alone," said Doreen. "But they say it is better when you can to have some one with you. I shall not be able to take Hagar about the country with me when I begin to get provincial engagements though, for you see the expenses would mount up dreadfully. Those who are alone in the world must learn to fend for themselves."

A look of trouble swept over Max Hereford's bright face; he seemed about to speak, but at that moment little Mollie trotted up to her sister with a note which had just arrived.

"Freen, the agent!" said Doreen, glancing at the handwriting. "Perhaps he has heard of more work for me. Excuse me one moment."

She read the letter, and looked up with sparkling eyes.

"It is an offer to sing in the 'Messiah' the day after to-morrow, at the Albert Hall. Just think! that charming Miss Latouche is still indisposed."

They all laughed at her candid speech.

"Well, well," she added, "I am, of course, sorry for her, and I hope it's a comfortable sort of illness. But only to think that my greatest wish should have come so soon! I wonder how I shall manage 'Rejoice Greatly' in that huge place; it almost frightens me to think of it."

"We must come and hear you," said Mrs. Hereford. "By the bye, had you not better drive there with us? What time should you wish to be there?"

"Oh, not more than five minutes before the beginning," said Doreen. "Never again will I be unpunctual at the wrong end, and have a whole hour to wait as I had last night; it takes all the courage out of one and sets one's nerves on edge. It is so very kind of you to offer to take me."

"It will be a great pleasure," said Mrs. Hereford, kissing the sweet, sunshiny face, which seemed to her still to retain much of its childlike character. "I have often wondered whether I should ever again hear the voice that Max discovered in Ireland; and to hear you in the 'Messiah' will be a special treat."

"I shall not feel so alone if you are in the audience," said Doreen; "I shall sing to you, and forget the rest of the people."

CHAPTER IX.

"A smile that turns the sunny side o' the heart
On all the world, as if herself did win
By what she lavished on an open mart!
Let no man call the liberal sweetness sin,—
For friends may whisper as they stand apart,
'Methinks there's still some warmer place within.'"—E. BARRETT BROWNING.

"Was I right?" said Max to his mother, as they drove that afternoon from Bernard Street. "Is she what I described to you?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Hereford. "I don't think you said a word too much in her praise. If success does not spoil her, I think she will be a very noble woman. And I don't think it will spoil her, for she seems too large-hearted for petty vanity."

"I wish she need never take up this hateful profession," said Max, with a sigh. "Think of the mixed lot of people she will be forced to associate with; some of them no better than they should be."

"You might say just the same of Miriam, in her society life," said his mother. "I don't see that it is more objectionable to sing with a bad man than to dance with him: the tares and the wheat are together, and we have not the separating of them. Doreen seems to me the sort of girl who would pass unscathed through the most difficult life. 'Mailed complete in her white innocence,' as Whittier puts it. By innocence I don't mean ignorance, but a nature without guile,—a nature that will neither harm nor be harmed."

"Yet the fate of her nation seems to be upon her," said Max. "Think of the troubles that have from her very childhood persistently beset her! Do you remember the account she gave us of her father's arrest?"

"Yes, poor child; and for all her brightness you can easily see that the shock of last January has, in a sense, ended her girlhood. Though so much younger than Miriam, she has already about her an almost motherly tenderness which I doubt whether Miriam will ever gain."

"You are always a little hard on Miriam," said Max, laughing; "but we should fare very ill without her. She is quite unique, you must admit, and, like Phyllis in the song, 'never fails to please.'"

Mrs. Hereford did not reply; for in truth her niece was a sore perplexity to her, and she had for the last three years lived in terror lest Max should fall in love with her,—a possible, but highly undesirable, ending to the cousinly friendship and intimacy which had so long existed between them. She ardently longed to see Miriam satisfactorily married and settled, but the girl seemed in no haste to comply with this wish; she flirted and amused herself, and used Max as a convenient *cavalière servente*, when no one more desirable was to be had. It was, perhaps, natural that Mrs. Hereford, in her terror of what this might lead to, and her desire to rescue her son from a position which chafed her motherly pride, should turn with relief to such a woman as Doreen O'Ryan. She had immediately learnt, from her son's way of talking about the girl, that he greatly admired her, and she was too unworldly and unconventional to care in the least for wealth or social standing. Doreen was good, loving, well bred, well educated. What did it matter that her father had been on the staff of a rebel paper, and had been imprisoned at the time of the Fenian rising? The important thing was that this sweet-voiced, sweet-natured Irish girl would be far, far more likely to make Max a good wife, than Miriam, with her restless craving for incessant amusement and incessant admiration.

She left the choice of seats for the concert to Max, and was secretly amused at his chagrin when he returned.

"Nothing to be had in the stalls till the tenth row," he said; "however, it is the right side, so perhaps after all it is not so bad. Are there any decent flowers in the conservatory that we could send Miss O'Ryan?"

"Plenty of lilies-of-the-valley, if they will do," said Mrs. Hereford. "You had better let Harding arrange them for you; she made two lovely sprays for Miriam the other night."

But this did not suit Max at all. His mother learnt from the maid that he had insisted on arranging the flowers himself, and the result seemed satisfactory; for when, on the eventful night, they called for Doreen, the white lilies in her dark hair, skilfully arranged by Mrs. Muchmore's clever fingers, looked really charming.

"The rest of them I have here," she said, throwing back her cloak, and showing the lilies nestled against her snowy neck.

"And there is the real, original, 'Colleen Bawn' cloak," said Max; "now I can imagine myself once more at Castle Karey."

"Well, not exactly the original one," said Doreen, laughing; "that has been cut up for Mollie. You seem to forget that I have grown since we were in Ireland."

Presently a silence fell upon them. Mrs. Hereford guessed that the girl was somewhat nervous; yet there were no signs of special excitement about her face, when now and then it became clearly visible, as the light from a street lamp flashed across it. "It is a noble face," thought Mrs. Hereford; and, in truth, that was the first impression that Doreen usually made upon people. Later on they would describe her as charming and winsome; but the first thought was invariably of a certain indefinable air of goodness, a loftiness of soul, which invested the face with a strange power.

"This must be a great day for you," said Mrs. Hereford, guessing a little what was passing in the girl's mind.

"Do you know," said Doreen, "it feels to me like my confirmation day; and I am so glad that what may be counted as my first real appearance in public is to be in the 'Messiah.' How I have dreamed of attempting it, and longed to try!"

"I suppose you do not come in just at first?" said Max; "doesn't the soprano always have an effective little entrance all to herself just before the pastoral symphony?"

"Yes," said Doreen, "disturbing the first violins, and making an unnecessary fuss. I don't mean to do that, but shall come in at the beginning with the others; it seems to me in better taste, especially for a novice."

With a little shudder she saw that they were fast approaching their destination,—there upon one side was the Albert Memorial, while in advance she could see the lights in the great hall, and the throng of carriages.

"There goes Madame St. Pierre!" she exclaimed, as they paused while the brougham in advance of them set down its occupants. "That is fortunate; now I can go to the artistes' room under her wing."

For a moment her hand rested in Max Hereford's as he helped her to alight; then with hasty farewells she ran up the steps, pushed open the swing door before he could forestall her, and hurried away in pursuit of the retreating contralto. Max, feeling baffled and unaccountably miserable, returned to the carriage.

"Stalls' entrance!" he said sharply to the coachman as he closed the door.

"Well, she seems in good spirits," said Mrs. Hereford; "it is a terrible ordeal for a girl of that age."

"Yes," said Max grimly; "but her whole heart is in her work. She is, in every sense of the word, an artiste."

"True artiste, yet true woman," said Mrs. Hereford quietly; and the words came back to Max comfortingly as he sat in the vast hall, listening to that somewhat stirring process of the tuning of a great orchestra, and watching the chorus as they assembled, yet never letting his eyes roam far from that particular little opening whence he knew the solo singers would shortly emerge.

But first of all came the conductor, with evident intention of making a speech. A thrill of disapprobation ran through the assembly; for was not Clinton Cleve, the great tenor, to sing that evening, and had he not, owing to his terribly susceptible throat, a most trying habit of disappointing people at the last moment? There was perfect silence for a minute, and the conductor, to the general relief, announced that, owing to the indisposition of Miss Latouche, the soprano solos had been undertaken, at very short notice, by Miss Doreen O'Ryan. The people clapped, not because they cared at all for this unknown *débutante*, but because they were intensely relieved that it was the soprano and not the tenor who had failed. In another minute, there was a burst of applause, as the bass appeared, leading Madame St. Pierre, followed by loud cheers as the beloved tenor, the idol of the public, emerged from the back of the platform, graciously ushering in the white-robed *débutante*, and making her smile by a low-toned injunction to remember the words spoken to Fanny Kemble, and to regard the audience as so many rows of cabbages. Fortunately for Doreen, the very size of the vast assembly was in her favour; the place seemed vague and dream-like, the huge gathering, just an impersonal mass, gorgeously coloured like some brilliant and crowded flower-garden. Then, when Clinton Cleve had sung, as no other tenor could sing, "Comfort ye," and "Every Valley," she no longer thought of success or failure, of criticism or of the

children's daily bread, but lost everything in the perfect enjoyment of the music, and in the strong desire to tell forth her divine message in the most perfect manner possible. In the last chorus before her trying recitatives, she sang a few bars, gaining confidence as her voice blended with the others, and falling more and more into the spirit of the oratorio, as with her heart and soul she sang of "The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

All nervousness had now left her; it was Max who was nervous, as he sat there in the stalls, watching the absorbed, sweet face of the girl he loved. Had she, indeed, forgotten this great assembly of critical people? It seemed like it, for she looked as happy and peaceful as though she had been listening to the angels' music on the far-away, quiet hillside near Bethlehem. And when the violins ceased, she stood up with a simple, straightforward, almost childlike air, her clear, reedy voice sounding softly through the great hall, as she told how "There were shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night." Max lost all fear for her, as she delivered the message of the angel; he lost that shrinking from the thought of the solitary girl standing up in the huge building, for it was no longer possible to doubt that Doreen had found her true vocation. He wondered that he had wished it to be otherwise, so great a thing did it seem to him that she should be able to keep thousands spell-bound, to raise them, if but for a time, into such divine enjoyment. It was not until the end of her most trying solo, "Rejoice Greatly,"—a song which taxed her strength very severely,—that she could receive any recognition from the audience; but then, just as she became conscious of her excessive exhaustion, there came a stimulating burst of applause. This was renewed so vigorously and persistently after "Come unto Him all ye that labour," that it became really necessary to repeat the song, and there were tears in many eyes as the exquisite air, all the better loved because so familiar to every one, fell once more upon the listening throng in that wooingly sweet voice. In the interval, she realized that her career had begun most auspiciously, for every one spoke to her with the greatest kindness. Clinton Cleve laid a fatherly hand on her shoulder, genuine pleasure lighting up his rugged old face, as he looked down at her.

"You did very well,—very well indeed," he said. "I like your style, and the *timbre* of your voice is sympathetic. Would to heaven that I were at your age, with my career just beginning!"

He patted her cheek as though she had been a child, and turned away with a sigh, wandering off in search of a mirror, that he might see whether his wig was well adjusted. Doreen was next accosted by the conductor, who, at the rehearsal on the previous day, had been somewhat brusque with her, but was now full of compliments and congratulations; and then Madame St. Pierre came up to introduce her husband, the well-known harpist.

"We have a little project to suggest to you," she said. "Monsieur St. Pierre and I intended to get up a company this autumn for a provincial tour. Mr. Freen tells me you have at present no engagements for the autumn, and I am quite willing to accede to the terms he requires for you. Possibly we may have Madame Gauthier, the pianist; but there will be no other lady in the party, and you would find her rather a pleasant travelling-companion; we hope to induce Ferrier, the celebrated bass, to be one of the party."

Doreen could only thankfully accept a proposal which would, as she well knew, do much to give her an assured position in the musical world; and when, at length, her work for that evening was over, and she found Max Hereford waiting outside the door to help her into the brougham, her face was radiant.

"My dear, how tired you must be," was Mrs. Hereford's motherly greeting, as she made room for the girl beside her. "You have, indeed, given us a treat to-night."

"They were all so kind to me afterwards," said Doreen. "And, oh, it is a wonderful oratorio to sing in! I am so glad my first appearance was in that, for it is the Irish Oratorio, you know."

"How is that?" said Max.

"Handel was very fond of the Irish," she replied, "and the 'Messiah' was first performed in Dublin, and the proceeds were given to the distressed prisoners' fund. Many of those who were in gaol for debt were really freed by it. I kept on thinking of that to-night: it was the performance, you know, when all the great ladies agreed to leave off their hoops, that there might be more room."

"What did it feel like to have that huge audience applauding you so heartily?" said Max.

"It felt lovely," she said, with the utmost frankness; "as refreshing as ice-cream soda on a hot day in New York."

They laughed at her simile; but a passing gas-lamp revealed to her the same look on Max Hereford's face that had startled her when she spoke of Brian Osmond, the doctor, a few days before.

"You said you grudged me to the aldermen, and I believe you had the same feeling to-night," she said, smiling. "And that is very unfair, since you yourself were among the audience. Or is it that you grudge me the applause? That is even more unfair. You see the short-lived triumph, but you don't at all realize the years of study and preparation, the scales and the exercises and the monotony of hard work, to say nothing of the anxiety."

Max wondered how she had discovered from his manner that vague discomfort which he could not at all justify.

"Every one must have realized to-night that you had found your vocation," he said, "and to-morrow I shall seize the opportunity of laying trophies at your feet in the shape of the daily papers."

"Ah! the critics! I had forgot that they were there taking notes to-night. How I dread them! It is horrible to think how much depends on a few lines in a paper. And if the writer happens to be in a bad temper or to have the toothache, ten to one he will visit his discomfort on others, and put in words of carping criticism that may ruin a singer's reputation."

"Somehow, I don't think they will be hard on you," said Max. "If they are, you must follow the example of Vaughan the novelist. I met him at the club the other day, and the talk happened to turn on a most ruffianly attack made upon him lately in the 'Hour.' Now I happened to know who had written it, and said so. 'Don't tell me his name,' said Vaughan, with that quietly humorous smile of his; 'I prefer to picture him as a poor, struggling, penny-a-liner, working in a garret, soured by lack of success and desperately hungry. With the proceeds of that *critique*, he went out and had a rattling good dinner, and upon my word I am glad to have furnished him with a meal.'"

"Was the critic really poor and half-starved?" said Doreen.

"No, nothing of the sort; just a conceited young jackanapes fresh from Oxford, and much spoiled by the flattery of his home circle; a fastidious, narrow-minded prig, who, if he lives to be a hundred, will never do as much for the world as Vaughan has already done."

"And the moral of that is, 'A fig for the critics,'" said Doreen, laughing. "But all the same, I shall want to see what they say, and I don't at all want to share the fate of Kingsley's 'Feckless hairy oubit,' when 'The saumon fry they all arose and made their meals of him.'"

The talk turned upon the arrangements for sending the children to Firdale, and Doreen, tired but very happy, was set down in Bernard Street, where every one but Hagar Muchmore had retired to bed.

"Cold and hungry, ain't you," said the kindly nurse; "come and sit you down by the fire, and eat this basin of mock turtle. 'Twill hearten you up nicely."

Doreen, dreamily happy and content, took the proffered chair, and held out her dainty white-shod feet to the fire.

"Please take the lilies out of my hair," she said. "I want to keep them. Oh, Hagar! it has been a wonderful evening; I wish it were just beginning over again instead of all being over."

"Bless your heart!" said Hagar, almost tenderly; "you're young,—yes, very young."

But it was not the applause, or the sense of triumph, or even the recollection of the music, which lingered in Doreen's memory so deliciously. It was the close pressure of Max Hereford's hand as he bade her farewell on the doorstep, and the glance which had said so plainly, "I belong to you, and you to me."

All night long she seemed to dream of him, and it was with no surprise that soon after twelve the next morning, as she was practising in the drawing-room, she heard his name announced. He came in looking unusually blithe and contented, some half-dozen newspapers in his hand.

"Here are the trophies," he said, when she had replied to his inquiries, and had persuaded him that she was none the worse for the fatigue of the previous night. "Oh yes, you need not be afraid; you can read them without calling up that picture of the hungry scribe in the attic, for they are one and all agreed about you."

"And prophesy the great career, no doubt," said Doreen, laughing merrily as she glanced through the *critiques*. "Well,

they are very kind to me,—quite wonderfully kind. Such praise makes one inclined to quote Dr. Watts, and sing, 'Not more than others I deserve.' And yet do you know last night when it was all over, and I went up to look at the children in bed, and found them sleeping so peacefully, and was so happy to know that their education and bringing up was now quite safe, I couldn't help feeling that I should be very, very sorry if Mollie or Bride had to be professional singers. I don't think I could bear to think of it for them."

"Now you understand me," said Max, triumphantly; "now you realize that grudging feeling of which you accused me."

"But to be a singer is my vocation," said Doreen, musingly; "I am as certain of that as that we are talking together at this moment. I couldn't be a painter, or a governess, or a do-nothing sort of person, or a nun. Even before the Castle Karey days I knew quite well that I had to be a singer."

"Yet you own that you would not wish one you love to take up the work?"

"If it were their vocation, they would be obliged to take it up, but I hope it will not be their special work. I would so much rather they could just be quietly at home."

"Why?" he asked.

"Because I see now that the life of any artiste must be a double life, and that it must be very, very difficult to make both the lives what they should be. It is bad enough to face it for oneself, and a great deal worse to think of my sweet Mollie having to play so hard a part."

Max seemed about to speak, but something in his look made her hurriedly proceed, as though she were anxious to check him.

"But it is ungrateful to speak thus of the life, when all the time I know there will be much that is enjoyable about it, and that it is my clear duty to live it. And now, as to the children's journey to Firdale. I am the worst hand in the world at Bradshaw, but auntie assures me that the 2.45 is the best train, and that they won't have any change."

Max found himself remorselessly plunged into the dreary discussion of practical details, and knew that it would now be impossible to say what had been trembling on his lips but a minute ago. However, he consoled himself by the remembrance that Doreen would soon be at Firdale herself, and that it would be hard indeed if the fir woods, the lake, or the ivy-grown ruins of the Priory would not afford him place and opportunity to open his heart to her.

CHAPTER X.

"Her summer nature felt a need to bless,
And a like longing to be blest again."—LOWELL.

Miss Latouche remained obligingly ill for the next fortnight, and Doreen was fortunate enough to be asked to take three of her engagements in the provinces. Nothing, however, chanced to interfere with her visit to Firdale, and Mrs. Hereford arranged to call for her in the carriage and take her to the station; for she was one of those people who, although rich themselves, have enough imagination to understand how to be really helpful to those who have to think of every sixpence. Her visitors were always made to understand that no gratuities must be given to her servants, and the servants themselves, who were amply compensated in other ways by their mistress, would no more have accepted a fee than an attendant in a well-ordered theatre or a waitress in an aerated bread shop. In this way it was possible to make Monkton Verney the greatest boon to many who were sorely in need of change, yet had little enough to live upon.

Doreen was just sufficiently tired to enjoy most thoroughly the prospect of a rest, and, though she was far from being self-indulgent, and was quite content with the simplest style of living, she was nevertheless conscious of keen enjoyment as she lay back in the luxurious carriage, and still more when at the station she found everything beautifully arranged for her. It was delightful to be waited upon by Max Hereford; it was pleasant to have no anxiety about luggage, or recalcitrant porters, or grasping cabmen; it was restful, too, to be tucked up cosily in the corner seat of a first-class carriage, instead of skirmishing for oneself in a crowded third-class compartment; and, above all, it was a treat not to be alone, but to have companions who at every turn seemed to consider her comfort. She made them laugh with her merry account of her three journeys into the provinces.

"Aunt Garth did not half like my going alone," she said, "and persuaded me at Exeter to go to a very small, quiet, old-fashioned hotel, thinking it would be nicer for me. But nothing could have been worse. It was so very quiet that there was only one other visitor. I came down rather early to dinner, and thought that at such an hour I should probably dine alone. But at the long table were two places laid, and scarcely had the soup been removed, when in stalked a solemn, black-bearded Frenchman. He spoke no word, but sat down opposite me, tucked his table napkin into his collar, felt in his waistcoat pocket and drew out a pill-box, from which he produced two huge black pills as big as the top of my thumb,—they truly were quite as big. Whether he saw me shaking with suppressed laughter I don't know. We simultaneously grasped the water caraffe; he withdrew his hand; I poured out a tumblerful, and gulped down my mirth as well as I could; he followed my example, and with frightful agility swallowed his pills. After that experience, I don't think I shall venture on small hotels again!"

The first sight that greeted them on the Firdale platform was Michael's eager little face, which lighted up till it positively shone as he caught sight of Doreen.

"The coachman let me drive part of the way to the station," he said gleefully. "He is the jolliest man you ever saw, and, oh, there are such heaps of things to show you! Mollie wanted to come too, but we thought she'd better not, because I shall have to be inside going back, as the what-you-call-it—the waiter—no, I mean the footman,—from London, will be on the box."

Michael's unfailing tongue chattered the whole way to Monkton Verney, and his pride in pointing out to Doreen every possible point of interest greatly amused Mrs. Hereford.

"Why, Michael, I think you must be intended for a newspaper correspondent," said Max, greatly taken with the bright-eyed boy. "Nothing seems to escape you."

"Oh, I don't want to write," said Michael. "It's Dermot that means to go in for that. I do so want to be an engineer."

"Yes, indeed, I counted it a great proof of your affection that you were looking out for me, when our train came in, and not studying the engine," said Doreen, laughing. "Engines are his latest hobby; he will read the driest books about them, and will rattle off the names of their component parts in a way that makes my brain reel."

"But you like them yourself," said Michael, wistfully.

"Why, yes, asthore, of course I do. I like anything that you like, and will never forget to tell you the name, and the sort, and the colour of every engine I travel by."

"It will be a great help to you, if both boys have some marked inclination to guide you in their education," said Mrs. Hereford. "You had better talk to the Worthingtons, who are coming to stay with us to-morrow. Sir Henry Worthington is a great railway director, and would be able to give you plenty of advice as to Michael's future."

"You will like the Worthingtons," said Max. "They are the most delightful people; and Lady Worthington is Irish. We must keep off politics, though; for they are of the opposite party. Have you heard yet, mother, when Uncle Hereford comes?"

"He says he will ride over from the camp to-morrow afternoon. His portmanteau must be brought from the station with the Worthingtons' things. Now, Doreen, this is the beginning of Monkton Verney, and we shall soon be home. I am sure you must be longing for afternoon tea."

"And for the children," said Max, with a glance at her eager eyes.

"Yes," she said, smiling. "What a paradise it has been for them!"

The road skirted the park, of which glimpses could now and then be seen through a thick wild-wood which bordered it. On the other side lay peaceful, green meadows, a narrow, winding river, and the woods of a neighbouring estate, not yet in leaf, but with those varying hues of early spring which are almost more beautiful than the following stage. Presently they came to a place where four ways met.

A steep, sandy road led upwards among stately fir groves, and Max drew her attention to it.

"That is the way we shall take you to Rooksbury," he said.

"And there is the water-mill that I sketched for you in my letter," said Michael.

"And here we are at home," said Mrs. Hereford, as the carriage turned in at the pretty gate-way near the mill.

But Doreen had hardly a glance to spare for the solid, well-built, slightly prosaic mansion; she only saw two little figures dancing about on the steps, and in another minute Dermot and Mollie had flung themselves upon her.

"And if you choke me with the four arms of you round my throat, what will become of us all then?" she said gaily, carrying off Mollie to greet Mrs. Hereford, her heart full of joy at the sight of the bonny little face so dear to her.

The country air had brought the colour back to all the pale little faces, and Mrs. Muchmore, established in a large, airy nursery, was full of pride in the well-being of her small charges.

"Hagar Muchmore is really the most wonderful woman," said Doreen, as she rejoined Mrs. Hereford in the drawing-room. "She has the art of making herself at home everywhere; she does not seem cramped in a crowded little cabin, or in dreary lodgings; and yet she does not look out of her element in that beautiful nursery of yours, where a dozen children would have room and to spare."

"Ah, my dear, I often wished I had the dozen to fill it," said Mrs. Hereford. "It used to look gaunt and bare, somehow, when there was only Max to tenant it. As often as we could we had Miriam with us, but being both only children, they quarrelled a good deal, and it was not always a successful experiment. The servants have nothing but praise for your four little ones,—never were such children, according to my housekeeper."

"Well, I think they are all pretty good hands at amusing themselves," said Doreen. "I was a little bit afraid that Hagar Muchmore, with her brusque, independent ways and republican frankness, might not get on very well, but she seems to have made friends all round and looks as happy as a queen. Perhaps her intense veneration for the first real ruin she has ever seen was in her favour. The ruins and the ivy seem quite to have taken her breath away. You see we can't supply old priories in America, and ivy does not grow there."

When they had had tea, Max proposed that she should come out and see the Priory; and together they crossed the smooth, well-kept lawn, and, skirting the side of the little lake, passed through the shrubbery to the park beyond, where, in the soft sunset light, stood the gray old ruin, with its air of peaceful decay, its forlorn, roofless walls, its graceful arches and fragments of delicate tracery. Sheep were peacefully grazing within the dismantled choir, and birds flew homeward to their nests in the thick ivy which clustered about the pillars.

"I don't think you are so enthusiastic as Mrs. Muchmore," said Max, looking into her face, which had grown sad and wistful.

"Ruins are somehow depressing," she said. "Do you remember the ruined Abbey near Castle Karey? I never could understand how your cousin could spend whole days in painting it. One can't help thinking of the builders and how all their hopes and efforts are at an end; failure seems written over the whole place in spite of its loveliness."

"It shelters sheep still, though not the two-legged ones it was intended for," said Max, smiling.

"Yes; but it is much too good for mere animals," said Doreen.

"What would you do with it if it were yours?" he said. "Some people think I ought to restore it; but I am not going to be such a fool as to plant a huge church in a place where there is not even a village."

"I think," she said musingly, "I should turn it into almshouses for old people, or into a convalescent home for Londoners. You could use the choir for the chapel. It would perhaps spoil your view a little from the house, but the building could be low and need not be unsightly."

"I wonder what my heir would say to it," said Max. "However, I need not trouble much about that thought, for the property will certainly never come to him."

"Why not? Is it only yours for your lifetime?"

"It is a curious thing," he said. "But this property never remains in the same family long. It may pass from father to son, but the grandson has never been known to succeed. I am told it is the case with all estates that were once church property, and there is a book containing many instances of the kind. I would not like to say that I altogether believe in the legend, and yet it certainly seems something more than a mere coincidence." Doreen shivered a little. At heart she was superstitious, and this idea appealed to her Keltic imagination.

"How did it come into your possession?" she asked.

"The estate was in the market. My father bought it, but died only a year after the purchase. Do you see that old crone over there picking up sticks? She told me, as a child, all manner of legends about the former owners. She is rather a character; I should like you to see her."

They walked on towards a plantation, where a skinny old woman was slowly tying up her bundle of firewood, with many muttered ejaculations.

"She looks like a witch," said Doreen.

"As children, we used to call her Goody Grope, after the old woman in Miss Edgeworth's story; and the name has stuck to her ever since. But she is a worthy old body, and full of humour when you get her in the right mood. Good evening, Goody; how are you?" he exclaimed, as the old woman looked up and caught sight of them. "This lady comes from Ireland, and she wants to hear all the stories about Monkton Verney,—all that you used to tell us long ago. Don't you remember?"

"Glad to see you home again, sir," said Goody, curtseying to them both. "The lady, I take it, is of kin to the pretty little lass I saw up at the house last week."

"I am her sister," said Doreen, with her usual happy pride in claiming kinship with Mollie. "Have you been telling your delightful tales to the children, I wonder? There's nothing they would like half so well; they are just crazy about stories."

"Bless their little hearts!" said Goody; "there's many a tale I could tell them."

"But don't you go telling them about the ghost, Goody; I don't allow that ghost to be talked about. He's part of my property; and now that I'm of age, I'll manage him myself. You'll be scaring the children if you tell them the Priory is haunted. Many's the time as a child, that I've made myself go shivering to the window, ashamed to lie quaking in bed, and have looked out at the ruins to see if he was really there."

"And did you ever see it?" said Doreen, who, like Minna Troil, did not believe in ghosts, but was, nevertheless, afraid

of them.

"Never," he said, with a mischievous glance; "but Goody has often seen him; you ask her."

"What is it like, and where did you see it?" asked Doreen, with an interest that charmed Goody.

"Thrice have I seen it, but never again will I run the risk; for afterwards it makes a body feel badly for weeks to come," said the old woman. "Drains all the strength out of you, that it does."

"Is it, then, so dreadful to look at?"

"No," said the old woman, musingly; "it's not that it is altogether horrible to see, but it's uncanny to look up all at once, as you are crossing the park on a moonlight night, and thinking of nothing in particular, to be taken right back into the past,—to see a figure kneeling there in the ruins in the old-time dress, a wide ruffle about the throat of him, and a little beard cut in a point, and a cloak cast about his shoulders. You can see his picture in Monkton Verney Hall now, and the ghost is as like the picture as eggs is like eggs."

"Is he inside the Priory or outside?"

"Well, I reckon it is where it would have been the inside, but the outer wall being all down, you can see him plain enough as you cross the park; he kneels there prayin' and prayin' to be forgiven. Many's the night I've heard his pitiful cries,—fit to make your blood run cold."

"A banshee, is it?" said Doreen. "Does he foretell misfortune?"

"Owls," whispered Max; "I have often seen them, and heard them, too."

"Oh yes," said Goody, not heeding the murmur of the Sadducee who owned the ruin. "Doubtless, he foretells misfortune; there's always misfortune to them as owns this property."

"Now, Goody, put it mildly," said Max, laughing. "You know there are exceptions to prove every rule. You always admitted that I might be the happy exception. And if you made out such a black case against Monkton Verney, you will be frightening my guest away the very day she has come."

"I always had hopes of you, sir," said Goody, looking into his blithe, cheerful face. "If ever there was one fit to reverse the ill-fortune of the place,—why then, it's you. But it's seen many a sad tale. There was Lord Royle, who got it first in King Henry's time, and turned out the Prior and spoiled the church; that's the one that walks," she added, with a glance at Doreen. "He lived to be an old man, and saw every one of his children come to a bad end. Then there was Sir Peregrine Blount, in King Charles' days; his only son was killed in battle. Next, the Lepines had the place, and all went well for a time, and there was two bonny lads born to them; but the heir and his brother, they both fell in love with the same lady, and they fought a duel together, and one was killed and the other was hung for his murder. Then the Wintons bought the place, and did well for a bit till the South-Sea Bubble burst,—I don't rightly know where, but it ruined them somehow, and the place was in the market again till the Chorleys took it; and they did well and were good to the poor, and the father saw no ill in his time, nor the son in his; and men thought the doom was at an end. But when the grandson came into the estate, men saw that the delay had only made the doom all the worse; such trouble there had never been before. From being a pleasant enough boy, young Mr. Chorley grew into the wildest and wickedest man that Monkton Verney had ever known for its owner. He went to the bad, and there were shocking doings, I've heard my mother say. And one night, when there was a great party of them in the house, drinking and gambling, sudden destruction came upon them. The master was taken ill, and the next day two of the guests were stricken down. The rest fled, but before the week was out Squire Chorley was carried to the churchyard. After that the house stood empty many years, until Squire Hereford bought it. There's a doom on the place,—nobody can deny that, though nowadays folk laugh at such things. They can't get over facts; and it's my hope that the squire here will be warned in time, and give back to the Almighty what is His by right."

"For my part," said Max, smiling, "I think it's uncommonly hard that I should be made to suffer for the sins of Lord Royle, which took place in 1536. The place was bought with money which my father had honourably earned as a civil engineer, and why can't you let me enjoy it in peace, Goody?"

The old woman shook her head. "There'll never be peace in Monkton Verney," she said; "not lasting peace."

"The same might be said of most houses in the world," said Max, entirely unconvinced. "Show me the family that in three generations contrives to escape great and grievous trouble, and I will believe your legend."

"Have ye heard the doom, miss?" asked Goody, turning to Doreen for sympathy, and scanning her Keltic face with a keen but appreciative glance.

"Oh, is there really some rhyme about it?" asked Doreen, eagerly.

"Some beautiful doggerel; but it sounds impressive when Goody says it, specially in the twilight," said Max, with a mischievous twinkle of fun in his eyes.

"The rhyme was found, miss, in the old church register, written in the margin by the entry of Lord Royle's burial," said Goody; and in slow, measured accents, she repeated solemnly the following doom:—

" 'Gained by fraud,
No good shall come;
None shall find
A lasting home.
Peace shall ne'er
Be here again,
Till the land
Is freed from stain.
This is Monkton Verney's doom.
Lord, let Thy blessed kingdom come!' "

There was a minute's silence, then the old woman picked up her bundle of firewood.

"'Tis getting late, sir, and the lady will be taking cold," she said. "I wish ye both good evening."

They bade her a kindly farewell, and thanked her for the story.

"Lady Worthington will be here to-morrow, and she will be coming to see you for certain, Goody," said Max; "she loves nothing better than to hear you tell of the ghost."

They turned away and crossed the park to the shrubbery, the old crone pausing more than once to look after them.

"Yon's a bonny-looking lady," she said to herself; "and there's that in her face that might likely enough reverse the doom. It would be a fine-thing if she was, indeed, to bring peace to Monkton Verney and lay the ghost. The squire, he do seem took with her, but he be young and a bit headstrong, and with a temper that ill brooks contradicting; and I reckon the lady herself is a trifle too much of the same sort of temper,—holds her head like a queen, she does."

"Isn't she a funny old soul?" said Max, as they walked briskly home; "I like to see her solemn dark eyes grow bigger as she says that wretched bit of doggerel which, to her, is more beautiful, I am sure, than any poem in the world."

"There was something quite uncannily prophetic about her whole air as she said it," replied Doreen, smiling. "And yet, you know, there is truth in the words,—

'Gained by fraud,
No good can come.'

Why, really, the whole rhyme might be applied to the way in which the Act of Union was gained. It's a sort of Home Rule song, and I couldn't help thinking, as she said it, how you English cheated and tricked us out of our parliament."

"Now, here is fresh light on the problem," said Max, laughing. "Lady Worthington and her sister are for ever telling me to restore the church, and I tell them I will wait till the congregation is ready for it. You think that by turning Home Ruler I shall set right this ancient wrong."

"No, not this one; this is your own private affair, and the other a national matter. I only compared one with the other."

"Ah, yes, it was to be almshouses, or a convalescent home. But I don't really think it's fair that I should suffer and try to make amends for somebody else's wrong-doing."

Doreen turned and looked at him for a moment with puzzled eyes.

"Why," she said, "I thought that was exactly what we had all promised to do. Isn't that following Christ?"

She had the usual Irish habit of speaking with the utmost frankness of spiritual things; in her voice there was no slightest change, no conventional tone of piety: there was to her no borderland between sacred and secular, and the effect was strange enough to startle an Englishman. Some would have deemed the tone irreverent, but to Max, after the first shock of surprise, it seemed like the unaffected sincerity of a child; and back into his mind there flashed a remembrance of a mountain-side, and of a little figure in a red cloak, and of a sweet-toned voice, ending the graphic description of a night of terror with the words, "Afterwards God talked to me, and it was better."

"Do you recollect that morning on Kilrourk," he said, "when you began to make plans for the future and fired me with the ambition of being a public speaker? You seem to have the gift of inspiring people with ideals. Your scheme is certainly more practical than Lady Worthington's. It even begins to make me feel a little uncomfortable."

"Why uncomfortable?"

"Uncomfortable as one feels in the morning when the bell rings, and you know that before long you must get up just when you long to lie lazing."

"You are not very complimentary," said Doreen, laughing. "Never before have I been compared to anything so disagreeable as a dressing-bell." Then, as they paused to close the gate leading into the shrubbery, she glanced once more at the gray old Priory. "Do you know," she exclaimed, "when old Goody was saying that misfortune always followed the owner of Monkton Verney, I couldn't help wondering whether that had anything to do with your ill-luck in being present that day on Lough Lee, and witnessing the struggle between Mr. Desmond and—"

She broke off suddenly with an involuntary start, for at that moment, as they turned a sharp angle in the path hedged in by closely clipped shrubs, they came suddenly upon Baptiste, the French servant.

"Mr. Stanley has called to know if he can speak to you, sir," said the man, speaking, as usual, in his native tongue; for he had proved singularly slow in acquiring English, and still protested that he could not understand it unless spoken very slowly.

"It is the manager of our coffee tavern," said Max. "What a plague the fellow is to come just now! I suppose I must go and see him, and, perhaps, you have had as much walking as you care for."

"Do you think," said Doreen, with a feeling of vague discomfort, "that Baptiste can have heard what I was talking about? We came upon him so suddenly, when I never dreamt any one was there."

"Oh, I don't think he could possibly make anything out of such a fragment as that, even if he heard the words. And, as a matter of fact, I don't suppose he did hear, for he is a regular duffer at learning English, and knows little more than when he first came to us. We should not have kept him, only he is such a handy fellow, and always gets on with people."

"It was careless of me to speak about it at all," said Doreen; "but I made sure we were quite alone, and it is somehow such a relief to be able to speak of it now and then."

At that moment Michael caught sight of her, and came running across the lawn, while Max, very loath to attend to business, went in to interview the manager of the coffee tavern.

Baptiste, in the mean time, had retired to his room in the servants' wing, and, unlocking a desk, had drawn forth a shabby little note-book. Sitting down by the window to catch the fading light, he made the following entry in French:—

"To-day the 18th April, being five years and eight months from the time of Mr. Foxell's disappearance, I travelled down from London to Monkton Verney with my master, Mrs. Hereford, and a young Irish lady, Miss Doreen O'Ryan, now becoming noted as a public singer. Heard much talk about this lady's childhood, she being a daughter of one concerned in the Fenian rising some years ago. She was also staying near Castle Karey at the time of Mr. Foxell's death, and accompanied my master and Mr. Desmond on the 18th August on an expedition to Lough Lee, as before mentioned in my journal. Taking a message to my master late this afternoon, I heard him closing the shrubbery gate, and paused behind a bush in hopes of overhearing their talk; was fortunate enough to hear Miss O'Ryan use the following noteworthy words, 'Your ill-luck in being present that day at Lough Lee, and witnessing the struggle between Mr. Desmond and—'

"Compared with Mr. Desmond's words let fall during delirium, I am in hopes that at length we have the clue."

CHAPTER XI.

"Not perfect, nay, but full of tender wants,
No angel, but a dearer being, all dipt
In angel instincts, breathing Paradise,
Interpreter between the gods and men."—*The Princess.*

Doreen was so happy that first day at Monkton Verney, that she was almost inclined to regret the advent of other guests, and inhospitably wished General Hereford had not seen fit to ride over from the camp in time for lunch. He came, bringing with him an atmosphere that somehow was uncongenial to her, and she could scarcely help smiling when Dermot drew her confidentially apart as soon as the meal was over, and in the softest of voices, asked, "Is that Mr. Worldly Wiseman? He's so awfully like him."

"Why, Dermot, what a goose you are," said Michael, reprovingly. "He always seems to be thinking that he sees people out of books! The other day, when we were in Firdale, there was a circus passing through the town, and on one of the cars there were two lions in a cage and the tamer in with them, and Dermot shouted out, 'Look, look! there's Daniel in the lions' den!'"

Doreen laughed; but she thought Dermot had very accurately hit upon a likeness for General Hereford, though she could hardly have defined what it was about him that she disliked. He carried off Max to the smoking-room, so that she had plenty of time to muse over her somewhat uncomfortable first impressions, and Mrs. Hereford presently proposed a drive, relapsing before they had ended the first mile into a gentle doze, and leaving her companion to the enjoyment of the scenery and of her own thoughts.

"I wish he had not come," she said to herself. "He seems to be for ever sitting in judgment upon everything and everybody, and he patronizes Max,—how hateful it is to see any one patronize him! To be sure, he was once his guardian, and, perhaps, it is the remains of the old manner in which he treated him as a boy,—but that he, of all men, should dare to do it! A man so inferior in every way, so shallow and selfish and conventional, one of the coldly censorious people that can never be stirred up into an honest enthusiasm over anything. I detest him, and I am sure he detests me."

At this moment Mrs. Hereford awoke, refreshed by her nap, and not in the least imagining that she had really slept. She began to tell of the Worthingtons, of their children, of Sir Henry's kindness to Max, and of the help he had always been to her.

"They are our oldest friends," she said. "Katharine and I were at school together as girls, and Sir Henry was a college friend of my husband's. What they were to me at the time of my husband's death, I can never tell you; and all through the difficulties of later years when I so greatly needed advice, there has always been Sir Henry to turn to. In many ways he was more truly my son's guardian than General Hereford, and Max, though not at all agreeing with many of his views, has the most profound veneration for him."

"Did I not hear that Lady Worthington was Irish?" said Doreen.

"Yes, but not of your persuasion," said Mrs. Hereford, smiling. "Still, I think you will like each other,—I feel certain of it; Lady Worthington takes strong likes and dislikes: but I shall be greatly surprised if you two do not quite fall in love with each other."

The surmise proved correct; for Doreen instantly felt a sense of kinship with the tall, graceful, bright-eyed Irish woman, whose rapid movements and rapid talk, and keen, quick glances, were so full of animation and vitality that she seemed younger at fifty than many women at thirty. Max watched a little anxiously, to see what her impression of Doreen would be, for he knew from experience that if she happened to take a dislike to any one, she would take small pains to conceal it; he knew that Lady Worthington had heard from his mother of Doreen's history and parentage, and though well aware that politics would, as usual, be a tabooed subject during the Worthingtons' visit, he was a little afraid that she might start with a prejudice against Patrick O'Ryan's daughter.

But Lady Worthington, who had protested to her husband all the way from the station on the folly of Mrs. Hereford in humouring her son's admiration for the penniless daughter of a Fenian, was fairly caught and enthralled the very moment the girl was introduced to her. For about Doreen there certainly was a curious power of fascination; perhaps it lay in that

frank sincerity which had so charmed Mrs. Hereford, that genuine goodness of a nature without guile; or again, it might have been in the unquenchable brightness of spirit, the mirthfulness which sorrow and care were powerless to crush. But it was a fascination which few could resist, and it appealed to what was highest in others, not merely to their sensuous nature.

A very merry and cheerful dinner ensued, and Doreen's heart was entirely won over when, afterwards, Lady Worthington begged to see little Bride, and went up with her to the night nursery to visit the children in bed. She had three children of her own and seemed to have endless experience of all childish ailments.

"They are careful comforts, my dear," she said. "But very real comforts for all that, and I don't think I ever saw a more charming little quartette than yours."

To Doreen, who was quite as proud of her children as though she had been their mother, this in itself was enough to stamp Lady Worthington as a delightful and discerning person. She was amused to see Michael's knight-like devotion to her, and made Max laugh by telling him of the boy's comments.

"He thinks Lady Worthington must be the most beautiful lady in England. 'I thought' he said, 'that people with titles like that would be horrid and pompious, but she is not the least bit pompious,—she's less so than other people, not more.' Michael is never so funny as when he gets hold of a long word and pronounces it in a way of his own; in one of his letters he assured me that the Priory was very capricious from the drawing-room windows."

"I shall call him Mr. Malaprop," said Max, laughing. "But by the bye, that reminds me that your Convalescent Home would also be very conspicuous from the drawing-room, and not after such a pleasing fashion." He turned to Lady Worthington, and asked her what she thought of the idea.

"'Tis the most sensible notion I have yet heard," she said, "and Miss O'Ryan, as the originator, ought to lay the foundation stone."

"But what will the artists say to our spoiling the ruins? My cousin, Claude Magnay, will call me a Goth."

"He may grumble, but his sensible little wife will soon make him see reason. They have just returned to London; I travelled down with them from Rilchester yesterday."

"Is he all right again?"

"I doubt if he will ever be quite as strong as he was before the accident," said Lady Worthington, "but he is so far recovered that he can begin to work again. It has been a wonderful recovery, and they are as happy as their own two babies."

They relapsed into talk about Rilchester, and Max and Doreen wandered off to the other end of the drawing-room, where, between talking and singing, the time passed only too quickly.

The days that followed were to Doreen more like a delicious dream than a bit of real life. After those weary months of sorrow and anxiety, after all the illness and suffering she had had to witness, after the torturing sense of poverty and helplessness, this easy life in the country house was the perfection of rest. She seemed able to live only in the present; neither the griefs of the past nor the cares of the future oppressed her, while each day deepened within her a happy consciousness that she and Max Hereford somehow belonged to each other.

On the last afternoon of their visit, it had been arranged that they should go up a well-known hill close by, called Rooksbury; an expedition which the elders of the party entirely declined, for Rooksbury was steep, and there was no winding path by which it could be easily scaled. Lady Worthington preferred to drive with Mrs. Hereford, Sir Henry and the General rode over to the camp, and the children, to their great satisfaction, found that only Max and Doreen were to accompany them. The fir woods which clothed the hill rang with the merry voices of the climbers, as they toiled up over the bare ground, slippery with fir needles. At the summit, upon the further side, looking away from Monkton Verney over a wide stretch of heath-covered, undulating ground, there stood a crooked hawthorn, known as the wishing-tree; and here Max insisted that they must all register a secret wish, solemnly walking three times round the bush,—a proceeding which enchanted the children. This ceremony over, the two boys went to the more sheer and slippery part of the hill to enjoy the delight of incessant running up and down, and Max found a sheltered nook for Doreen, where she could watch Mollie at a little distance searching for daisies in the grass near the wishing-tree.

"How strong I ought to be for all the work that is coming," said Doreen, "after this heavenly rest. It is odd, but do you know, being here has made me feel years younger."

"I hate the thought of your going back to that struggling life!" he exclaimed impetuously. "Doreen, why must you go at all,—why not make this your home? You know—you must know—that I love you! Come and help me to reverse the doom on the old place. I love you, dearest,—I love you! be my wife, and help me to keep the promise to work for Ireland!"

Doreen did not speak; but neither did she resist him when he took her hand in his, and held it closely. The light in her blue eyes was reassuring; he remembered how as a child, when wakened by him on the mountain, she had looked up at him with glad recognition, almost embarrassing him with her frank, "I was dreaming of you."

There was a newly awakened look about her eyes now; but it was a thousand times more beautiful. It seemed to him that all her soul looked out of them, recognizing and claiming his. At last she spoke reflectively,—almost sadly.

"I wonder," she said, glancing towards little Mollie, "whether I ought to let you wait for me. Even if I succeed as a singer, it would be impossible for me to think of marrying for the next five or six years."

"You are thinking of the children, and of providing for them," he said; "but surely you know that they would be to me like my own brothers and sisters. We could make them very happy at Monkton Verney,—you see, already they love the place."

She put her other hand upon his with a little, tender caress.

"Max," she said, speaking his name for the first time, half shyly, "you know that I love you, and you must not misunderstand and think me proud or ungrateful, but I cannot let you marry the whole family like that,—I really cannot. It is right that I should use my one talent; I am not going to hide it in the earth and just be idle."

He sighed; but he had known beforehand that she would never consent to abandon her profession. She would not have been the girl whom he loved and reverenced, had she done so.

"I will wait," he said. "My father himself was engaged seven years, and married but one. The doom will surely not be cruel for two generations."

Doreen's eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, Max," she said, "I cannot let you pledge yourself to me like that; it is not fair to you. There shall be no engagement between us; but if five years hence you are still in the same mind,—why, then, you can tell me."

Max vehemently protested against such an arrangement, but Doreen was firm.

"Indeed, it will be best so," she pleaded; "it would never do for the engagement to be publicly announced now; it might hamper you in your political life,—it might even make my career more difficult and tedious. Besides, I should feel all the time that I was perhaps doing you harm. You might meet some one in your own set who would make you a far better wife; and then, if you were really betrothed to me—! No, no; I cannot let that be! Let us wait; we can meet often as friends, and no one save your mother need know that we understand each other."

"And your aunt; she ought to know," said Max, certain that he should never get upon a comfortable footing in Bernard Street unless Mrs. Garth were taken into confidence.

"Yes; you are right," said Doreen; "and auntie will be a very safe person. She will not talk us over with her friends."

"And in four years I may speak again," said Max, boldly cutting off a whole year from the time she had stated.

She assented, and began to speak of all the work that would make the time pass quickly. And Max, being quite certain of her love and of his own constancy, prepared to face the waiting-time with a certain brave cheerfulness which characterized him.

"We will make a compact that four years hence we will climb Rooksbury again together, and—and manage things better," he said, smiling; "but who knows that when you are a great *prima donna*, and I, perhaps, an unsuccessful candidate for Firdale, that you will not throw me over?"

"How can you say such things!" she cried; "you know well enough that I shall not change."

"Very well; I will take your word for it," he said, smiling. "The plan we made long ago as we climbed Kilrourk is in a fair way to be fulfilled; now let us seal our promise as we did that very different promise in the Castle Karey fernery."

But the kiss was to each of them as unlike that former one as the promise itself was unlike that unwelcome pledge of secrecy. In the strength of the love which it symbolized, Doreen felt that she could face her four years of waiting and working, and her face was so transfigured with joy that even Michael noticed it, and wondered.

"We have had such a jolly time on the other side!" he exclaimed. "Why didn't you come there and watch us?"

"Well," said Doreen, readily, "the sun was on this side."

"How it does seem to shine on your face," said the boy. "I never knew before, Doreen, that you were pretty."

"For which frankly fraternal speech you shall be chased down Rooksbury," said Doreen, laughing; and, having seen that Max had taken charge of Mollie, she bounded down the hillside, her feet flying over the steep, slippery ground, as she sprang from one tall, straight trunk to another, being well aware that those who try to walk down a fir hill generally come to grief.

Max, with little Mollie on his back, paused at the top to watch her lithe figure in its swift descent. Who would have thought that this was the singer who had held thousands in rapt attention at the Albert Hall such a little while ago! and who would dream that this girl of eighteen had all the care and responsibility of a family of four brothers and sisters to whom she must be guardian and breadwinner!

CHAPTER XII.

"If then thou dost not make use of the shield of patience, thou shalt not be long without wounds."—THOMAS À KEMPIS

"I have come to confession," said Max that night as, according to his invariable custom, he looked in the last thing to bid his mother good night on the way to his own room.

The maid had gone, and Mrs. Hereford in the prettiest of dressing-gowns sat beside the fire, reading. The sunshine of late April might be pleasant enough in the day-time, even on the heights of Rooksbury, but the nights were still chilly, and in her large, lonely room she liked a fire for company. The large, old-fashioned sofa stood at right angles with the hearth. Max sat down in his usual place beside her; in his well-opened eyes there was a curious mixture of gravity and subdued triumph.

"I am a rejected lover," he said, smiling.

"Your looks belie you," said Mrs. Hereford, glancing with motherly pride and love at the comely face, and thinking within herself that he need not greatly fear rejection.

"Nevertheless, I'm speaking the strict truth," said Max, sighing a little. And by degrees he told her what had passed that afternoon.

"I know what you will say," he concluded. "You will say it is the best thing that could have befallen a fellow who has all his life been spoilt and indulged, and had exactly what he wished the moment he craved for it."

"Well, dear," she said, "I am sorry for you, but I really do think this waiting-time will do you no harm. I suppose some people would say that you ought not to have proposed to her while she was staying here, but I can't regret it; it is far better that you should understand each other."

"Far better if she would consent to a real engagement, to my way of thinking," said Max. "However, it is of no use; she will not hear of it. Seems to think it might be hard on me, or a hindrance, and was ready with all sorts of prudent considerations that I should never have thought likely to cross the mind of a girl of her age."

"She has seen many sides of life, and has been forced to think for herself. That she should dwell so much on your side of the question shows how much she loves you, and that she is no mere weak, impulsive girl, but a true woman."

"Ah, *Mütterchen*!" he said, using the tender German term of endearment which he had learnt as a child, "what a mercy it is I belong to you, and not to a mother like Aunt Rachel, who would expect me to marry money and a title."

"Of money you already have enough," she replied, smiling; "and I would much prefer your marrying Doreen O'Ryan, with her sweet nature and her lovely voice, to your marrying into the most aristocratic of families. But indeed you wrong Aunt Rachel. Though she is anxious to see Miriam well married, I don't think she covets a title for her. Indeed, to tell the truth, I have always been a little afraid that she wished you to be her future son-in-law."

"Heaven forfend!" said Max. "Miriam and I shall always be good friends, but nothing more. There is hardly a single subject we agree upon; we should indeed make a quarrelsome couple."

There was a minute's silence. Mrs. Hereford, thankful as she was to think that Miriam would not be her daughter-in-law, could not but realize that in marrying Doreen O'Ryan there might be sundry difficulties and discomforts which Max could hardly yet realize. That the two would be very likely to disagree as to future arrangements she quite foresaw.

"Do you think," she said, "that such an artiste as Doreen would ever be willing to retire from public life at the end of four or five years?"

"Oh, it will be time enough to think of that later on," said Max, easily. "I daresay by that time she will be sick of all the drudgery, and glad enough of rest and peace."

"I don't think she accounts it drudgery."

"But in time it must become so. Think of the sheer hard work of the travelling; and then the excitement, the jealousies,

and the criticisms, the wearing anxiety, the galling sense of living in the fierce light of public life! Oh, how I hate the thought of it all for her!"

"I think you scarcely realize how sacred her calling is to her," said Mrs. Hereford. "I have been very much struck with the way in which she regards it as a sort of divine mission."

"I see she has lent you her favourite American poet," said Max, taking up the volume which Mrs. Hereford had been reading when he entered. "I tell her it is a contradiction in terms for a public singer to be devoted to a Quaker."

"I fancy she owes a great deal to the gospel according to Whittier," said Mrs. Hereford. "You will never persuade her that Browning is the only poet in the world, and Mark Shrewsbury the only novelist. She has much more catholic tastes than you have, and will see the best points of many rather than the supreme excellence of one. To me her great charm lies in that readiness to perceive beauty in everything. There are some lovely thoughts in this 'Andrew Rykman's Prayer,' which I was reading."

Max did not care for Whittier, but the sight of Doreen's pencilled line in the margin made him read the following passage:—

"Thou, O Elder Brother! who
In Thy flesh our trial knew;
Thou, who hast been touched by these,
Our most sad infirmities;
Thou alone the gulf canst span
In the dual heart of man,
And between the soul and sense
Reconcile all difference;
Change the dream of me and mine
For the truth of Thee and Thine,
And, through chaos, doubt, and strife,
Interfuse Thy calm of life;

Make my mortal dreams come true
With the work I fain would do;
Let me find in Thy employ
Peace that dearer is than joy;
Out of self to love be led,
And to heaven acclimated,
Until all things sweet and good
Seem my natural habitude."

"It must be his straightforward simplicity that she likes," he said, putting down the book; "that and his practical way of looking at spiritual things. What shall you say, mother, if I really try to make something of this notion for putting the old Priory to use?"

"I shall say it is a capital plan," said Mrs. Hereford; "and the arranging will be a very good thing for you during your waiting-time. But you could not build it in a day; it would need a good deal of thought and care."

"Yes, and some retrenchment," said Max. "But I shall not mind that; it will make my life a little more like hers. There are several expenses which we might cut down."

"Yes," assented his mother, restraining a smile; for Max, though not exactly extravagant, had a way of letting money slip through his fingers, and the thought of his practising economy seemed somehow incongruous. But he was absolutely in earnest, and as he bade her good night his mind was full of schemes for the future.

As he entered his room, Baptiste turned the lamp a little higher, adjusted the shade, and inquired whether his master needed anything further.

"Nothing more," replied Max. "Call me at seven to-morrow morning."

"I will get up early," he thought, "and run through those accounts before breakfast. And talking of retrenchment, I might just as well do without Baptiste. He is a handy fellow, and I shall miss him, but after all—after all—"

The thought was never completed, for as usual his head had hardly touched the pillow before he was asleep, and the next thing he knew was that a clear and unwelcome voice was endeavouring to rouse him.

"*Monsieur! Monsieur!*" said Baptiste, with peremptory firmness. Then, as Max muttered some rejoinder, he instantly relapsed into his usual tone of humble deference.

"A fine morning, *Monsieur*, and the clock has just struck seven."

Max gave just a sufficient indication that he was awake to induce his tormentor to leave the room. Then, with a portentous yawn let his eyelids close once more.

"After all," he said to himself, drowsily, "one would make but a poor hand at accounts before breakfast. I will think matters over here, instead. Baptiste shall go, and—and—"

Here he relapsed again into a delicious sleep, from which he was only roused by the ringing of the eight o'clock dressing-bell.

"It is Doreen's last day here," he reflected drearily, and came down to breakfast feeling disgusted with himself and with life in general.

Doreen, however, was one of those people who wake with a buoyant sense of strength and a conscious delight in being alive. The morning was invariably her best working time, and this particular spring morning when, for the first time, she had awaked to the remembrance that Max loved her, was one of the red-letter days of her life. Her bright face and merry talk seemed to bring sunshine into all hearts, and when, after breakfast, she went away to superintend the packing, she seemed to leave an extraordinary blank behind her.

"I would almost as soon hear that girl talk as sing," said Lady Worthington; "her voice in speaking has something absolutely bewitching in it."

"She must not waste her last country morning over packing," said Mrs. Hereford. "I will send Harding to do it for her, and persuade her to go out."

Going upstairs, she knocked at Doreen's door, catching, as she did so, the familiar strains of—

> " 'Tis the most distressful country that ever yet was seen,
> And they're hanging men and women there for wearing of the green."

Doreen, on catching sight of her, apologized for making such a noise.

"I get into the way of singing to the children up in my bedroom," she explained. "One or other of them generally comes to be my page or my maid."

"I want you to let Harding finish the packing for you," said Mrs. Hereford, taking little Bride on her knee, and looking with motherly eyes at the sweet, bright face of the girl Max loved.

"Thank you, but it is really almost done," said Doreen. "I woke very early and was too happy to go to sleep again, and the dew was so heavy that I was afraid to risk going out, though it looked just like paradise. I have grown so to love this view."

"My dear, it makes me very happy," said Mrs. Hereford, "to think that some day in the future you will make this indeed your home. Max has told me that you understand each other, and have agreed to wait."

"I hope," said Doreen, earnestly, "that you do not think I did wrong in what I said. Indeed, it seemed to me the only right way. Had I loved him less, I might have consented to an engagement."

"I think I understand you, dear," said Mrs. Hereford. "And I believe you are right. The four years will not be idle to either of you, and you are both young."

She could not help reflecting that not one girl in a hundred would have allowed the heir of Monkton Verney to remain absolutely free and unbound, dreading lest an engagement should in any way thwart his prospects or mar his life.

"There is only one thing," said Doreen, "that troubles me a little. And that is that later on, even if I have a very great success, there will certainly be many of your friends and relatives who will think it a very strange and unfitting marriage. General Hereford, for instance, regards professional people as of quite another order; and I do not think he will at all approve of me as a niece, though, of course, as a guest in your house he has been very pleasant to me."

"There never yet was a marriage that pleased an entire family, including all the uncles and aunts," said Mrs. Hereford, laughing. "And one thing I may safely promise you, my dear; you will have a mother-in-law who loves you very dearly, and will not be always seeking to interfere."

Doreen, charmed with the words and the look which accompanied them, threw her arms about Mrs. Hereford's neck. A few months ago she had seemed more desolate and forlorn than any one in the world; now, all at once, her cup was filled to the brim with unlooked-for joys.

The lovers, ostensibly for the sake of talking over the future plans for the Priory, had later in the morning a long ramble in the park, and it was in the ruined church itself that they had their real parting; but neither the leave-taking, nor the melancholy tokens of failure and decay around them, nor even the prospect of the four years' waiting, could depress Doreen. As the balmy spring air blew softly in her face, it seemed to fill her with new life; her feet passed lightly over the smooth turf flecked with daisies; she felt as free from care as the birds that flew about the old ivy-covered walls, and darted off blithely to the trees beyond as they approached. Her bright hopefulness infected Max, who did not as a rule fail to take cheerful views of life,—at any rate, after the first two or three hours of the morning were over. He began to realize that his position with Doreen gave him many privileges, though not all that he coveted; and he derived great amusement and satisfaction from successful attempts to dodge General Hereford, who was bent on showing him sundry trees in the park which he thought had better be cut down.

Even when he returned from Firdale that evening after seeing the last of his guests, he was still in tolerably good spirits, and was awakened rudely enough from dreams of Doreen by a discovery which stirred him to greater anger than he had given way to for many a day.

Happening to go to his room to dress for dinner somewhat earlier than usual, he noticed, to his surprise, through the open door, that the upper drawer of his secretary, which he invariably locked, was wide open; approaching quietly he looked in, then with a wrathful ejaculation strode forward and caught Baptiste's arm in an iron grip. In the valet's hand there was an open letter, beside him on the dressing-table a pile of documents which he had evidently been looking through.

"What is the meaning of this?" thundered Max. "How dare you unlock my secretary and meddle with my papers?"

"*Monsieur* knows that I do not read English," protested Baptiste. "I was but rearranging and tidying the place; it was in great disorder, as *Monsieur* well knows."

This was true; things belonging to Max were seldom methodically arranged, and had he been prudent he would have let the matter pass, and have told the man later on that he had previously decided to dismiss him. But though usually self-controlled, Max had a naturally hasty temper, and nothing irritated him so much as any sort of deception or untruth.

"You scoundrel!" he cried passionately. "You are telling a lie, and you know it. Leave the room."

"I assure you, *Monsieur*" stammered out the servant; but Max would not hear another word.

"Do you wish me to doubt my own eyes? I saw you reading the letter; you were so absorbed in it that you did not hear my steps."

Baptiste volubly assured his master that he could speak but little English, and could read it—not at all, certainly not at all. But Max knew well enough that the fellow was lying, and hastily scrawling a few words on a sheet of paper, handed it to him with a gesture of dismissal. Baptiste, surprised and confused, utterly lost his head.

"*Monsieur*" he pleaded, "I can but obey, yet I implore you not to take away my character."

"Oh! you can read that," said Max, drily.

He had written in English a brief direction to the housekeeper. "I have dismissed Baptiste. Pay him his wages and let him go at once."

The man flushed deeply; an angry gleam came into his dark eyes.

"I have served faithfully for many years," he said. "Will you for a mere bagatelle ruin my life and take away my character?"

"No," said Max; "I will say the truth, that I have found you an excellent servant in every respect save one. If they ask me why you left, I shall certainly not represent you as the soul of truth and honour."

"Then *adieu, Monsieur*" said Baptiste, drawing himself up, and darting a malicious glance at his master. "You will live to regret this day."

Later on, in the drawing-room, Mrs. Hereford remonstrated a little with her son on what she deemed a somewhat hasty dismissal of an old and tried servant. "You might at least have given him his *congé* with less severity, particularly as you had decided before to part with him," she urged.

"There was no time to think of that; I was far too angry," said Max. "He may think himself lucky that I did not kick him downstairs as he deserved."

Mrs. Hereford sighed, and her troubled look instantly softened Max.

"Indeed, mother, I don't think I gave him more than he deserved. Don't worry about it; the fellow will have no difficulty in getting another place; he is far too clever to be long out of work."

"I was not so much thinking of Baptiste as of you," she replied. "I hoped you had at last got your temper quite in hand; but if such a thing as this can so move you, how will you endure the far worse provocations you are sure to meet with?"

Hot tempered and intolerant of any sort of deception, Max was, nevertheless, thoroughly conscious of his own shortcomings; he took the reproof with the silent deference seldom seen except in children.

Mrs. Hereford had certainly not spoilt her only son, and her task had been no easy one; for Max for the first ten years of his life had been one of those excessively passionate children so difficult to manage,—most loving and devoted when good, and most fiendishly vindictive when put out. The last of his serious outbursts of temper with his mother had long ago taken place. Having been guilty on his tenth birthday of some specially flagrant act of disobedience, she had punished him by shutting him in alone into her little sitting-room. Furious at losing a whole hour out of his holiday, he had revenged himself by opening the cage containing a very favourite canary that his mother prized above all things because it had been her husband's last gift to her. With huge delight he saw the bird flutter round the room and soar out of the open window into that free, sunny landscape from which he deemed himself most cruelly and unfairly detained. But his triumph did not last long; his mother's surprise and sorrow at finding the cage empty gratified him for a moment, but the utter dismay and grief in her face as she turned to him with the sudden perception that he must deliberately have tried to hurt her broke down his pride for ever. He flung himself at her feet, sobbing out the whole truth and pouring forth all his self-loathing, all his love for her. He prayed as he had never prayed before that the canary might come back. But it never did, and its empty cage gave him many a wholesome heartache.

"I will, at any rate, say good-bye to Baptiste, and give him the option of remaining till the end of his month," he said after a few minutes' silence. "He was to blame, but I certainly lost my temper with him."

But when he went out into the hall to make inquiries, the butler told him that the valet had already left. A month after his character was applied for by a gentleman living in Dublin, and Max, true to his word, said all that could be said in the man's praise, but when asked the reason of his leaving, wrote uncompromisingly, "I found him reading my private letters, and dismissed him in sudden anger. It was, however, to the best of my belief, his first offence."

CHAPTER XIII.

"In my thought I see you stand with a path on either hand,
—Hills that look into the sun, and there a river'd meadow land;
And your lost voice with the things that it decreed across me thrills,
When you thought, and chose the hills.
'If it prove a life of pain, greater have I judged the gain.
With a singing soul for music's sake, I climb and meet the rain.' "— ALICE MEYNELL.

In the course of the next few years the drawing-room in Bernard Street entirely lost its air of stiff propriety; it was the despair of the housemaid, whose vain attempts each morning to tidy unmanageable stacks of music, or to marshal the books in seemly ranks, or to hide, or, if possible, to confiscate the heterogeneous collection of rubbish which the children called toys, sometimes stirred even Doreen's untidy nature into momentary sympathy.

"Poor Marianne!" she would sing in a comical parody. "What with uncle's study, which she may only dust at rare intervals when there are no valuable remains lying about, and what with the children's playthings straying all over the place, and, worst of all, with my Bohemian ways and manifold comings and goings, and meals at unseasonable hours, it is a wonder that she still stays here and doesn't desert us for some comfortable situation in a tidy and Philistine suburban villa."

But Marianne was devoted to Doreen, and waited on her gladly, even when she gave a good deal of trouble; and as for Aunt Garth, she seemed to like the drawing-room in its new state far better than in former times, when it had been a mere reception-room, never used as a sitting-room, or in any way made the centre of the home. She liked it specially in that interval when Doreen had come up from her solitary four-o'clock dinner, and sat working away at her letters at the davenport near the fire, breaking the monotony of her unwelcome task every now and then by merry snatches of talk.

It was now four years since the day when the house in Bernard Street had opened its friendly doors to the five orphans. As Mrs. Garth sat knitting by the fireside and glanced across the hearthrug at her niece, she saw how great a change time had wrought in Doreen. Happiness and success had entirely banished all signs of care and sadness from her bright face; yet, nevertheless, she looked old for her twenty-two years, and, spite of her simplicity of manner, gave people the impression that she was a woman who knew the world and was capable of holding her own. Gay and light-hearted and talkative she would be to her dying day, but her early struggles and the necessity of going forth into public life alone at an age when most girls are shielded from all care and trouble and danger had given her a sort of dignity which greatly enhanced the charm of her frank friendliness.

Her success had been extraordinarily rapid after those first weary weeks of waiting for a chance of being heard. Everything seemed in her favour; the retirement of Miss Latouche and the American tour of Madame De Berg left excellent opportunities for a new soprano, and Doreen had speedily become the rage.

"You must have managed very cleverly," said Madame De Berg, with a withering smile on her thin lips. "I suppose you have given little suppers to all the critics; that pays very well sometimes, and has doubtless brought you some of those pleasing laudations."

"I don't know any of the critics," said Doreen, laughing, "and I'm sure they wouldn't like having supper with me, for I go home to nothing but a great joram of bread and milk, and am far too hungry to share it with any one."

Madame De Berg made the slightest possible gesture with her shoulders; she smiled, but not sweetly.

"Then how has all your popularity come about?" she said.

"I can't think," said Doreen. "It is just a delightful surprise. I have done nothing but work hard, and of course there are plenty of singers who do that."

"Well, make hay while the sun shines," said the rival soprano, assuming a friendly tone, "for I don't think you'll last, my dear; you haven't the *physique* for a singer's life."

With which Parthian shot she sailed out of the cloak-room, while naughty Doreen ran up to the cheval glass and studied her slim figure critically.

"Must one grow so very, very stout to be a lasting sort of singer?" she asked, turning, with laughter in her eyes, to Ferrier, the celebrated bass. He was a man who from the first had befriended her; she liked him better than any of her fellow-workers, and was very intimate with his wife and daughter.

"No need at all," he replied, "if only singers would take more exercise. I have been singing for the last quarter of a century, and am still one of the 'lean kine.' As for your success, my dear, it is not of the kind that springs from critics and little suppers, or from pandering to the taste of the public and singing sentimental twaddle; you have succeeded because you are an earnest worker, and a conscientious artiste."

Doreen had known how to appreciate such praise, and the words more than repaid her for Madame De Berg's spiteful attack.

The years had passed by, on the whole, with wonderful swiftness, and they had been happy years, full of hope and hard work and healthy enjoyment of the struggle to overcome difficulties. Rathenow had found her a pupil after his own heart, determined to reach the highest standard of which her powers would admit; her earnestness made her respected by all genuine musicians; her merry light-heartedness made her a favourite in the artistes' room, and a certain indescribable purity of heart and life gave her a peculiar position of her own in the profession, which was not to be impaired even by her occasional displays of a vehement Keltic temperament. Every one knew that although it was difficult to rouse Doreen O'Ryan by any sort of personal attack, it was very easy indeed to stir up her wrath by an attack upon Ireland or the Irish, or by venturing to speak in a disparaging way of Donal Moore and the Land League.

The busy pen was flying over the paper at lightning speed when the door opened, and Dermot ran in, cap in hand; his curls had been shorn, for he was now a schoolboy of ten years old, somewhat thin and delicate-looking, however, and with a dreamy look in his eyes, curiously unlike Michael's wide-awake expression.

"Two minutes to post time, Doreen!" he exclaimed.

She made an ejaculation of dismay.

"This London post will be the death of me! Stamp those, there's an angel, and this one for America."

"Oh, is that a poem?" cried Dermot, pouncing upon some verses which he espied.

"Don't talk, asthore, or I will be putting 'affectionately' for 'truly' to a man I have never seen. Yes, yes; you shall read the verses when you come back. Now fly, or they will be too late."

Dermot caught up the pile of letters and bounded out of the room, while Doreen, flinging down her unwiped pen, pushed back her chair somewhat wearily, and crouched down on the hearthrug to warm her hands by the fire.

"Drawback number one to the pleasures of an artiste's life," she said, smiling, "the dreary drudgery of much letter-writing. Drawback number two, the plague of dressmakers. Drawback number three, having to take one's family life in fitful snatches. Oh, how I wish there was no need to turn out to-night!"

"Are you tired, dear?" asked Mrs. Garth, looking with some anxiety at the mobile face, upon which the flickering firelight played.

"Not tired, but lazy; or, to quote Mr. Fox, it's a touch of 'what Madame Fox and I call lassitude,'" said Doreen, smiling. "I have been singing now for some years, at an average of five nights a week, and somehow I wish they would invent a new form of concert, for there is a hideous monotony about the ordinary sort. It is marvellous to me how people can go week after week to Mr. Boniface's concerts, for instance; again and again I see the same faces, and they never seem to weary of the eternal round of ballads."

"What are you singing to-night?"

"A song of Spohr's; a catchy little duet with Madame St. Pierre, which is very popular just now; and, of course my great consolation, a real old Irish melody."

"Ah, here comes Dermot, eager to hear the poem."

Taking up a piece of manuscript from the table, she read some pathetic lines about an Irish eviction,—lines which made

the child's eyes dim with tears.

"They are by Mr. Brian Osmond," she said, "and a friend of his out in America—a tenor named Sardoni—has just set them to music. By and bye I will sing you the song; to my mind it is a lovely air, and it ought to be a great success. I only wish he could bring it out at once, but there is sure to be delay before he has arranged with a publisher, specially as he is across the Atlantic. I long to be singing this and stirring up the indifferent."

"What was it that Mr. Moore was saying about the evictions that had taken place last year?"

"He was saying that owing to the bad season and the great distress, the number of evictions had greatly increased. Last year there were over a thousand families evicted; this year he thinks the number will be probably doubled, and that things must go from bad to worse until real substantial justice has been shown to the nation. I wish I could do something more for my people than singing ballads and national airs!"

"Yet to be the national singer is no small thing," said Mrs. Garth, in her quiet voice. "I am not sure that your songs will not outweigh other people's speeches; and in any case it is not so much what we do, but the spirit animating us that is of real importance. You actively work for your country, love her, and pray for her welfare unceasingly. Did you ever hear that saying of Marcus Aurelius, 'Every man is worth as much as the things are worth about which he busies himself'?"

Doreen was silent for a moment, gazing into the depths of the fire and tracing some curious resemblance to the outline of Monkton Verney Priory.

"So you think," she said, looking up with a smile, "that the monotony of eternal ballad concerts, and the woes of dressmakers, and business letters, and even perhaps the plague of autograph-hunters, may be set down as indirect work for Ireland? It would be a very consoling belief, though the process seems roundabout. But then, to be sure, it is a roundabout world. Did you hear that Mrs. Hereford wants me to sing at Firdale when the election work begins? I only trust it may be in my least busy time of year, for I should dearly like to do a bit of direct work like that just for once. Happy thought! Why should I not persuade this Signor Sardoni to let me sing his song just during the election, even if it is not already published? We will make him secure his copyright as soon as possible."

"Has Mr. Hereford seen the song?"

"Not yet, but I am sure he will like it. Oh, he is becoming very much devoted to Ireland; we shall soon have him a good staunch Home-ruler. Here come the children, eager for a dance, I can see."

A little fairylike girl of seven came bounding across the room and flung her arms about Doreen's neck. She had the most winsome and coaxing of faces, but there was a fragile look about her which sometimes filled the elder sister with anxiety. Mollie was her greatest treasure, but a somewhat careful comfort. Little four-year-old Bride, on the other hand, was much such a child as she herself had been, only more solidly built, and with rounder, rosier cheeks. Her black hair was cut straight across her forehead, and Max Hereford used to declare that living in the same house with Mr. Garth had given the child a sort of Egyptian look.

A merry romp followed, then Doreen played Garry Owen, and the three children transformed themselves into Oberon, Titania, and Puck, and danced the most fantastic dances conceivable, talking in the intervals in a sort of comical jargon, partly Shakespearian, partly suggested by the latest pantomime and spoken in a stately measured fashion, freely sprinkled with thees and thous, a mode which was deemed proper among fairies.

Doreen forgot all the petty vexations and anxieties of her life as she watched them, and if the children added considerably to her work, they nevertheless contrived to keep her heart young and fresh, sweetening with their sunshiny presence the difficult double life to which she had been called.

After a while Michael returned from his work at Bermondsey, and there was much to hear of his day's doings. He was now a tall, bright-faced lad of sixteen, and had just begun his course of training as an engineer. Doreen was immensely proud of him, and his chivalrous devotion to her was pretty to see; he was the only one who could fully realize all that she had been to them, and already he was beginning to take thought for her comfort in a fashion far beyond his years.

"They say you are to have some wonderful infant prodigy at the concert to-night," he said, as he turned over the pieces in Doreen's portfolio, to find the songs she would need.

"Yes, to be sure; I had forgotten. Little Una Kingston is to make her first appearance in England. It seems to me a very cruel thing, this craze for precocious children. She is only eleven."

"Is she a pianiste?" asked Mrs. Garth.

"No, she plays the violin: a solo of De Beriot's, I see. Poor little mite! one feels sorry for her. Madame St. Pierre says she is now entirely under the care of Madame De Berg, for her father died six months ago, and this cousin of his is sole guardian."

"Do take me to hear her," said Mollie, coaxingly.

"No, no, darling; you are far better in bed; and for the matter of that, so would the little prodigy be, too. Some other time I will take you to hear her when she is playing at a morning concert. In all probability she will become the rage. Why, here comes Mrs. Muchmore; Bride, my sweet, you must go to bed, and Mollie shall come and help me dress."

"Wait," cried Dermot, receiving from the hands of the nurse a lovely spray of pink and white azaleas and maidenhair, "here come Mr. Hereford's flowers. How clever it is of him always to remember when you are going to sing. It must cost him an awful lot to get so many flowers! Does he send them to many other singers, do you think?"

Doreen laughed, and picking up the flowers in one hand and Mollie in the other, ran upstairs.

"You had better ask him," she said, looking back with a mischievous gleam in her blue eyes.

A little later in the evening, having climbed the familiar stone staircase at St. James' Hall and passed through the narrow outer room, she was confronted in the artistes' room by a somewhat unusual sight. A little girl in the shortest of white silk frocks stood crying by the table. Nothing was to be seen of her face; it was hidden by the long-fingered, delicately shaped hands, while wavy golden hair shadowed the forehead and hung in lovely luxuriance over the bent shoulders. Beside her stood Madame De Berg, florid and flushed, evidently in the worst of tempers, and soundly rating her little ward. In the doorway Ferrier and M. St. Pierre lingered, either from curiosity, or from an innate feeling that the child would fare worse if they went away.

"Come, my dear," said Ferrier, greeting Doreen in his fatherly fashion, "you are precisely the very being I wanted. Go and rescue that unlucky child from her tormentor;" and ignoring the fact that Madame De Berg was Doreen's bitterest enemy, he sauntered across the room and putting his hand on the little violinist's shoulder, drew her gently away.

"There is a lady who wishes particularly that you should be introduced to her," he said, kindly. "She knows all about first appearances and stage fright, and she likes nothing in the world so well as children."

Madame De Berg shrugged her shoulders.

"I wish you joy of *this* child," she said, greeting Doreen a little less stiffly than usual. "But if you will only bring her to a proper frame of mind in time for her solo, I shall be much beholden to you. I must go down; it is time for my duet."

As she left the room, Una yielded to Ferrier's exhortations, uncovered her tear-stained face, and lifted a pair of frightened gray eyes to glance at the stranger who wished for an introduction. She saw a face that took her heart by storm, not by its beauty, but by its tenderness. In a moment she felt that here was a being to whom she belonged. Doreen stooped and kissed her.

"I have heard of you often," she said. "I heard of you on the night of my own *début* when I was quite as miserable and frightened as you are."

"Were you all alone?" asked Una.

"Quite alone; that is to say, I knew no one at all. Of course Mrs. Muchmore was with me. By the bye, I will get her to fetch you some water. We must bathe your eyes and make you look yourself again. It will spoil people's pleasure if you go on looking sad and woebegone."

"I wouldn't mind so much," said the child piteously, "if Herr Rimmers could have been here. He is my master, and he would have played my accompaniment; but we have just heard that his wife is dreadfully ill and he can't come."

"That does seem hard on you. But you must try to play all the better, and not add to his trouble. And as to the accompaniment, why, Ciseri is the most perfect accompanist in England, and you may be quite at rest about that. Is this your violin?"

"It was my father's," said Una, speaking eagerly. "I think he cared for it more than for anything in the world except me. I never played on it till a few months before he died, but directly my hands were large enough he let me. I used to have a three-quarter size, and played on that when I played at the Leipzig concerts."

"Guess you'd best let me fix you," said Mrs. Muchmore, when the tear-stained face had been washed, and Una found her republican frankness so surprising and yet so comfortable that she resigned herself entirely to her tender mercies, listening meantime to Doreen's cheerful flow of talk.

"And now we had better come down to what we call the family pew," said her new friend. "Mrs. Muchmore will bring the music, and you can take the fiddle, and I shall take you." She took the child's cold hand in hers, talking all the faster when she felt the nervous clasp of the fingers. "I have to struggle into this long pair of gloves," she added, with a laugh. "Do you know the saying about gloves? 'A Frenchwoman puts on her gloves in her bedroom, an Englishwoman in the entrance hall, a Scotchwoman out of doors.' And as to the Irishwoman, I think she never puts them on at all till she is forced to do so."

Una smiled, forgetting for the moment the ordeal that was before her; but she clung very tightly to Doreen's hand as they entered the funny little den leading to the platform. It was some relief to find that her guardian was still singing the duet with the tenor; she could hear that they were fast approaching the end of "*Mira la bianca, luna*." Meantime Doreen was greeting her friends and doing her best to make her little companion respond graciously to the remarks addressed to her; but Una was a painfully shy child, and was not easily drawn out of her shell.

"Come and look at the audience and get accustomed to them," said Doreen, taking her to the foot of the steps where she could gain a good view of the platform and a partial view of the hall. "I can see a dear little girl just about as old as you over there in the balcony; she has come on purpose to hear you, I should think, and you must play to her so beautifully that she will never rest until she has learnt to play well too. And down there in the stalls I see a gloomy old man; you must play to him so entrancingly that he will quite forget his cares and troubles."

At this moment the duet ended, and Madame De Berg, with the regulation smile fading from her face, tripped down the steps and gave a keenly critical glance at Una.

"Well, I'm glad you have come to your senses," she remarked. "Pray don't treat us to any more scenes of the kind."

The child blushed and faltered; there was an ominous quiver in her voice as she said:—

"Don't watch me, please don't watch me; it makes me nervous." Madame De Berg shrugged her shoulders.

"I can assure you I am heartily tired of both you and your fiddle," she said, with a sarcastic little laugh; and without another word she marched out of the family pew and betook herself to the cloak-room, while Una, with a look of relief, turned to Doreen.

"If Cousin Flora keeps away, I don't so much mind. I will think of what you said, and please stand just there so that I can feel you near."

And now the final tuning of the fiddle was over, and Ciseri took the child's hand and led her up the steps.

"Good luck to you, dear!" whispered Doreen, watching the poor little victim and well knowing with what dire tremblings of the knees she made her first curtsey to that great unknown public. Yet she did not appear nervous; the little feet in their white satin slippers were planted firmly; the slim legs in their white silk stockings betrayed no trembling; the pretty face only showed by heightened colour and over-bright eyes the strain of this ordeal. Pleased with the unusual sight of a violinist who might have walked to all appearance straight out of one of Carpaccio's pictures, the audience gave the newcomer a warm reception, and Una, when once embarked on De Beriot's "*Le Trémolo*" forgot all about her surroundings and played brilliantly. Her tone, of course, was as yet wanting in richness, but both execution and expression showed that the child had wonderful talent, and there was something almost uncanny in the mastery which the shy, delicate-looking little girl displayed over her instrument. Una and her violin together were undoubtedly a rare power; but without the violin she was just a shrinking, nervous child, and it was with much ado that Doreen could

persuade her to face again the applauding audience and to bow her acknowledgments.

"Will you not play again?" said old Mr. Boniface kindly. "You have evidently pleased the people."

"Oh, not now, not now," pleaded poor Una. "There are still the Scotch airs in the second part."

"Then at any rate run on once more and curtsey," said Doreen; "and just notice how you have changed the whole look of that doleful old man; he is shouting '*brava!*' and looking positively delighted."

Una obeyed, then returning once more, was wholesomely diverted from dwelling on her triumph by finding that Doreen was to sing. Would this sweet-faced Irish heroine of hers have a voice equal to her face, she wondered; and sitting down on the steps leading to the platform, where she could see without being seen, she watched Doreen with an eager excitement, not unlike that with which Max himself had waited for her first appearance in the Albert Hall. That most perfect and satisfying of songs, Spohr's "Rose Softly Blooming," was one which suited Doreen particularly well. It had been her father's favourite air, and both for that reason and for its own sake she loved to sing it. Una listened entranced, quite forgetting that her own ordeal was not over.

"Oh, do, do sing again," she implored, as Doreen returned; and the public clearly expressing the same wish, Doreen with a smile turned over her national song-book, and asked Ciseri to play for her the lovely Irish melody usually sung to Moore's "Last Rose of Summer," but which she had always sung to Lady Dufferin's words,—

"Oh, Bay of Dublin! my heart you're troubling,
Your beauty haunts me like a fever dream;
Like frozen fountains, that the sun sets bubbling,
My heart's blood warms when I but hear your name,

"And never till this life pulse ceases,
My earliest, latest thought you'll cease to be.
Oh, there's no one here knows how fair that place is,
And no one cares how dear it is to me."

As she returned from singing it, Una looked up into her face wonderingly. What was it that brought that strange light into the Irish blue eyes? She stood up and slipped her hand into Doreen's. The touch at once recalled the singer to the needs of the present.

"Are you tired, dear?" she said, glancing down at the pretty, flushed face. "It is hot in here; let us come outside."

"I see," said Ferrier, as he held open the swing doors for them, "you have been wise enough to adopt Miss O'Ryan as your guardian angel. She is the best friend you could possibly have."

Doreen laughed and protested against being exalted to the angelic host. "A wingless and faulty angel," she said, as they went upstairs; "but your friend I will be, dear, with all my heart."

Una's words did not come readily, particularly when she knew that Madame De Berg was close at hand; but she squeezed Doreen's fingers in response, thinking in her heart that Ferrier had spoken nothing but the truth; for, had not her new friend sung like an angel? Had not there been the most wonderful look on her face when she returned from her work? And had not her kindness been altogether unlike what was usually to be met with in this hard bustling world? Nevertheless, she could not but perceive that her guardian angel had a hot Keltic temper, which did not accommodate itself at all easily to Madame De Berg's sarcastic remarks. For, in truth, sarcasm had upon Doreen the same effect which the sharp, cold steel of a spur has upon a high-mettled horse. There are people who are simply pained by sarcasm, and others who are chilled and silenced by it; others, again, seem to catch the infection, and are able to defend themselves in evil fashion by sarcastic retort. But Doreen was apt to be entirely upset, and dangerously roused by a mode of attack which seemed to her like a personal encounter with the devil. Fortunately, the public ovation she had just received, Ferrier's undue praise, and the effect of her own singing had armed her with that humility which is slow to take offence. With an effort she managed to control the hot anger which set her blood on fire, as Madame De Berg talked with her, and as she glanced at the eager eyes of the child, so evidently watching and understanding all that passed between her two companions, a strong desire to do what she could for the forlorn little prodigy gave her courage to strangle her angry resentment, and actually to ask a favour of her rival.

"I have been talking to Una of my little brothers and sisters," she said. "Will you spare her to us next Sunday? I hear it is

her only free day, and I should much like to have her."

Madame De Berg shrugged her shoulders.

"Oh, have her by all means, if you please. I should be glad indeed of anything that roused her up and made her a little more like other children. Her Sundays are her own, and she can do as she likes about accepting your invitation."

"I like to come, please," said Una, her face glowing with delight. Then, as Madame De Berg was summoned for her next song, she put both hands in Doreen's with a shy but eager gesture, and with the boldness which so often curiously accompanies an exceptionally timid nature, said hurriedly:—

"I want so to tell you, before any one comes, how much I love you—I love you more than any one I ever saw. I wish, oh, so much, there was something I could do for you!"

Doreen had listened to many declarations of love from sufficiently tiresome admirers, always with the vexed consciousness that it was her refusal to be actually engaged to Max Hereford which laid her open to such disagreeables. But she had never before come across this strange, touching, and yet almost amusing hero-worship from a little girl. There was something in the child's intense fervour and eager, lover-like devotion which pleased her greatly; and, though she could not help smiling a little at the thought of the suddenness with which this passion had possessed her little worshipper, she knew that such love was from its very purity and freshness a thing to be highly prized. Her heart went out to Una with that motherliness which characterizes the love of all true women.

"We must see a great deal of each other," she said, stooping to kiss the sweet little face with a tenderness which thrilled through the child's heart, and seemed to fill her life with new possibilities. But neither of them in the least guessed how curiously their lives were to be bound up together.

Her thought at present was entirely how she could serve the poor little violinist, whose character and *physique* seemed so ill-suited to a life of hard work, late hours, and constant excitement. Una's reception after the playing of the Scotch airs was almost overpowering. It was quite clear that she would become the rage, and Doreen learnt with deep regret that she was in the hands, not of sensible and considerate Freen, but of an agent who would not scruple to work her to the utmost, and from whose bondage there was no possibility of escape for the next two years.

"I congratulate you on your success," said old Mr. Boniface, as the child followed Madame De Berg down the stone staircase, looking sadly pale and tired now that all was over. Her face lighted up for a moment, however, as she caught sight of Doreen, who was standing beside the old man.

"Will you take this home to your little sisters?" she said, holding out a huge box of *bonbons*, which had been presented to her at the close of her last piece; then, as Doreen protested that she ought to eat them herself, she added entreatingly, "I would rather they had them, and indeed my head aches, and it makes me feel sick even to think of chocolate creams."

After that, there was nothing for it but to accept the present, and urging Una to come as early as she liked on Sunday, Doreen bade her good night, and turned to Mr. Boniface with a sad look in her eyes.

"There is something very wrong there," she said, in a low voice. "That poor little soul is being robbed of her childhood."

CHAPTER XIV.

"The wide, transparent radiance of the gloaming
Broods high above the city's great unrest,
And rosy little clouds, like tired birds homing,
Flutter soft wings against the shining west.

"Down the long vistas of the crowded highways,
A purple bloom is gently gathering,
And daintily through streets, and squares, and by-ways,
Flit the sweet hesitating steps of spring."— FRANCES WYNNE.

Among the audience that evening at St. James' Hall, there chanced to have been, unknown to Doreen, her old acquaintance, Miriam Hereford. The General, too, had patiently sat through the whole concert to please his daughter; but his thoughts had been engrossed with other matters, and as they drove home his talk took a practical turn.

"My dear," he said, "I think that notion of yours as to your cousin's fancy for Miss O'Ryan was all a mistake. The years pass on, and nothing comes of it."

"I don't know what to think," said Miriam, indifferently. "He makes no secret of his admiration for her; but then, as you say, nothing happens."

"It is a great relief to my mind," said the General, "for a more unfitting marriage could not well be."

"Well, papa, I don't know; Doreen is very charming and very clever; and if her father was an Irish rebel, I don't see that it need affect us very much. He died years ago, and will never give any more trouble."

"Max ought to marry in his own set," said the General, decidedly; "and you know well enough, my dear, what I have always desired for him."

"Yes, you were always a hard-hearted father," said Miriam, saucily. "Most anxious to get your daughter safely disposed of. It's very unlucky, daddy, that you and I look on that question so differently. I am in no hurry at all to leave you."

"Ah, my dear, it is of your own good that I think," said the General. "It is well enough for you now; but what is to become of you at my death? And time is passing by; you ought seriously to consider the matter. I own that I long to see you established at Monkton Verney, and Max is a thoroughly good fellow; he would make you perfectly happy."

"No, daddy," she protested, "he would make me perfectly miserable. As a cousin, I like him very much, but as a husband he would fidget me to death. I know his faults a great deal too well."

"You are hard on him," said the General. "He is no immaculate hero, but he is one of the best fellows I know, liked and respected by all who come across him."

"Yes, yes, Max is all very well," she said impatiently, "but it is so dull to marry one's cousin; and then, he has never asked me."

"You could easily make him," said the father. "You have always had great influence over him."

"Perhaps," she confessed; "but I don't want him, daddy; and what's more, I won't have him: he is quite given over to philanthropy and politics, and would expect a wife to sympathize with his tastes. Yes, yes, I quite agree to all you would say; he is handsome and rich,—perhaps I should like him better if he were not quite so aggressively handsome and rich."

"Well," said the General, with a sigh, "I confess I don't understand you, my dear; he seems to me a delightful fellow."

"So delightful, but so uncomfortable," said Miriam, naughtily. "People who meet him in society only know one side of him, and the sunny side is fascinating enough; but when he is put out, he can be more like a grizzly bear than any one I know. And besides, now I think of it, I fancy Doreen O'Ryan really does care for him, and the politics and the philanthropy are so much more in her line."

As she recalled Doreen's bright face that evening, her thoughts wandered back to the summer visit to Ireland long ago, and to the remembrance of the little curly-headed Irish girl who had sung to them at Castle Karey. Certainly, she

reflected, she would not at all like "the heart of the minstrel" to be "breaking," for the sake, too, of a purely conventional and worldly marriage on her own part.

It was true that she had often contemplated a loveless marriage with a certain calm docility, but somehow she would have preferred not to sacrifice Max or Doreen. Still, as her father said, time was passing; she was now eight and twenty, and it was scarcely to be supposed that her whole life was to be devoted to the memory of John Desmond,—a man who, by some strange magic, had won her heart as a girl of eighteen, and whose plain, forcible face rose before her now more vividly than faces she had seen but a few minutes ago. She leant back in the brougham, letting various possibilities float through her mind, weighing the advantages and the disadvantages of marriage in a curiously calm, unembarrassed fashion. Should she yield to her father's and her mother's great wish, or should she still be loyal to that dream of her girlhood? An irritating sense of the great power which Desmond had gained over her, and of the little she really knew of his life or character, took possession of her and brought a cloud of trouble over her beautiful face. Most fervently did she wish she had never paid that Irish visit which had been destined to change the whole tenor of her existence. After all, it would be very satisfactory to be at the head of the Monkton Verney household, and her father had rightly said that she had great influence with Max. She might do much to divert him from his tiresome schemes of reform, might lure him into safe and pleasant paths and make him more like other people; might tone down his disturbing and unfashionable enthusiasms, and develop in him that slightly cynical indifference which was, to her mind, "better form."

The brougham stopped as she reached this point in her reflections; her father handed her out and fumbled for his latch-key while she waited on the door-step, looking out over the moonlit garden of the Crescent. Suddenly she was constrained to look at the face of a man who paced slowly along the pavement; she started as though she had seen a ghost, recognizing in an instant that pale, sallow face, almost livid-looking in the moonlight, and those dark, wild eyes which met hers now sadly and hungrily. Miriam made a step forward as though to speak, but John Desmond merely raised his hat and passed on.

"Come, my dear," said the General, throwing open the door; "it is too wintry a night for moon-gazing."

And the girl with an effort dragged herself across the hall, and with a hasty good night to her father, crept upstairs to her room, dismissed her maid, and dropped into a chair beside the fire, trembling in every limb. He was alive and in London. He knew where she lived, and he still loved her! All her calm dispassionate consideration of a loveless marriage with Max Hereford faded away as though it had never for a moment existed; the world held for her only that one man whose extraordinary influence she acknowledged without in the least understanding it.

In the meantime, Desmond, even more agitated by the recognizing glance which he had received, paced slowly back to his rooms in a dismal back street at Westminster. He was much altered since the Castle Karey days, though the change was not one that could be noticed by Miriam in the moonlight. Seen, however, beneath the flaring gas-burner in his scantily furnished lodging, Desmond revealed the traces of many years' anxiety and excitement; there were deep lines round his mouth, the hair had receded from his forehead, making it more noticeably high than ever, and his eyes had a restless, unsatisfied look in them. On the whole, he was altered very much for the worse; and though there was still about him a certain force of character, and a genuineness of devotion to what he deemed right, the man's whole nature seemed twisted and distorted, so that he was really incapable of judging justly. When he had left Castle Karey he had returned to his home, there to endure as well as might be the tedious months of convalescence, and to struggle against his love for Miriam. Finally, he had resolved to put the Atlantic between them, and, dropping all correspondence with Max, had buried himself in a great American city, where he did his best to forget the past. The events of the summer had roused in him a keen sense of the wrongs of Ireland; but, unluckily, instead of falling in with men of the same calibre as Patrick O'Ryan, or noble-minded, unembittered Nationalists like Donal Moore, he was thrown among men of a very different type, and he had become a member of a Secret Society, whose extreme views and reckless plans of action were the despair of all the more sober reformers. As an agent for this Society he chanced now to be for a short time in London, and curiosity had led him that night to St. James' Hall. It was with a very strange feeling that he listened to Doreen O'Ryan's songs; was this graceful, white-robed singer indeed the little Irish girl whose merry laughter and lively talk had once amused him as they rowed about Lough Lee? Was that, indeed, the face which he had seen blanched with terror on that terrible afternoon? And had those hands, indeed, grasped the tiller and steered with desperate resolution over the water beneath which lay the body of James Foxell?

> "Peacefully smiling, so let me be,
> Living or dying, sweet rose, like thee."

These were the words she sang. He wondered greatly if beneath her frank, sweet face, with its sunshiny look, there yet remained hidden away a dark, ghastly remembrance of that past scene. Had all this applause and success driven out such memories? She was graciously vouchsafing an encore, and her choice had fallen on a well-known national song. In thinking of her country's deep wrongs, had she perhaps forgotten the fatal dispute she had so unwillingly witnessed in her childhood?

But suddenly all thoughts of Doreen were banished from his mind, for he caught sight of Miriam Hereford, and the beautiful face, with its Jewish outlines, which had so long lived in his heart, set every pulse within him throbbing wildly, and for the time made him forget the hopeless barrier that divided them. He had followed her home by an irresistible impulse, and her glance of surprised recognition, the eager light in her eyes, her impetuous movement towards him, filled him with delight. He slept little, and the next morning his feet seemed to turn naturally in the direction of Wilton Crescent. He paced slowly past the house, then returning, was just in time to catch sight of General Hereford's portly figure descending the steps, in close conversation with a lady in a long sealskin jacket; something of similarity in height and bearing made Desmond feel sure that this must be Miriam's mother. He walked after them at a discreet distance in the direction of Victoria, with no very settled purpose, but from curiosity, and from his acquired habit of shadowing people.

Arrived at the Metropolitan station, he reached the ticket office exactly in time to learn the destination of Miriam's parents, took a ticket himself for the same station, followed them down the steps, and kept them in view as they paced up and down the platform waiting for the train; more than once as they passed him, he caught Miriam's name. It was quite clear that the absorbing conversation related to her, and Desmond's curiosity became more and more aroused. He did not venture to get into the empty compartment, however, towards which the General steered his way. He got, instead, into the adjoining one, where, though effectually hidden from view, he could, when the train was not in motion, distinctly hear, above the barrier, all that passed.

"I told her," said the General, "that she had great influence with Max. She has only to draw him on a little, and he will propose fast enough."

"He certainly admires her," said his wife. "Nothing could be more desirable in every way than the marriage; but what more can I do? She is thoroughly wilful, and has refused every offer she has received."

"She was not unreasonable last night, as we drove home from St. James' Hall," said the General. "You had better get her invited to Monkton Verney for Easter, and, unless I am much mistaken, she will yield to our wishes. Miriam is a sensible —"

But here the train plunged into the echoing subway, and Desmond heard no more. He had heard enough, however, to fill him with uneasy compunction. What was he to do? To dream of marriage with Miriam was absurd. His whole past cut him off from any such possibility, nor did he feel disposed to break with his present mode of life, even could he with safety have done so. Should he see her once more and explain to her the hopelessness of the barrier between them? Unfortunately that was impossible; there was too much that he was quite unable to reveal. And, moreover, to be brought face to face with each other would be but an ill preparation for the final parting. Yet somehow, he must prevent her from sacrificing her whole life, must at all costs free her from any lingering bondage to that past dream of love. He would write to her, would lead her to think that her marriage with Max Hereford was what he most desired. And in truth he could better bear to think of her as wedded to his old pupil, than as leading a forlorn life, and constantly incurring the displeasure of her parents. She was hopelessly lost to him. Why should she not marry Max? He would, at any rate, take good care of her, and fill her life with every luxury that wealth could buy.

Making his way back to his dreary lodging, he spent the rest of the morning in the attempt to write what would in some degree satisfy him, but with small success; in the end he was obliged to content himself with the following lines:—

"Last night, after an absence of nine years and a half, I saw you once more, but had imagined that time had altered me too much for recognition on your part to be possible. That you knew me and would have spoken to me gives me a strange pleasure, even though I write this expressly to beg that you will do your best to forget me and to forget that I ever had the presumption to love you. The barrier of which I told you at Castle Karey will always exist, and there are now other reasons which make it impossible for me to remain long in this country, or to venture ever again to see you. My life is not wholly unhappy, for I have work which interests me, nor have I to look forward to a dreary old age, for those who adopt my present pursuit are seldom long-lived. I shall not attempt to see my old pupil, but you might casually mention to

him that you have met me, and that I am still in the land of the living. I am told that he is one of our most promising public speakers; if so, a man with his advantages ought to have a grand future before him. If he should some day win that which I have been forced to relinquish, I shall bear him no grudge; on the contrary, it would brighten the remainder of my life to think that you were at least established in a home not unworthy of you. And now, for the last time, I wish you good-bye."

The effect of the sudden shock of the previous night had been to keep Miriam in bed for the next four-and-twenty hours with a severe headache. Being a person of leisure, she yielded rather easily to any slight ailment. Doreen, with a similar amount of pain, would have gone about her work, travelled, perhaps, a couple of hundred miles, sung the same evening, and rattled home again the next day, enduring the discomfort as best she could. But Miriam had not herself and four brothers and sisters to support; she was at present supplied with every luxury in her father's house, and the only thing he expected of her in return was that eventually she should marry a rich man.

It happened, therefore, that she received John Desmond's letter alone, and in her own room, and that she had ample time to muse over the strangely worded communication. What his life-endangering work might be she could not guess; possibly it was some sort of scientific research, likely to enfeeble his health. As for the barrier, she fancied that could only mean money or debt, for of any other difficulties she knew nothing. There was, however, an absolute hopelessness about the tone of the brief note which made her feel that she must, indeed, do her best to obey him and to bury the past in oblivion. It was strange that he, too, should harp upon this same notion of her ultimate marriage with her cousin. Could it, indeed, be that she and Max were suited to each other? She had great influence with him, it was true, but in her secret soul she much doubted whether her influence was for good or ill. And then there was Doreen O'Ryan. Did he, after all, care for her? And was it only her fancy that Doreen, who was so sunny and light-hearted at all times, became just a little more bright and witty whenever Max was present? That her eyes became distinctly bluer, that a sort of glow came into her usually pale face, that her very voice had a more mellow ring about it? Surely it was no fancy, the girl did care; and Max, if he meant nothing by his attentions, had certainly treated her very badly. No; she would not step in between them, even to please her father and mother; she would not be made the cat's-paw to bring the wealth of Monkton Verney to her father's assistance. After all, she cared for Max far too much to marry him just for his estate. John Desmond should be obeyed; she would do her best to forget the past, but nothing should induce her to draw her cousin on in any way, or to promote the scheme which her parents so ardently desired.

Miriam had many faults, but she had good impulses, and she not unfrequently followed them. A knock at her bedroom door made her thrust Desmond's letter hastily beneath her pillow; she looked up with a smile at her mother.

"Are you better, my dear?" said Lady Rachel, anxiously.

"Yes, mamma, but I have not felt warm since last night's concert. I must have caught cold on the way home."

"There is great news for you," said her mother. "Your father has just heard that the Dissolution is to take place at Easter. It is much sooner than was generally expected. In a few weeks, you see, we shall be in the thick of the General Election. I am going to write this evening to your aunt, and propose that you go down with her to Monkton Verney. She will have a number of people to entertain, and constant coming and going, and it is just at those times that she so much needs some one to play the part of daughter of the house."

"Mamma," said Miriam, decidedly, "I am very sorry, but nothing will induce me to go to Monkton Verney for such an early Easter as we have this year. Why, Good Friday is on the 26th of March! Just think what the cold will be in that country house!"

"Oh, they will warm the house; and besides, you will have very good fun at the election. You had better go, my dear; your father particularly wishes it."

"Mamma," said Miriam, piteously, "please do not write to auntie. I know why you wish it so much, but don't urge me just now. I shall only hate Max forever, if I have to listen to all his election speeches. That sort of thing bores me to death. Do let us keep out of it. Take me abroad, and let us have a nice time on the Riviera while they are all talking themselves hoarse here. And, then, next season, if Max gets into Parliament, I will perhaps think of what you so much want."

"We only want your good, my dear, and your best happiness," said her mother, reluctantly consenting to her suggestion as she left the room.

"My best happiness?" repeated Miriam to herself half dreamily. "I wonder what my best happiness would be?"

And then in fancy she saw the announcement in the newspapers:—

"A marriage has been arranged between Mr. Max Hereford, M.P., and Miss Miriam Hereford, his cousin, the only daughter of General Hereford."

Or again, it might be:—

"A marriage is shortly to take place between Mr. Max Hereford, M.P., and Miss Doreen O'Ryan, the charming and popular Irish vocalist."

She caught herself humming a quaint little song which Madame De Berg had given as an *encore* at the concert.

> "I know not, no, not I, where joy is found!"

Suddenly she drew Desmond's letter again from beneath her pillow; she read it slowly, lingeringly,—read something of his love for her between the lines,—and then suddenly broke into a passionate fit of weeping.

"It is all very well for mamma to talk of my best happiness," she thought to herself. "The only rag of happiness left to me is not to interfere with the happiness of other people."

CHAPTER XV.

"If sadness at the long heart-wasting show
Wherein earth's great ones are disquieted;
If thoughts, not idle, while before me flow
The armies of the homeless and unfed—
If these are yours, if this is what you are,
Then am I yours, and what you feel I share."— MATTHEW ARNOLD.

On the Saturday afternoon after the news of the Dissolution had been made public, it chanced that Doreen was travelling back from Southampton, where she had been to sing in Haydn's "Creation." Ferrier, the well-known bass, and her old friend Warren, the tenor, who now treated her with the greatest deference, and no longer ventured to offer her three guineas for singing at a city dinner,—were in the adjoining smoking-compartment; they had laughingly supplied Doreen with all the Liberal papers, had seen that she was well wrapped up with a railway rug and provided with a foot-warmer, and then, to her great content, had left her in the empty compartment to her own thoughts. She wanted much to be alone and to have time to think, for the news had taken her altogether by surprise. Max had always imagined that the General Election would be in the autumn, and this sudden announcement had almost taken her breath away. It had filled her with hope for her country, and it had come at a very opportune moment in her own personal life. In April that four years of waiting for which she had stipulated would come to an end, and she felt that in every way it would be better for her engagement with Max to follow rather than to precede the election. Her four years of public life had taught her to know the world tolerably well, and she was convinced that she would best consult her lover's interests by adhering strictly to the term of probation.

Yet it was with a sigh of glad relief that she realized how nearly the tedious waiting-time was over. The years had been happy, yet they had been beset with difficulties; and with an absolute trust in Max, she looked forward to her betrothal as to a haven of rest and peace.

Her face lighted up with happiness as they drew near to Firdale, and as once more she looked forth on the green meadows and the white tower of the church and the long avenue of elms on the ridge in the background. The familiar little station seemed more crowded than usual; a group of townsfolk had apparently come to meet some person of importance, and she was engrossed in watching the fussy movements of a little, officious, red-faced man who was giving a most obsequious welcome to the newcomer, when suddenly she was startled by Max Hereford's voice.

"Is there any room for me?" he said, with his hand on the door. His fresh, glowing face looked to her almost as boyish as it had done in the old Irish days.

"I thought you were in town!" she exclaimed, as he sprang in and took a place beside her, holding her hand in his, with a momentary glad pressure of greeting.

"I was obliged to run down yesterday to see my election agent," he explained. "And I was not without hope that I might chance to meet you on your way back from Southampton. To find you like this, and without your usual duenna, is indeed good luck."

"I was staying with some friends of ours who live there, and so could dispense with Mrs. Muchmore," said Doreen, who, the moment she could afford it, had been careful always to take Hagar about with her, unless she was secure of Madame St. Pierre's company. "Who is that very grave-looking man that every one is making so much of?"

"That," said Max, laughing, "is my rival, Mr. John Steele, and the small crowd of his supporters is made up of the oddest mixture of Firdale scribes and Pharisees, publicans and sinners."

"Is he popular? He looks a most depressing person."

"Oh, he is extremely popular; it will be a hard fight," said Max. "It will be easy enough for him to make the Firdale folk believe that their future welfare is bound up with the consumption of beer, and that it is absurd for them to be represented by a notorious temperance worker. By the bye, what colour shall we choose? I see they have already donned red and blue rosettes."

"What is your favourite?" she asked.

"White," he said; "which you will say is no colour at all. Now put your favourite with it."

"Oh, I am for the wearing of the green," she said, laughing. "That is but natural."

"Very well, that is decided; green and white, but none of their grass greens or apple greens. It must be one of the new greens—the shade of that dress you wore last summer."

She smiled to think that he should remember it, and in her heart she was pleased. There was a brief silence as the train slowly steamed out of the station, leaving the Conservative candidate looking somewhat uncomfortable and oppressed amid the motley crew surrounding him.

"Do you remember," said Max, in a tone which startled her, "the promise you made me?"

"Which?" she said, laughing and blushing. "I have made you so many promises. I have not forgotten that I promised to sing as much as you liked during the election, and I have a delightful song which will be exactly the right thing if I can get the composer's permission to sing it."

"Then you will certainly win the election for me," he said. "But it was of another promise I was thinking. Doreen, why must we wait any longer? Why—can you not—"

"Stay," she said, springing up, and crossing to the other side of the carriage. "There is Rooksbury. I never pass this bit of the line without looking at it. After the election we will climb it once more. I do not, indeed, break my promises; but please have patience till then." Her eyes, blue and tender and a little wistful, were lifted to his.

"You think I am going to be beaten by the Publicans' favourite," he said, smiling; "and you keep the Rooksbury expedition as a consolation prize for the vanquished."

"No, quite the contrary; nothing will persuade me that Mr. John Steele is going to defeat you; but when you have won the battle, you may perhaps look on life with other eyes."

She took one final look at the fir-crowned hill, then returned to her former place.

"Did you look on life with other eyes after your success?" said Max, moodily.

"Well—no," she admitted, after a pause. "I don't know that I did; but men are different."

"I thought you were the one woman in the world who did not pass sweeping judgments on men."

"I don't judge them; I don't say that they are not so constant as women, but that they have a greater capacity for seeing more than one side of a question."

"There was more than a little touch of blarney about that," said Max, unable to help laughing at her expression. "Well, I will be patient if you bid me."

"You will keep your promise," said Doreen, with a mischievous glance, "and I, for my part, shall keep mine."

She did not, however, make any resistance when he took her little ungloved hand in his and kissed it, only defending herself by asking a prosaic question or two about the probable date of the Firdale election, and the ways in which she might be of use to Mrs. Hereford.

"Perhaps, however," she added, "your cousin will be staying at Monkton Verney; she must know so many of the people in the neighbourhood, and would be a much better helper."

"Unluckily," he said, "she detests the whole affair, and I heard only yesterday from my uncle that they are all going next week to Hyères. By the bye, Miriam wrote to tell me a curious thing: it seems that John Desmond is in England once more; she saw him in the street. He just raised his hat to her, but seemed anxious to avoid speaking. One can understand that well enough. There is no doubt he was in love with Miriam in the old days; I only trust she doesn't care for him. It is hardly likely after all these years,—there are limits, I suppose, even to the constancy of women."

Doreen laughed and promptly changed the subject, not at all desiring to relapse into a discussion which she had purposely checked. And so they travelled swiftly through the long, undulating stretches of sandy country, with its

heathery banks and dark fir trees, talking contentedly, and enjoying to the full the unusual chance of a quiet interview that had fallen to them.

"Madame St. Pierre would scold me well were she here," said Doreen, as they drew near to London. "She has a dreadful theory that public singers should not tax their throats by talking in the train. I tell her that an exception must be made in favour of Irishwomen, who could not possibly sit mum throughout a whole journey. How wonderful it is to think that the next time we travel this line together the election will be over!"

She broke off abruptly as the thought suddenly flashed through her mind that the next time Max helped her on to the platform at Waterloo she would in all probability be betrothed to him. Her cheeks were still tinged with the blush that had suffused them at this thought, when Ferrier came to the door to offer to put her into a cab. He knew Max Hereford, having met him once or twice at Bernard Street; but to-day a latent suspicion that had long haunted him became a certainty. He sedulously waited upon Doreen, forstalled Max in taking possession of her travelling-bag, and in fatherly fashion waited till she was safely ensconced in a hansom, then made his way homeward with a somewhat grave and preoccupied air.

"A nice enough fellow," he thought to himself. "But our little Irish *prima donna* will be lost to the profession."

Doreen found on her return a complication of family duties and an alarming pile of letters to be answered. Till twelve on that Saturday night she was hard at work, and she slept late on the Sunday morning,—not an ideal thing to do, or at all in accordance with a model heroine, but yet a natural enough proceeding on the part of an overworked artiste, whose severely taxed strength required more sleep than it was ever likely to get. Uncle and Aunt Garth, with their lives of steady routine and rooted habit of waking in the early morning, failed to understand how greatly this girl of two-and-twenty needed sleep, and how impossible it was for her, after the brain-exciting work she had been through, to sleep as they did during the first watch of the night. But shrewd Hagar Muchmore understood without any scientific training to help her; and on Sunday mornings, the only time when Doreen could afford to have her sleep out, Hagar was a veritable dragon, silencing the least attempt at noise on the part of the children with a sentence that made them feel like criminals of the deepest dye. "Can't you be quiet for one hour and let your sister have her sleep out, when she is toiling for you from week's end to week's end?"

The good woman's face was comical to behold when, on the morning after Doreen's return from Southampton, Michael stole softly upstairs with the news that little Una Kingston had already arrived.

"Why, it's but nine o'clock!" she exclaimed. "And I never think of disturbing Miss Doreen till half-past on a Sunday. Whatever can have made her come at this hour of the morning?"

"Devotion to Doreen," said Michael; "and I believe she was told to come as early as she liked."

"Is it Donal that's come?" shouted Bride, in her loudest and most penetrating voice, running out from the nursery in high glee; whereupon Doreen, roused at once, opened her door and laughed to see the energetic way in which the boys suppressed poor Bride.

"I do believe," said Michael, "you have voice enough to fill the Albert Hall!"

"Don't scold her; it's high time I was awake," said Doreen. "Did you say Donal had come?"

"No, it's the infant prodigy," said Michael. "The prettiest little girl I ever saw, but seems to think every one is an ogre in the house except you."

"Bring her to the nursery; I'll be ready in ten minutes. And, Mollie, make an extra slice or two of toast; I daresay she will like a second breakfast."

So Una was piloted upstairs by the boys, of whom she was desperately afraid, into the snuggest little room she had ever seen. Even the two little girls made her shy, however; for she had been so long cut off from child life that she hardly knew what to make of her own contemporaries. Fortunately, no O'Ryan was ever troubled with shyness, and Mollie and Bride gave her the warmest of welcomes, relieved her of her hat and jacket, and politely inquired if she liked making toast.

"I don't know," said Una; "we never had toast in Germany."

"That's a mercy," said Michael; "everything is made in Germany nowadays, till one gets quite tired of the words. I'm glad they leave the toast-making to us."

"Try," said Mollie, courteously relinquishing the much-treasured toasting-fork. "It's such fun making it. Bride and me always make it on Sunday mornings for Doreen, and she lets us get her breakfast ready up here, so as not to bother the servants. Sunday is the nicest day in the whole week; we see much more of Doreen, and she never writes letters or does anything horrid, but just rests, and gives us a good time."

"Did you come so early to go to church with us?" asked four-year-old Bride, with the unabashed directness of her age.

Una blushed and hesitated. "Do you go?" she asked.

"Doreen always takes us in the morning to Mr. Osmond's church; but we don't stay as long as she and auntie do, you know, and it's really rather nice. Then we come out, and uncle takes us for a walk till dinner," said Mollie.

"Which church do you go to?" asked Bride, in her emphatic voice, her rosy, babyish little face beaming upon shy Una. "The boys go to the Oratory, and Hagar to the Congregational."

"I have never been in London," said the little violinist, colouring, "and I never used to go in Germany till I read Schiller's 'Wandelnde Glocke,' and was afraid the bell might come to fetch me."

"To fetch you?" said Bride, with dilated eyes. And Una was beguiled into telling them the legend, until, what with toast-making and talking, she had quite forgotten her fears. Then Doreen came in, bright and cheery as ever, with a welcome which made the child's heart throb with delight, and the merriest of breakfasts followed, Una discovering that for once she really was hungry, and that there was something in toast one had made oneself that was specially good. Perhaps she had never in her life been so happy as she was that afternoon, when Doreen took her down to the Hospital for Incurables on Putney Heath, where she often used to sing on Sunday to the patients. To be alone in a hansom with her new friend, to be allowed to slip her little forlorn hand into the comforting clasp of those motherly fingers, to open her heart to one who would understand and sympathize with her, seemed to Una the perfection of bliss. Then, too, the spring day was as full of quiet beauty as a mild day in February can be, and it was rapture, after the imprisoned life she had led of late, to drink in the fresh air, and to feel that for once that she had nothing to do but to enjoy herself.

"Do you always come here on Sundays?" she asked.

"Not always to this hospital, but generally to some hospital or infirmary when I am in London. You see it is the only way in which I can give at present."

"I never somehow thought about giving," said Una, musingly. "I wish, oh, how I wish, you would sometimes let me come too, and bring my violin. Do you think the people would like it?"

"I am sure they would, but I am not sure that you ought not to keep your Sundays quite free from anything that might tire you, for you are very young for public life."

"Oh, that would not tire me; it is just perfect rest and happiness to be with you," said Una, with such a sincerity of devotion, that Doreen hardly knew whether to smile or to cry.

"Well, that is a very easily attainable piece of happiness," she said, with a kindly glance at the little fragile face. "You can come and spend every Sunday with me if you like."

The child's face lighted up until all the signs of over-pressure and care had utterly vanished, and it was once again the face of a child, radiant and unclouded and aglow with happiness. Doreen gradually learnt to understand her completely, for little by little Una told the whole story of her past life.

It seemed that from her earliest childhood Madame De Berg had been her evil genius. Of her mother she had no recollection whatever; she and her father had lived as best they could a more or less nomadic life, and she had had a succession of nurses and nursery governesses, with all of whom Madame De Berg had ultimately quarrelled.

"Cousin Flora used to swoop down upon us unexpectedly," said Una, "to see, she said, that all was going on well; but somehow her coming always set things wrong, and just as I had grown fond of my governess or my *bonne* she was dismissed. Then for a year we lived with Cousin Flora at St. John's Wood. I was always so dreadfully afraid of her, and

just to avoid one of her scoldings got into the way of telling lies; even now she can terrify me into saying almost anything, and yet there is nothing that one can exactly complain of. She never punishes me; it is only her dreadful tongue; but I would rather any day be whipped than scolded by her. I never told my father, having a sort of notion that grown-up people always stood by each other, and I was afraid I should never be able to make him understand how miserable I was. Perhaps he guessed a little, for four years ago last Christmas he took me to Germany to study under Herr Koner. They were very kind to me at Leipzig. Of course, Frau Muller may have cared mostly, as Cousin Flora says, for the money she received for my board, but I think she did care for me, too, a little. The food was not very good; but then she was poor, and had a married daughter who was always in trouble. And she was very kind, and at the Christmas tree would put quite a number of presents on my table. Cousin Flora says that was good policy, to keep me from complaining of the food. Do you think people are always kind just from self-interest?"

"No, I don't," said Doreen. "That is a horrible creed, and I could give you a hundred instances to the contrary, where people have been kind, though it was to their own hindrance. Was your father with you in Germany?"

"Only in my holiday time; then we used to travel about, and sometimes I was very happy, though often it was lonely in the hotels. I had a doll, though, that was just like a real child to me, and I used to pretend I was a very young widow, and was always begging my father to buy me a black dress. He never would, though; men seldom seem to like black," and Una looked down at her mourning attire with an acute perception of how much her father would have disliked it.

"Was it in Germany that Mr. Kingston died?" asked Doreen.

"Yes; it was last September, at Baden. I had played there at a concert, and all had gone well. He was very much pleased that night, and kept speaking of plans for the future; how, when my education was finished, we would travel about the world together. But the next morning he was too ill to get up, and the doctor sent a sister to nurse him. She was very kind to me, and she did all that could be done for him,—only always it made me unhappy to look at her, because I was so afraid it would some day perhaps seem to be my duty, too, to become a sister and wear those dreadful clothes, and never play my violin again. You don't think it ever could, do you?" she added, looking up with her wide, gray eyes full of anxiety.

"No," said Doreen; "I think it is clearly your vocation to play the violin." Her tone of quiet decision and the little sparkle of humour in her blue eyes set Una at rest, and that "phantasm of the conscience" was laid for ever.

"We telegraphed to Cousin Flora and her husband to come," she continued; "but they came too late. He died the next evening. I was sitting with my doll by the open window, the room had grown quite dusk, when all at once he called to me from the bed, and asked me to play him '*Pieta Signore*.' I thought he must be much better; for, when I took the violin out of the case,—his own violin, which I had only been allowed to use for a few months,—he took it from me and tuned it himself. I wish, oh, so much, that they wouldn't still make me play '*Pieta Signore*'; for always I seem to see again the room at Baden, and the sister in her ugly dress, and father's face looking like marble in the dim light. But Herr Rimmers always says it is one of my best things, so there is no help for it. Father gave a great sigh as I finished. I was afraid I had disappointed him; for, indeed, my hands were cold, and I had not played very well. But when I put down the violin and stooped down to kiss him, he caught me in his arms; 'I am proud of my *Herzblättchen*,' he said, and then suddenly his arms fell back from me, and the sister came quickly forward, and somehow from her face I understood that this was death."

The description touched a chord in Doreen's own life; her eyes filled with tears, and her heart went out more than ever to the desolate little orphan who had made so sudden a claim upon her affections. By this time they had reached their destination and were driving along the pretty approach to the Home for Incurables, with its lovely glimpses of distant country. Una was astonished when they were shown into the beautiful building to see that the faces of the patients were, as a rule, wonderfully bright, and that there was none of that dreary hopelessness which she had anticipated. Far too shy to speak a single word, she followed Doreen with loving admiration, listening to her cheery greetings to one and another, and then sitting in rapt attention to listen while Doreen sang "Come unto Him" from the "Messiah," ending with two or three hymns which the patients liked as well as anything, especially the familiar Vesper hymn which rang in Una's ears all the way home. Surely, she thought, the words "union" and "communion" had that day gained for her a new meaning,—a meaning which must brighten and widen her whole life. By the time they reached Bernard Street tea was ready,—not on Sundays a mere drawing-room affair, but a regular children's tea, at which Mollie and Bride were wont to consume surprising quantities of bread and jam and sponge cake. Una, though much afraid of Uncle Garth, soon found that the presence of the children thawed her shyness, and there was something so gentle in Mrs. Garth's face that in spite of a

certain awe inspired by her quiet reserve of manner, Una felt sure that she should love her, and was perhaps better capable in some ways of appreciating her character than Doreen, whose spontaneous and demonstrative Irish nature still at times found it hard to accommodate itself to her aunt's reticence.

Sundays were not days of dull routine at Bernard Street, or of compulsory idleness, and Una entered with spirit into the matter which happened to be absorbing the children's minds,—the painting and pasting and cutting out pictures for a scrap-book destined for a Christmas tree at one of the "Sailors' Rests." Aunt Garth in the mean time read aloud to them, and Una found Kingsley's "Water Babies" so fascinating that she could hardly bear to wait a whole week for the next reading. When Doreen and Michael left her at the door of Madame De Berg's house, she felt as if she were coming back to a rather dreary earth, having had a little glimpse into another and much brighter region. Her life was of necessity hard and wearing, but Doreen's thoughtfulness had at least rescued her Sundays, and the child looked forward to them as—

> "Bright shadows of true rest....
> Heaven once a week;
> The next world's gladness prepossest in this."

CHAPTER XVI.

"What is wealth, what is fame, what is all that people fight about,
To a kind word from her lips or a love-glance from her eye?
Oh, though troubles throng my breast, sure, they'd soon go to the right about
If I thought the curly head of her would rest there by and by." —FRANCIS A. FAHY, *Irish Love Songs*.

On returning to Bernard Street that evening, Doreen and Michael found that Donal Moore had just arrived. When he was in London he not unfrequently dropped in on Sundays, knowing that he would probably find them all at home, and to Doreen there was always a sort of whimsical pleasure in watching the growth of that curious friendship which gradually sprang up between Uncle Garth, the hater of change, and Donal Moore, the ardent Nationalist. Sometimes when alone she would laugh aloud at the comical recollection of the contrast between their faces, or of the embarrassed nervousness of Uncle Garth's aspect when Michael, who had a way of blundering into awkward topics with charming *naïveté* and frankness, only excelled by four-year-old Bride, had turned the talk upon Irish matters. It was perhaps as well that Mr. Garth chanced that night to be kept in his study until supper time, for inevitably the talk turned upon the coming elections. Donal Moore was in excellent spirits and was confident that the true wishes of Ireland would be manifested as they had never been manifested before, and that the dawn was breaking.

"If only my father had been spared for this time," said Doreen, wistfully, "how he would have worked!"

"True," said Donal; "yet one who knows all the ins and outs of political life could hardly wish him back to it. His innate love of fighting would have kept him to the last in the thick of the fray, and his health was too entirely shattered to have stood for long against such a strain."

"And how was it shattered?" said Doreen, speaking low and quickly. "It was the long years of imprisonment which killed him, and he was imprisoned merely for writing words which every liberty-loving Englishman would have written, had England been under the same unjust 'Castle' system."

"And yet," said Donal Moore, "ninety-nine intelligent Englishmen out of a hundred will tell you, and will really believe, that Ireland is governed as England is governed."

"Yes, it is easy enough to believe anything until you inquire into facts and really study the question," said Doreen. "But you have made one convert, Donal,—at least I feel pretty confident about him,—and that is Mr. Hereford."

"I met him last night and had a long talk with him," said Donal; "but he is your convert, my dear, not mine; he vows that you pledged him to work for Ireland when you were only twelve years old."

"As we climbed Kilrourk together," said Doreen, a dreamy look stealing into her blue eyes.

"He has the makings of a very fine fellow," said Donal Moore, thoughtfully, "but yet I hardly think he realizes the difficulties that lie before him. It is not one man in a thousand who is unselfish enough to run the risk of spoiling his own career and incurring general odium for the sake of a cause which, after all, is not really his."

Doreen winced; it hurt her to hear Max discussed in such a calm, dispassionate, critical way. And had this man, to whom she had given her whole heart, only the "makings of a fine man" in him? After all, that was but a *façon de parler*; in one sense, every one was in process of being made. What she was slow to admit was the unwelcome thought that Ireland could possibly be for him a matter of secondary interest and importance. Donal Moore had argued that the cause was, after all, not really his own. But was it not his own, when England for generations had been misgoverning and unfairly treating the Irish? Did not the responsibility of the past rest in part upon him? Was it not his plain duty to help in righting the wrong?

The talk was interrupted by the entrance of Uncle Garth, who took no sort of interest in the news of the Dissolution which was causing such keen excitement throughout the country; he greeted Donal with much warmth.

"I'm glad to see you, Mr. Moore; extremely glad. Doreen has perhaps told you our great news."

"No," said Doreen, with a merry laugh, "I left it for you, uncle; that is to say, I forgot all about it."

"A very great discovery has just been made," said Uncle Garth, his eyes sparkling; "some one just by chance happened to

meddle with the head-dress of a mummy recently; the hair was coiled in bits of papyrus, and it was actually found that this was covered with writing; folds and folds of it were discovered merely in the hair of this one body, and there is great reason to hope that a rich store of information may be gradually acquired, as the hair of other mummies is gradually investigated. I can show you, if you like, the sort of thing that has been found"; and he bustled off to his study, while Doreen with laughter in her eyes looked mischievously at Donal Moore.

"Farewell to Erin!" she said merrily. "Henceforward the evening will be devoted to mummy curl-papers!"

Fortunately, during the Easter holidays, Doreen was less busy than usual, and was able to spend most of the time with Mrs. Hereford at Monkton Verney. Miriam, true to her decision, had gone to the Riviera, and wrote amusing letters to her aunt, describing the delights of the sunny south, and condoling with the poor victims who had to sit in dreary rooms, listening to her cousin's election speeches. She little guessed how keen a delight this was to Doreen, or how full of radiant hope was the whole of that busy fortnight.

The contest was likely to be a severe one, but fortunately it was fought in honourable fashion throughout; and though Max inevitably came in for vehement personal attacks with regard to the position he had taken on the temperance question, and was often greeted in Firdale streets by the singing of—

> "D—— their eyes if they ever tries
> To rob a poor man of his beer,"

yet, on the whole, Mr. Steele proved a vigorous and determined, but not an ill-bred, opponent.

Doreen found endless food for fun in the whole election, but, after one or two attempts, she wholly declined canvassing.

"It's a hateful system," she protested, when one evening at dinner she was urged by some one present to try her hand upon a few voters who were known to be of doubtful mind. "If I were lucky enough to have a vote, and some one came poking into my house at an inconvenient time, and wanted to know the exact state of my views and what I intended to do, I would be just like the pig that the man was driving over Westminster Bridge, and he couldn't do it till he turned its tail where he wanted its head to go."

"Of course," said her neighbour at the dinner-table, "there must be no intimidation; only just a clear setting forth to them of Mr. Hereford's views, and a little gentle persuasion to them to adhere to the right side."

"I can't help it," said Doreen. "I was born to be a singer, not a canvasser; and after all, one can only do well what one thoroughly believes in. Now I will just tell you what happened when I went to see one of these obstinate old rustics who have the privilege of voting, which is denied to me. 'Have you heard Mr. Hereford speak?' I asked.

"'Oh, ay, I've 'eard 'un, and he be a rare fine speaker, so he be. But I be a goin' to give my vote to the other chap this time.'

"'I am sorry for that,' I replied, 'for I'm sure Mr. Hereford will do more for the country's good in Parliament than the other candidate, and surely they told me you voted for the Liberal candidate at the last election.'

"'So I did, my dear,' he replied. 'But ye see this time the other chap, the Conservative, he be called John. Now John's me own name, and so says I to my wife, "Let's give old John a turn."' And he will give old John a turn, too, whoever goes to argue with him."

Max laughed heartily at the story.

"I am not sure that I grudge Mr. Steele that supporter," he said. "And, as you say, it is a shame that women should have no power to vote. I know well enough that their feeling here is so strong on the temperance question that they would certainly give us the victory."

"But the majority of women are surely Conservative," said Doreen's neighbour.

"So people say," said Doreen. "I rather doubt it; but even if that is the case, why are they to be kept out of a right which they actually enjoyed in olden times? Of one thing I am certain: they care more for what is really right than most men do. It is only because it seems to be expedient that men deny them their just rights. We are told in all the histories that the great principle set forth in Magna Charta was that there could be no taxation without representation, and that the law of

the land is the same for all; but people seem gloriously to have broken that principle for generations."

"Your country blocks the way," said Mr. Farrant, the member for Greyshot, who was sitting at Mrs. Hereford's right hand. "When Ireland has Home Rule, there will, perhaps, be time to set this grievance at rest."

"Are we to have Signor Sardoni's song again to-night?" asked Mrs. Farrant, as the ladies went to the drawing-room.

"Yes, if you are not quite tired of it. The people seem to like it, and I hear it now constantly whistled about the Firdale streets," said Doreen. "Are you not almost weary of election work, having just been through the campaign at Greyshot?"

"This is so different," said Mrs. Farrant, her bright face clouding for a moment. "At Greyshot it was a very bitter fight, and I am glad for my husband to be away from home for a little while: this thorough change will do him great good. He was returned, you know, by a majority of ten only, and I can't tell you what he has had to endure all through the election, —the raking up of the past, the gross exaggerations, the incessant slanders, or half-truths, bandied about by his opponents."

"What did he do to check them?" asked Doreen, with keen interest.

"As a rule he refused to take any notice whatever, unless the slander was likely to damage others also. He used to tell me of brave old Hannah More, who steadily declined to vouchsafe the least notice to the cruel slanders which saddened her life, even when they went to the length of accusing her of attempting the assassination of the Regent."

"I think it is the one thing I should resent more than all others," said Doreen, thoughtfully.

As yet nothing of the sort had touched her; she had gained a high position in the musical world, and had won the greatest personal respect; the thought of having the least shadow cast upon her reputation made her shudder, and it was with more understanding eyes that she looked at Donovan Farrant when, shortly after, the gentlemen rejoined them. Was this, she wondered, the explanation of that air of having lived through a great struggle which made him so curiously unlike Max? There was not so very much difference, after all, between their ages. Mr. Farrant might be a few years older, but he had the look of one who had fought a hard fight and had conquered, yet would bear all his life the scars of the conflict. What had his past been? she wondered. And was this what Donal Moore meant by a man that was "made"? Must Max also pass through some great ordeal before Donal would allow that he had more than the "makings" of a fine man in him? She turned from the idea with a shudder of dread, unable to endure the thought of any cloud coming over the fair horizon of his life. Everything save sunshine and prosperity seemed so foreign to his nature, his life had hitherto been so wonderfully smooth, that to think of danger or trouble in store for him seemed unbearable.

"You are tired," said Max, crossing the room to the little nook behind the piano, where she was somewhat absently turning over the songs in her portfolio in search of something fresh for that evening. "I am afraid we are letting you do too much."

She looked up into his fresh, cheerful face, met the eyes which always seemed so full of sunshine, and promptly dismissed that thought of a future ordeal in store for him. Surely nothing so incongruous as trouble or danger could ever come near Max.

"No, I am not tired," she said. "I was only thinking of something Mrs. Farrant told me of the disagreeables they had had to go through at Greyshot."

"Firdale has been better behaved," said Max. "But there is no knowing how it will treat me when Irish matters come to the fore, unless in the mean time you have succeeded in fairly bewitching them with your Irish songs. However, I am calmly talking as though I were already elected. We must not make too sure of victory."

"But your agent is in very good spirits," said Doreen. "He looked quite beaming when we met him this afternoon in the drive."

"He didn't tell you about the placards, did he?" said Max, laughing. "You know the whole place was covered with posters adjuring people to 'Vote for Steele and keep Southshire solid.' Well, some wag on our side amused himself last night by going round with paint-pot and brush and neatly inserting a T into every placard, so that they are bidden to vote for the Conservative to keep things stolid."

"How Michael would have enjoyed doing that!" said Doreen, with a smile. "It would have been a trick after his own heart. Mrs. Hereford does not look well to-night; I am glad she has given up the thought of going."

"The excitement is bad for her, but it will soon be over now; by the day after to-morrow we shall know our fate. Here comes the carriage; let me roll up your song."

Doreen ran upstairs to get ready, reappearing before long in the pretty white felt hat trimmed with dusky olive green velvet, and the long green cloak lined with white fur, which she had specially devised for the election. It was a costume of which Max heartily approved, and it called forth Mrs. Farrant's admiration.

"It has been such fun singing at these meetings that I am quite sorry this will be the last time," said Doreen, as they drove into Firdale.

"The last, but the most important occasion of all," said Max. "To-night you have to rival the great gun Mr. Steele has managed to secure; a member of the late cabinet, dull as ditchwater, but, nevertheless, one who is bound to draw, for is he not a real live Earl?"

"How clever it was of your agent to secure the Town-hall in time! It is delightful to think that the other side will have to take refuge in the Corn Exchange, and to talk of Protection, and sing 'We don't want to fight,' in that depressing place, which is worse for sound than any room I ever knew."

"The true red-hot election temper is beginning to possess you," said Max, laughing. "For a singer, I consider that a most vindictive speech!"

"Well, well," said Doreen. "For such songs as they will sing the place is surely good enough. Now we really must have something better than that wretched glass-roofed shed."

By this time they had reached the town, and as the lamplight flashed across Doreen's eager face, Max found himself thinking of that evening years ago when he had driven with her to the Albert Hall before her first appearance in the "Messiah." She was far more excited now than she had been before her own ordeal, and there was a happy confidence in her manner which made his own heart beat high with hope. Max usually succeeded in life, and invariably he expected to succeed. This was not from conceit, but from a certain unconquerable hopefulness of temperament, and from the long spell of unbroken good fortune which he had enjoyed. Save that terrible incident in Ireland, of which he had been the witness, no untoward event had occurred to cast a shadow over his life; and he was not of a worrying nature, and had quite ceased to feel Desmond's secret any sort of burden to him. If at times the recollection of that scene on Lough Lee, and the horror of witnessing Foxell's violent death, returned for a few moments, the discomfort was brief enough,—a mere temporary disturbance of his serenity. He lived in the present, and the present was full of excitement and hard work and eager hope. His great personal popularity in Firdale counted for much, and the cheers that rent the air as he and his companions entered the Town-hall would have stirred a far older and more seasoned warrior. Doreen thought no applause had ever sounded so sweet; accustomed as she was to such demonstrations, she was, nevertheless, moved almost to tears by this recognition of her lover, and all anxiety for the morrow left her: she threw herself unreservedly into the enjoyment of the present.

Perhaps every one else was a little weary of meetings, but Doreen to the last entered into the spirit of the contest, and found endless food for amusement in the study of the speakers and of the audience. In the second row she could see a certain local magnate who had been lured to the Town-hall simply by the desire to hear her sing, and who, being of the other persuasion, listened to the speeches with the most comically glum face imaginable. Then there were the labourers, the older ones somewhat stolid-looking countrymen, the younger listening intently, and occasionally opening their mouths wide for a great bellow of applause excessively startling to their nearest neighbours. The venerable-looking chairman, also a local light, was not without some comic aspects which tickled Doreen's sense of fun. He was an ardent politician, but a lame speaker, and he resorted to the simple expedient of introducing the beloved name of the great Liberal chief into his speech whenever he was at a loss, making a significant pause, which, of course, was filled with loud cheers.

After this, one of Doreen's songs came very refreshingly to the assembly, and with a comfortable sense of having stimulated her hearers and kindled their enthusiasm, she sat down again, eager to hear what sort of speaker Mr. Farrant would prove. One thing he undoubtedly possessed,—the faculty of arresting the whole attention of his hearers. He was no orator; he could not even be called an eloquent speaker, but there was a thoroughness about him which seemed to go straight to the consciences of the voters. His argument was weighty and convincing; he never stooped to abuse his

opponents, but somehow contrived to raise the whole tone of the meeting, to fill the electors with a sense of the grave responsibility that rested upon them, and to make them understand in the clearest, most practical way, what the effect of voting for Max Hereford would be, and how greatly it might help in bringing about long-needed reforms. Doreen almost trembled at the thought of coming after such a speaker. How was she to maintain the lofty tone to which he had raised the minds of those present? Sardoni's song, which had grown so popular, did not wholly please her, somehow. It would be more in keeping after Max Hereford's stirring, enthusiastic speech. She turned over the leaves of a book of Irish songs which she had brought with her, and selected, instead, a simple, stately, national air, one of those calls to battle, those stirring appeals to help in the national defence, which, like "The March of the Men of Harlech," appeal to all nations for all time. Max could just see her profile as she sang, and he thought he had never before seen her look so lovely. With one of those sudden flashes of perception by which truth generally makes itself known, he all at once realized to what an extent Doreen had influenced his life.

"If I win the election," he thought to himself, "if I am ever worth anything at all, it will be her doing."

And when presently he was received by the audience with deafening cheers, with an enthusiastic devotion which seemed to augur well for the morrow, this thought still remained with him, adding very much to the grace of manner which characterized all the more personal parts of his speech. Then, throwing off all diffidence, he flung himself, with fiery ardour, into the great questions of the day. As a speaker, he was the exact opposite of Donovan Farrant. Where the one was calm, logical, full of weighty arguments, the other was full of burning eloquence, of scathing denunciation, of glowing enthusiasm, which roused his hearers to the same pitch of strong feeling. Doreen, at the close, turned with a smile to Mrs. Farrant. "They ought always to speak together," she said. "Then every variety of hearer would be influenced and won."

The polling day passed off quietly enough, as polling days should; it was fine, but bitterly cold. Doreen, however, was in no mood to think of prudent considerations, and drove hither and thither with Max and the Farrants, regardless of the cutting east wind, and thinking only of the fight that was being fought. Everywhere the Liberal candidate was well received, and when, in the afternoon, Mrs. Hereford came in from Monkton Verney and joined the others in the Committee Rooms, Doreen gave her a glowing account of the way in which matters were progressing.

Then the election agent came in with a yet more cheerful version of the day's doings, and Doreen wandered to the window, which commanded a good view of the market-place, and amused herself with watching the faces of the crowd below.

Much laughter greeted the cart belonging to a local dyer, who was zealously conducting tardy voters to the poll; and who, by way of a novel effect, had sacrificed an unlucky little Pomeranian dog, dyeing it half blue and half red, to the great delight of all the Firdale children. An encounter between this ill-used quadruped and Mr. Farrant's fox terrier, which had been decorated with a huge green and white bow by Doreen, was attempted by some mischievous person, but Waif magnanimously refused to quarrel with his blue and red rival, and only walked round and round him with a puzzled air, sniffing a little contemptuously, as much as to say, "Lord, what fools these mortals be!"

All at once loud cheers rose from the crowd, and Doreen's heart began to throb with eager pride as she saw that the greeting was in honour of Max, who was just crossing the broad open space between the Town-hall and his Committee Rooms. He raised his hat, and walked through the eager crowd with an air of good cheer and hopefulness, which inspirited his supporters not a little. Doreen felt a glow of happiness as she reflected that he was the last man to be spoilt by success. Suddenly the cheering was interrupted by a series of groans and hisses; without glancing in the direction whence they came, Max entered the house and soon joined them. But Doreen, looking keenly down, saw that the prime agitator was a dark-haired man of about forty, whose face she was certain she had seen before.

"News telegraphed of ten more great Liberal victories," said Max, cheerfully. "That ought to help us to-day,—the flowing tide is with us!"

"Do look here one moment," exclaimed Doreen. "There is a man just below who tried hard to get up a demonstration against you, and I cannot think how I know his face so well."

"Doubtless it's old Friday that you once asked me about at a meeting," said Max, laughing as he recalled some past scene. "Miss O'Ryan," he explained to Mrs. Farrant, "was singing at a meeting ten days ago, and at the end of her song quite upset me by saying, 'Who is that old gentleman with marked features at the end of the room?' It was no less a hero

than the notorious Firdale drunkard, an old scamp who goes by the name of Friday, and who takes refuge in the workhouse all the winter and drinks all the summer."

"Of course Friday would be your opponent," said Doreen, smiling; "but this man was a great deal younger, and I know his face perfectly well. There, look; he is just talking now to that tall man who spoke at the Monday night meeting. He must be abusing you; how angry they are getting! See! see! there is some one throwing a flour bag at him. I daresay he deserved it."

"Stupid fellows!" said Max. "I wish they wouldn't defend me in such a fashion. I couldn't see the fellow's face, and now he looks like Lot's wife, and it's impossible to recognize him."

The unfortunate victim of the flour bag disappeared into a barber's shop a little lower down the street, and Max and Doreen, who had much else to think of, speedily forgot the incident. Had Max been present, however, when, after much washing and rubbing and brushing, the flour was at last got rid of and the victim of the outrage restored to his usual appearance, he would have deemed the affair worth a little more reflection.

Old Killigrew, the barber, had just been about to start for the polling booth, when his floury customer had arrived. He bustled about his shop in an important way, keenly enjoying the chance of learning all that had passed from the victim himself.

"Such things will happen on election days," he remarked soothingly, "and Lor' bless me, 'twould be tame enough if they didn't. Things 'av been mighty quiet here all day,—just a pane or two of glass broke by some of Mr. Steele's supporters, they tell me, down at the coffee tavern; but then, what can you expect? 'tis but natural they should 'ate the coffee tavern, which is just the apple of Mr. 'Ereford's eye, and if 'e goes about speaking against the liquor traffic, why, stands to reason there'll be some of 'em will get a bit riled. For Mr. 'Ereford 'e doan't mince matters. 'E's young, yer see, and 'e 'its 'ard. Now myself, I'm all for moderate drinkin', but these temperance folk they say as 'ow 'arf an' 'arf measures 'av never cured one drunkard, an' maybe they're right; yet for all that, I do like your moderate men; they smooths folk down and are a deal more comfortable than these Radicals. Not but what I'm a goin' to vote for Mr. 'Ereford to-day. 'E's the best man of the two, an' I've a deal of respect for 'im, an' there's truth in what 'e says about Ireland."

"Don't you be led by him," said the victim of the outrage, emerging from beneath the towel wherewith Killigrew was rubbing his hair. "I know a deal more about Mr. Hereford than you do, and I advise you not to vote for him."

"Why, Heaven preserve us!" cried Killigrew, catching sight, in the mirror, of the face of his customer now restored to its proper hue, "'tis Monsieur Baptiste! To be sure, if any one should know Mr. 'Ereford, why 'tis yourself that was 'is valet for years and years; not but what I've 'eard folk say that a man's never an 'ero to his valet."

"Mr. Hereford is certainly no hero to me," said Baptiste, whose English had greatly improved during his four years' absence from Monkton Verney.

As he spoke, there entered three more customers, burly, weather-beaten labourers, come to be shaved before going to the polling station. The eldest of the three, a man with great, brown, cow-like eyes, stared hard at the Frenchman.

"And what may you know about 'Ereford, eh, man? We were just a goin' to vote for un."

"You gowk," said his neighbour, "don't you see it's him that was servant up at Monkton Verney a while ago?"

"Yes, my friends," said Baptiste. "I was in Mr. Hereford's service many years, and was turned off by him at a moment's notice in a fit of anger. That's the sort of man your Liberal candidate is,—a man with no gratitude, a man who will use you and then throw you aside like an old glove, a man that has no more control over his tongue and temper than a child, yet who will talk fair about temperance and reform and philanthropy. Curse him! He's a hypocrite! A whited sepulchre!"

"Softly, softly, my good friend," said the barber, swathing the burly form of the old labourer in a white sheet. "'Tis but nateral you should resent being turned off at a moment's notice; but still be moderate, be moderate. I do like your moderate man who knows 'ow to smooth matters over"; and with an expressive flourish he emphasized his words by delicately lathering the face of his new customer.

"Why did he give yer the sack?" said the youngest of the new arrivals, who for the first time in his life was to enjoy the privilege of voting.

"I will tell you," said the Frenchman, dramatically. "For years, as Mr. Killigrew well knows, I served him faithfully, nursed him when he was sick, performed a thousand duties that were not really part of my work, and then, having discovered that I knew of a damaging secret in his past life, and fearing that I might reveal it, he turned me out."

"I never 'eerd nought against 'Ereford," said the man with the cow-like eyes, as he was released from the white sheet.

"That may be," said Baptiste, darkly. "He knows well enough how to hold his tongue. But mark my words, if you knew about him all that I know, you'd as soon go to the poll and vote for the devil himself."

"And 'ow did you find this out, Mr. Baptiste?" asked Killigrew, his good-humoured, mild face puckered and wrinkled with anxiety.

"I found it out a little when I was in Ireland years ago at Castle Karey, and later on gained fresh light on the matter at Monkton Verney. The instant my master suspected that I was on the scent he dismissed me; but I was even with him: took service with a family in Dublin, and worked away at my clew. The time will come when I shall be able to expose him. But don't you men of Firdale be such fools as to elect him to-day. 'Twould be a disgrace to the town to have its member shown up to the world for the deceiver that he is."

"Good Lord!" said Killigrew, wiping his forehead. "Why, I've known 'im since 'e was a baby. It must be a mistake, man; 'e can't have been so much to blame as you thought. It was, maybe, a mere sowing of 'is wild oats."

"Pshaw!" said the valet, contemptuously. "Do you take me for an innocent, my friend? Is it likely that I should make anything of a mere bagatelle of that sort? I do wrong to speak of it openly, however; the time of revelation is not yet; only it vexes me to see you all hoodwinked, and to think how you will regret having voted for him when the law is on his track and he is imprisoned, and the world knows him as he really is."

"Well, mates, anyhow we'll be safest in voting for Steele," said the eldest of the old labourers, tossing down his twopence on the counter; and Killigrew, with a perturbed face, saw them stroll out into the street and walk off to the polling station.

"I can't vote against Mr. 'Ereford," he said, as he slowly swept up the floor. "But I tell you what I shall do, Monsieur Baptiste, I shall not vote at all."

Baptiste smiled an evil smile and left the shop with a sweeping bow. "A very wise decision," he said. "I felt sure that you wouldn't vote for him when you knew that he was not what he seems to be. *Au revoir*, Mr. Killigrew; you are a sensible man, and I am glad to think you will no longer be gulled by that hypocrite."

CHAPTER XVII.

"Oh, not more subtly silence strays
Amongst the winds, between the voices,
Mingling alike with pensive lays,
And with the music that rejoices,
Than thou art present in my days.

"Most dear pause in a mellow lay!
Thou art inwoven with every air.
With thee the wildest tempests play,
And snatches of thee everywhere
Make little heavens throughout a day."—ALICE MEYNELL.

The Monkton Verney party drove home that night in excellent spirits. The result of the election would not be declared till the next day at noon, but the general feeling was that Max had won the seat, and the Conservatives, who at the previous election had had a large majority, looked anxious and dispirited. Max had been hard at work all day, and was thoroughly exhausted; to lean back in the corner of the carriage, to catch faint glimpses of Doreen's face opposite him, and to listen to the cheery talk of his companions, seemed to him a sort of paradise of rest. The conversation happened to turn upon the ghost that haunted the Abbey, and then Mrs. Farrant told a tale of a nice, matter-of-fact, well-explained ghost, of the sort that one likes to think of at midnight, and urged that all ghost stories could be explained after a similar fashion.

"Nothing will make me believe that," said Doreen, who had a strong tinge of Keltic belief in the supernatural. "I will tell you a story of an Irish ghost which my father himself knew to be true: it is a very nice sort, not at all creepy, and it shows a trait in the Irish character which English people don't realize."

"What is that?" said Max.

"Their unceasing memory of kindness. An Irishman never forgets."

"Let us have the story," said Donovan Farrant. "This is precisely the right sort of light for it."

"Well," said Doreen, in her clear, mellow voice, with its delicious modulations, "there was once upon a time a well-to-do settler in Australia, who lived some fifty miles from a town. He was in the habit of riding in occasionally to draw out money from his bank, and on one of these rides, as he was returning with a good deal of gold upon him, he was stopped by an Irishman who begged him most piteously to lend him some money to get his passage back to Ireland. The man was in terrible distress, longing to get back to his people in the old country, who needed him in some great trouble, but absolutely without means to pay his fare.

"'You are a perfect stranger to me,' said the Englishman. 'How am I to trust you?' Yet all the time he felt sorry for the poor fellow, and inclined to believe in him.

"'If you will only help me,' cried the Irishman, 'I will never forget it to you. Lend me the loan of the money, and I will pay you back, and, should death overtake me, sure then I'll repay you in the next world.'

"The Englishman, touched by the appeal, lent the money. Years passed by, and nothing was heard of the Irishman. One day he was again riding along the same road, and again carrying an unusually large amount of gold from his bank. He was feeling nervous that day, for there had recently been a bad highway robbery, and a solitary traveller had been robbed and murdered by two ruffians who were still at large. In the very loneliest part of the road he all at once felt that he was being followed. For a while he tried to believe it was nothing but fancy; the way was so rough and hilly that it was impossible to urge on his horse, and at last, glancing round, his worst fears were realized; he saw that two villainous-looking men were rapidly approaching him. They drew nearer and yet nearer; in the clear atmosphere he could plainly hear their words.

"'Now is the time,' said one; 'forward!'

"'Hold, you fool!' cried the other, with a sudden change of tone. 'It's no use; don't you see there are two of them?'

"Amazed at their words, he glanced round, and there, at his right hand, was the Irishman, walking beside him. There was something in the look of him that awed the traveller too much for words, yet he felt nothing but intense surprise and

relief. The two ruffians turned and fled the instant they realized that there might be risk to themselves in attacking their victim, and the Irishman walked steadily on beside the traveller, until his home was in sight, then suddenly vanished. And the Englishman realized that the promise had been kept, and that, unable to pay the loan in this world, the man had doubly repaid him in the next. He understood that the Irish never forget."

"That is the best ghost story I ever heard," said Mrs. Farrant; "but did not the traveller speak to the Irishman?"

"I cannot say; he may have spoken. I tell the story as my father told it to me, and I believe he had it from the traveller himself."

"It is so difficult ever to get a story at first hand," said Donovan Farrant, "but I confess that sounds more possible to me than your Abbey ghost, in which I can't get up any sort of belief."

"I believe in him," said Doreen. "Indeed, I am rather afraid of him. Nothing would induce me to go to the Abbey after dark."

"You might go a hundred times and see nothing," said Max, laughing. "It is only on certain nights, according to old Goody, that he takes the trouble to show up. I wish to goodness I could lay him somehow, for it is a serious drawback to the place; two or three times, when we were anxious to let it for the summer, the plan fell through on account of this silly superstition. The ladies of the party objected to a haunted place, and it was no use to tell them that the ghost limited himself to the walls of the ruins, and had never been so ill-bred as to trouble us in the house."

"You are going to lay it yourself, by restoring the ruin," said Doreen, smiling; and they fell to the discussion of plans for the projected buildings.

Doreen woke the next morning with an exultant feeling that the great day of her life had dawned, the day for which she had so long waited and hoped. She sang to herself from sheer lightness of heart as she dressed, and her bright face seemed to inspirit the others, when they all met at breakfast. Afterwards, they drove into Firdale, to be present at the counting of the votes, and the keen air of that sunny April morning seemed to banish all the misgivings which had seized them during the night, and to buoy them up with hope. The waiting was terribly long; Doreen hardly knew how to endure it. Like one in a dream, she watched the sedate, impartial air of the returning officer and his assistant, the well-assumed calm of Mr. Steele, and the undisguised eagerness of her lover. She sat beside Mrs. Hereford, marvelling at her quiet patience, and from time to time, when the tension became unendurable, she tried to forget it all, and looked forth from the window at the crowd, which grew and grew, until by twelve o'clock the whole of the market-place was packed with people, eagerly waiting for the announcement of the poll. She had contrived to become so much absorbed in outer things, that when Mrs. Hereford touched her on the arm, she started back to a painful remembrance of the present, and saw that the supreme moment was at hand: with throbbing heart and panting breath she waited, hope struggling with fear, yet always coming off conqueror. For a moment there was deathly stillness in the room; only from the outside came the subdued murmur of the waiting and expectant crowd. Then the returning officer announced the figures:—

For Mr. Steele, 700, For Mr. Hereford, 697,
Conservative majority, *three*.

The room swam before her eyes for a minute; when she could see again, she found that Max was shaking hands with the new member courteously enough, but with a dazed air, as of one who has just received an unlooked-for blow. The action touched her; it bore witness to his innate courtesy, which even in such a moment was not to be laid aside. As the new member turned to Mrs. Hereford, she came close to Max, and slipped her hand into his.

"You know how to fail," she said in a low voice, "and next time you will surely win."

There was bustle and confusion in the room, the window was thrown open, the returning officer stepped on to the balcony to announce the result of the election, but the two lovers still stood a little apart; in the bright, hopeful blue eyes lifted to his, Max forgot for a moment his bitter disappointment.

Already he was thinking of the changes that would have come in his life, when that "next time" of which she spoke had actually arrived.

"Shall I have your help in the next fight?" he asked, below his breath.

"Why, of course," she replied, with a glance full of sweetness and confidence; "you will always have it when you want it."

He pressed her hand, and together they moved towards the window and once more heard the fatal announcement and the mingled cheers and groans with which it was received. Then the new member spoke a few pleasant words and politely hoped that he might always have to do with so honourable an opponent; and when the victor had bowed himself off the balcony, the crowd, after their usual somewhat trying fashion, demanded a sight of the vanquished, and Max, feeling rather as if he were stepping on to the scaffold at his execution, went out to receive an ovation from his followers which was not a little trying in the present state of his feelings. And yet there still lingered with him the warm pressure of Doreen's hand, and that cheering thought of the next time. In the strength of her hopefulness, he spoke a few straightforward, manly words, candidly owning his disappointment, confidently looking forward to future success. "Let our honourable defeat," he concluded, "spur us on till at the next election our cause may have an honourable victory."

After this, Mr. Steele's supporters dragged his carriage triumphantly through the town, amid great rejoicings, and old Killigrew watched the procession with satisfaction.

"'E is, after all, a very moderate Conservative," he reflected, "and a pleasant-looking, urbane gentleman; there's something, too, that pleases me in the way 'e cuts 'is beard. I'm not on the whole sorry that 'e's to be our member; 'e'll be a credit to the place, there's no doubt of that."

The old man stood on his door-step, discussing the very narrow majority with some of the passers-by, and trying to discover if there was any likelihood of a recount. Presently the sound of wheels roused him from this discussion.

"Why, there goes Mr. 'Ereford," he remarked, making just as low a bow as he had made a few minutes before to the successful candidate. "Poor fellow! 'e do look disappointed. I'm really sorry for 'im; there's a deal that's good in 'im, and 'e's a fine, 'andsome fellow, nobody can't deny, though I do sometimes wish 'e would grow 'is moustache just a trifle longer. But Lor' bless you, 'e don't think much of 'is looks, or 'e'd realize fast enough that 'is mouth was not the best feature 'e 'ad, and would be all the better for a little more 'air about it. All 'e thinks about is what is best for 'is speechifying. 'E do look mortal fagged, poor fellow, an' no mistake."

Max was in truth desperately disappointed, and like most high-spirited people, when he did go down into the depths of depression it was no easy task to get him out again. The Farrants were obliged to leave directly after the poll had been declared, and there was something very dreary in the atmosphere of the house when the three returned to lunch after that dismal morning's work. Mrs. Hereford and Doreen made brave efforts to talk during the meal, but Max was not responsive, and afterwards shut himself up in the smoking-room. As for Doreen, she fell fast asleep on the drawing-room sofa, more tired than she would have cared to own, by the strain of the election.

To sleep was well enough, but to wake to the remembrance of that crushing disappointment was hard, indeed; fortunately she was too sensible to waste time in brooding over the inevitable, and springing up from the sofa, she began to work conscientiously at *Solfeggi*, then found some pleasure in singing "The Meeting of the Waters." This speedily drew Max from the smoking-room; he stole in quietly, not drawing near to the piano, but waiting in the oriel window at the further end of the room, forgetting for the time his miserable depression as he listened to the sweet voice and exquisite air. The words, too, fell soothingly on his ear.

> "Sweet vale of Avoca! how calm could I rest
> In thy bosom of shade with the friends I love best.
> Where the storms that we feel in this cold world should cease,
> And our hearts, like thy waters, be mingled in peace."

As the last chords died away into silence she heard his step approaching.

"Oh, is it you?" she cried, her face lighting up. "I never heard any one come into the room."

"You played Orpheus to my Eurydice," he said, smiling, "and witched me out of the inferno of the smoking-room and of my dismal reflections. That song is, after all, the most beautiful of all the Irish melodies."

"I sang selfishly to drive out my own dismal reflections," she replied. "I took Moore's advice, you see," and with a smile that was sweet, yet half mocking, she turned over the leaves of the book and pointed to the lines,—

> "Friendship's balmy words may feign,

Love's are e'en more false than they;
Oh! 'tis only Music's strain
Can sweetly soothe and not betray!"

"Do you believe that?" said Max.

"Why, no; not a bit," she replied, with a little rippling laugh. "What a curious creed one would have, if it were necessary to believe all that one sings!"

"What should you say to a walk up Rooksbury?" said Max, new life seeming to fill him as he watched her sunny face.

She turned a little on the music stool, and took a rapid glance at him.

"I think," she replied, "you are too tired for a climb after all that you have been through."

"Does that mean that you will have nothing to say to an unsuccessful candidate?"

"I don't break my promises, but we should perhaps climb better if—if—" she hesitated.

"If we climb hand in hand?"

"Yes."

Her eyes, which had met his for a moment in a glance of perfect comprehension, were cast down now; her hands trembled a little as she locked them fast together in her lap.

"Doreen!" he cried, "we seem always to be drawn together by some trouble or disaster. But to-day I had made so sure of success; to-day I had hoped all our dreams of long ago were to be fulfilled. How can I dare to ask you to be my wife at such a time as this? I, who, at the best, feel so unworthy of your love?"

"I could not have loved you so much had you succeeded," she said, lifting her face to his, with a light of such happy trust, such perfect love about it, that Max was almost overwhelmed.

"My dearest!" he cried, folding her in his arms, "this is worth waiting for."

And, in truth, the unexpected event of the morning had greatly altered and inexpressibly deepened Doreen's feeling for her lover. His success would have delighted her; she would have been full of eager excitement and joyous pride. But his rejection stirred within her that passionate sympathy, that absolute devotion, which she felt for her unhappy country.

The afternoon which had begun so heavily passed away in a sort of dream of delight. As for the election, it was forgotten with all else belonging to the outer world, and neither of them had the least consciousness of time. They might have sat together in the cosy corner beside the hearth for hours, if Mrs. Hereford had not after a time interrupted them. One glance at the two of course told her the whole story. She came towards them, smiling.

"Are you ready for tea, children?" she said, smiling. "By a happy impulse I was moved to order it in the oak parlour, which looked more snug and cosy for such a small party, otherwise you might have had Thomas breaking in upon you with the tea-tray!"

"Doreen has not rejected me this time," said Max, stooping to kiss his mother. "And let us hope that Firdale will follow her example and only keep me waiting a few years."

Perhaps under other circumstances the day of her only son's betrothal might have been a trying time for Mrs. Hereford, but coming after the disaster of the morning, the glad reaction was most exhilarating, and dearly as she had long loved Doreen, she had never loved her quite so well before. No one else, as she was well aware, could have driven the cloud of disappointment from her son's brow, or made him bear the thought of the long hours of wasted work so patiently and uncomplainingly.

"And here have I been wasting my sympathy on you the whole afternoon," she said, laughing. "I left him in the smoking-room, bound hand and foot by Giant Despair. How did you manage, Doreen, to draw him out of the dungeon?"

"I think, perhaps," said Doreen, blushing, "he remembered, as the pilgrims did, that he had a certain promise."

After tea the two lovers climbed Rooksbury together to see the sunset. The wind was still cold and blustering, but they cared nothing for that. Doreen only wrapped her green cloak more closely about her, and stepped briskly forward, feeling ready in the strength of her new happiness to walk for miles.

"I wear my election cloak to give it a new and happy association," she said, laughing, as they climbed slowly up the hill beneath the stately pines.

"I think you should put it away for the next election," said Max. "Moreover, it is not convenient for us now; I can't get at your hand. A sealskin jacket would be a hundred times more comfortable; I shall get you one."

"That would be beautiful for America next winter, if we go."

"You are going to America?" he said in dismay.

"Oh, nothing is settled; I must talk it all over with you," said Doreen; "but the St. Pierres think of making a tour in the States. We should be away from September to February, and they are most anxious that I should accept their offer. Financially, it would be an excellent thing, but I have not yet been able to face the thought of leaving the children for so long."

"You don't seem to take any account of me," said Max, with a reproachful smile.

"Indeed I do," she replied wistfully. "It is for your sake that I think I might screw up my courage to consent to the plan. You see, by going to America I should earn just double what I could earn in England, and so I should be all the sooner free."

"Why will you let this miserable money question stand between us any longer?" pleaded Max. "You know all that I have is yours."

"Yes, I know," she answered, pressing his hand; "but all the same, Max, I cannot let you marry the family. You must let me provide for the children, and somehow it takes much longer than I thought it would take. Perhaps I am not a good manager, but though I work hard, the money seems somehow to melt, and a good deal will be needed to start the two boys in life, and to get a really comfortable provision for Mollie and Bride. Then there are so many expenses in an artiste's life; dress is a very heavy item, and with regard to it I have had to buy my experience. You men are so much better off in that way,—always able to wear black."

"I am thankful you can't do that," said Max. "I should like you always to be in white; nothing suits you so well."

"Yes," said Doreen, laughing. "You said so long ago, and you have no idea what a struggle I made to meet your wishes, but it was just ruination. The dirty floors in the artistes' room, and the constant coming on and off the platform, make white dresses the trial of one's life. And then comes the next bitter piece of bought experience,—the dyer. Oh, I had a lovely white Liberty silk, and in an evil moment, having worn it thoroughly dirty, sent it to be dyed peacock blue. It came home looking no better than alpaca,—perfectly ruined. I shed tears over that dress, but afterwards we had some fun about it, drawing lots whether it should be made into frumpy frocks for the children, or given to the Little Sisters of the Poor, or sent to the rag and bone shop."

"You might be trusted to get fun somehow out of the direst mishap," said Max, laughing. "It was after that disaster with the dyer probably that you insisted on wearing for so long a black satin dress which I detested. It always made me think of that woman who was hung in black satin, and proved unexpectedly a benefactor to her race, by sending it out of fashion for years after."

"How long ago everything seems!" said Doreen. "The time itself has passed quickly, and yet it is almost like looking back on another life to think of that day when I met you on the steps of the British Museum,—that last day of my miserable waiting-time."

"The day when you wanted me to congratulate you on singing at a city dinner," said Max, laughing. "I remember very well how I hated the city magnates who were going to requite you with three guineas."

"You will never understand how a drowning man catches at straws," said Doreen. "Besides, it was not only the getting an engagement that made me so happy that day. Do you suppose it made no difference to me to find that after all I had a

friend in London?"

"But you knew so many of your fellow-countrymen in town."

"I had not come across many of them then, and Donal Moore was away in Ireland that spring. It was quite the saddest and loneliest bit of my life. There was not a soul to whom I could really talk."

Max smiled. "You will never make me believe that you were long silent," he said; "that is against nature. You mean there was no one to whom you could confide secrets."

"I have no secrets," said Doreen. Then a sudden cloud and smile flitting over her face: "At least, no secrets from you, and only one that must be kept from the world. But there was no one with whom I was really in touch. Then you came, and with you all other good things."

"What are we to wish this time at the wishing-tree?" said Max, as by and bye they stood together at the summit of Rooksbury, and once more looked over that wide, exquisite view. It was glorified now in the sunset light, and the first hues of early green were bursting out in bush and hedgerow, while the larger trees still stood out brown and bare, relieved in places by the dark pines.

"What are we to wish, darling?" he repeated, looking down tenderly into the bright, winsome face beside him.

"There is nothing left to wish for," said Doreen, dreamily. Then, awaking from her heaven of peace to the recollection of the struggle of the morning, she made a little exclamation, half of penitence, half of amusement.

"Why, what am I thinking of!" she cried. "Of course, we must wish for your success at the next election!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Since then, through all the jars of life's routine,
All that downdrags the spirit's loftier mood,
I have been soothed with fellowship serene
Of single souls with Heaven's own light endued."— JOHN CAMPBELL SHAIRP.

"I would give something to know what the world in general will say to your piece of news," said Michael, as on the following evening he sat talking to Doreen over the nursery fire.

Mrs. Muchmore had a laudable habit of retiring very early to bed, on such nights as her mistress did not require her attendance at a concert, and the nursery was the general resort of the family, being one of those delightful rooms that possess the supreme merit of snugness,—a quality which in a room corresponds to charm in a human being. Its window had a dull prospect, its light paper was the reverse of æsthetic, its carpet was merely what Mrs. Muchmore termed a "Kidder," and yet, somehow, it was the ever-cheerful "house place," available for every purpose, and with an extraordinary elasticity about it, accommodating itself in a wonderful way sometimes to two or three inmates, sometimes to a dozen.

Doreen sat stitching away at a dainty little low bodice, which was being altered for the next week's work.

"I hardly realize yet what *you* say," she replied; "and that matters to me more than anything."

"Does it?" said the boy, smiling, and evidently well pleased at the words. "Well, I say, in the words of the old butler when he learned that his mistress no longer needed him, 'But what be I to do?' Max is a jolly good fellow, though, and I'm awfully glad for him."

"I shall never say I no longer need you, dear boy," said Doreen, tenderly. "And you will do as the old butler did; you will stay. I am not going to be married yet awhile, and by the time it really happens you will probably have got an appointment somewhere, and will, of course, always look on our home as yours until you marry and set up for yourself."

"I shall have to go abroad before I can make anything of a living," said Michael; "and Dermot has brains enough to get a scholarship at Oxford, if he tries; but that still leaves you with Mollie and Bride."

"And you think I could do without them?" said Doreen, smiling reproachfully. "Even for Max I couldn't do that. How did Uncle Garth take the news, by the bye?"

"Oh, he was greatly pleased. First the news of the election made him chortle, and then when it came to your engagement to Mr. Hereford, he grew quite talkative. I never heard him say so much in his life except about a mummy."

"I take it as a great compliment that Uncle Garth should put me on the same level as a mummy!" said Doreen, laughing.

Apparently Aunt Garth was equally pleased; nothing could have made her talkative, but happily sympathy does not depend on words, or England would be a dreary place. She gave Doreen what a girl so greatly needs at all times,—a sympathy more ready to listen than to suggest; and her great pleasure in the engagement did something to still the longing for the dead father and mother which inevitably came to mar Doreen's complete happiness.

Naturally, Max Hereford's relations were not so well pleased. The General was greatly disturbed when the news reached him on the Riviera. He had not much regretted the loss of the Firdale election. It might have been convenient to have Max in Parliament; but it went greatly against the grain to think of a Hereford being on the wrong side. On the whole, the General was glad that the Firdale folks, by a majority of three, had elected the Conservative candidate. But when his late ward wrote to announce his engagement to the Irish *prima donna*, all his family pride rose in arms.

"It would be bad enough," he protested, as he paced to and fro beneath the palms with one of his friends, "if the boy had married any other girl out of his own set. But that he should have chosen Miss O'Ryan of all the women in the world, is past bearing."

"Well, my dear fellow, you know class distinctions are not what they once were," observed his companion, comfortingly; "it's rather the fashion to be in with all the celebrities, the actors, and public singers, and all the Bohemians that our forefathers despised. And I have always heard that Miss O'Ryan is as good as she is charming."

"Oh, it's not to the girl herself I have any objection," said the General; "but consider what the father was! My dear Garwood, I assure you that man was mixed up with every wrong-headed movement of his time. As a young man, he was implicated in the Smith O'Brien rising of '48, and was in jail then for some months. Then, in '65, he was sentenced to penal servitude as a Fenian, and at the time of his death he had taken to what he was pleased to call 'constitutional modes of agitation,' and was an ardent Home-ruler. Now, frankly, would you like a son or a nephew of your own to marry into such a family?"

"Is she the daughter of O'Ryan, the Fenian?" exclaimed the other, evading a direct reply. "Well, I never heard that before. I remember reading, a few years back, an account of his death. They say it was his time at Portland that ruined his health, and such conditions of life must have borne hardly on an Irishman accustomed to very different surroundings. Of course, I can understand that the match doesn't precisely please you. But what would you have? We can't expect the young people to think of our feelings. That sort of thing is out of date. And, after all, when Miss O'Ryan is once married, and has retired from public life, the world will soon forget all about the Fenian father; she will probably become a pronounced Conservative, and will lead your nephew back into the right fold."

"Well," said the General, half mollified, "I could almost forgive her parentage, if she would really do that."

Happening to catch sight of his daughter at that minute, he hurried across the rough beach to impart the news to her. Miriam was sketching under the shade of a red parasol. She looked up saucily, as her father approached.

"Letters!" she exclaimed, with a smile. "I knew you would hear from Max to-day. He will write a long account of his defeat, which we saw in the papers."

"On the contrary, he writes a long account of something much less satisfactory," said the General, ruefully. "He is engaged to Miss O'Ryan, my dear, and I am extremely vexed with him."

Miriam naughtily clapped her hands for joy.

"Now you will not tease me any more about him!" she exclaimed, "and that dreadful prospect of being forced to marry a philanthropist will no longer hang over me. It is the best news I have heard for an age, papa; and Doreen is one of a thousand, and will make him as happy as possible."

"You don't seem to think anything of what the world will say to such a marriage," said the General, irritably. "To think of that convict's daughter being mistress of Monkton Verney is enough to try the patience of Job."

"It is odd when you put it in that way," said Miriam, reflectively. "How well I remember the shock it was to us all at Castle Karey, when she—a little scrap of a girl with a great bush of dark hair, and a shabby frock much too short for her—announced that her father was a Fenian prisoner, much in the same tone in which I might have told any one that you lived through the Indian mutiny, and were a V. C."

"Yes, yes, like all her race, she is wrong-headed and perverse," said the General, with a sigh. "A nice, well-mannered girl, with a fine voice, I quite admit, but Irish,—so dreadfully Irish."

In the profession, the news of Doreen's engagement was received somewhat differently. Mr. Boniface had imparted the news to the first arrivals in the artistes' room, at the Evening Ballad concert after the election, and a little babel of question and surmise instantly arose. Was Max Hereford the sort of man who would insist on her retiring, or had he some sort of artistic feeling? Was he anything of a musician himself? Was it in the least likely that he appreciated the prize he had won? and so on. Ciseri, the accompanist, who adored Doreen from a respectful distance, was in despair at the news, and Ferrier himself, though not wholly unprepared for the tidings, seemed depressed by them.

"We all wish you joy, my dear," he said, when by and bye Doreen arrived with Mrs. Muchmore in attendance, "but we are nevertheless extremely sorry to hear of it."

Doreen stood looking at them for a moment, then burst out laughing, with the delicious, irresistible laugh of one who is utterly happy.

"You look as if I were going to be buried, rather than to be married!" she exclaimed.

"And so you are, my dear, from our point of view," said Clinton Cleve, putting his shaky old hand beneath her chin and

raising the sweet, radiant face a little, so that he could the better see it. The veteran was, of course, privileged; all the world had been at his feet, and Doreen was touched and pleased by the kindly words he spoke to her. But all the same, she knew that Max would never understand the good fellowship of the artistes' room, and that little details might grate on him just because he had been accustomed to a somewhat more constrained society. For the first time she seemed able to see all things with his eyes, and a little shadow fell on her happiness, when Ferrier said to her,—

"Is it decided that you retire on your marriage?"

"Nothing is decided," she replied. "I am just a little afraid Mr. Hereford may wish it. That is, unless I can make him understand that life without my profession would be at best a crippled life. In some ways it is so difficult to make any one who is not an artist understand anything about it. People talk as if art were a mere pastime, to be taken up or laid aside at will. I do really believe that many of them think a singer can sing a song, or a composer produce an opera, or an author write a novel, or a painter paint a picture, as easily as a housemaid can turn on a tap and fill a water-can."

Ferrier laughed.

"We must try to persuade your *fiancé*," he said, "that to take you away from public life just now would be something very much like a crime."

"Yes, I shall turn him over to you," said Doreen, gaily. "He is so fair and open-minded, that directly he sees anything, he will act upon it, though it were ever so much against his own wishes. He is one of the very, very few Englishmen who really do try to understand and feel with Ireland, and to do so is against all his interests."

"All?" said Ferrier, with a humorous glance. "I should have thought he had every inducement to devote his best energies to your nation."

"Oh, he doesn't do it to please me, I assure you," said Doreen, "but because he really sympathizes with the oppressed; he would feel for Ireland just as much if I belonged to any other country."

"No doubt, if you still espoused Ireland's cause," said Ferrier.

"No, no; not at all, at all," said Doreen, laughing. "I see you do not understand how utterly unlike he is to other people."

"But I do understand how insufferably dull other men seem in comparison," interpolated Ferrier, smiling good-humouredly, as he quitted the room for one of his songs.

The congratulations of Madame De Berg were of a somewhat acid nature; her very politeness seemed venomous, and she took a spiteful pleasure in hurling the news at Una Kingston, who turned pale, and shrank into her shell of reserve, from which Ferrier and Mr. Boniface tried in vain to draw her. Only Doreen possessed the power of reaching the shy little girl, and, happening to return to the inner room when no one else was present, she instantly understood why the tired little face of the child-violinist looked more wistful than ever.

She gave her one of those sunny, cheerful greetings, which always seemed to fill Una with new life. The child at once thawed, and became her true, best self.

"Oh, Doreen," she said, "I do mean to try and be glad for you, but I do so wish Mr. Hereford had waited a little longer."

"You hard-hearted child!" said Doreen, laughing. "But don't be afraid, you have not lost me; and who knows whether, after all, I shall retire when we are married? I don't at all want to play the part of the 'nightingale in the cage,' as Mr. Boniface says."

"Is the time fixed yet?"

"Oh, no; and it can't be just yet. Don't talk as if it were some catastrophe! Why, you, who know Mr. Hereford, ought to do nothing but congratulate me!"

Una liked Max well enough, but she was jealous of him, and she did not consider him worthy of Doreen; but she gulped down her jealousy with a heroic effort, and turned to other matters.

"It is decided that I go to America in the autumn," she said, sighing. "I do wish they would have let me stay here."

Doreen made an ejaculation of regret.

"They will certainly kill that child before they have done," she thought to herself. "Whom are you going with?" she asked aloud. "Your agent gave you no choice in the matter, I suppose?"

"None," said Una. "One might as well be a slave. But it is the losing you I shall mind most. It is M. St. Pierre who is getting up the tour, and I would rather go with the St. Pierres than with strangers. And it is just possible that Cousin Flora will not go. She said M. St. Pierre was already in treaty with another soprano, whose reply would have to be considered first."

"I am that other soprano," said Doreen, quietly.

The child gave a cry of delight, then her eyes filled with tears.

"But I *know* you will not come now that you are going to marry Mr. Hereford," she exclaimed piteously.

"On the contrary, I think that is the very reason why I shall be able to come, and to make up my mind to leave the children. It is an exceptionally good offer, and I rather think it would be wrong to refuse it. Now are you not grateful to Mr. Hereford?"

Una's face became radiant.

"To have you for all those months!" she cried. "Why, it will be like heaven! And I who had been dreading it all so much! Are you sure, quite sure, that you will accept it?"

Doreen had already talked the matter well over with her lover, and had only been waiting for some "leading" that should guide her to a final decision. The leading seemed plainly given by this forlorn little child-musician, who so sorely needed some one to lighten the burden laid upon her by a tyrannical agent and a foolish guardian.

"My mind is made up," said Doreen, stooping to kiss the little girl. "I am coming with you, and we will have a real good time."

CHAPTER XIX.

"Government against the will of the people governed is the very definition of slavery."—GRATTAN.

Whether it was the unwelcome prospect of the long absence from home, or the result of the hard work during the election, or merely the effect of all the excitement caused by her engagement, Doreen's health flagged as the spring advanced. She made light of it until her voice began to suffer, then, after a little persuasion from Mrs. Garth and Mrs. Hereford, she consented to be overhauled by a doctor, who decreed that she must have three weeks' rest. It was in vain to protest that the season was at its height, and that she had work which she could ill afford to leave; the authorities were inexorable; and so it came to pass that in June, when society was hard at work amusing itself in London, and when the workers were hard at work in providing the means of amusement, three happy travellers escaped from the great city, and early one summer's morning steamed into Dublin Bay. The plan had been Mrs. Hereford's, and it was easy to see that it was likely to prove a success. Doreen, who had joined them at Euston on the previous night looking thoroughly exhausted, seemed like a different creature as she stepped on to the deck of the steamer on that bright June morning, greeting her lover with a glance of such radiant happiness that Max was well content with the decision of the Firdale electors, and rejoiced in being free for this Irish holiday.

"You have lost the blue-and-white look which you had last night," he said, "in spite of all the hours of travelling."

Doreen laughed. "They always say those dreadful blue shadows round my eyes make me look like a willow pattern plate! But the very first breath of Irish air drives them away, you see. And what a good crossing we have had! It might have been a lake. Come round to this side and let us see if the Wicklow Mountains are clear. Yes, look! there they are! There is the dear old Sugarloaf, and there is Bray Head, and away in the distance must be Glendalough, right in the heart of the mountains. Let us keep my birthplace for the last of all,—the *bonne bouche*; but, perhaps, to you it will not seem so perfect as it always did to me."

"On the contrary," said Max, "it is, of course, my Mecca! The birthplace of the Irish nightingale."

"A very pretty speech, but unluckily it will not do; there are no nightingales in Ireland. It is a pity; but then, on the other hand, there are no snakes; St. Patrick banished them,—to England I think."

"Come, come, no reflections on my country," said Max, laughing. "How pretty Kingstown looks in this early morning light! How long is it since you were over here?"

"Oh, I have been here every year since my *début* just to sing in Dublin and Belfast and Cork, but never to stay for more than two or three nights since we had to go into exile. To think of three weeks' holiday in my own land is wonderful, and I am glad we are to have a night in dear old Dublin, so that I may show you some of the places I remember so well."

Doreen proved an excellent cicerone; she knew Dublin as one knows the home of one's childhood, with an absolutely indelible knowledge not to be gained in later life. Its streets and squares were so impressed upon her brain that invariably they formed the background of her dreams, often after a highly incongruous fashion, and she volunteered an amount of miscellaneous information which surprised and amused Max. In this house O'Connell had once lived; in that other, on the left side of the road, the Duke of Wellington had been born; up that dull-looking street, near an archway, one of the informers who had betrayed the Fenians had been shot. Here, on the gateway of the Castle, was the figure of Justice,—her face to the Castle, as an Irish patriot had once remarked, and her back to the city and the Irish people. There was a curious story, too, about the scales which were balanced in her hand: during the Fenian trials the scales had fallen to the ground.

"That must be one of your Irish legends," said Max, sceptically.

"No, not at all; it is strictly true, I assure you," replied Doreen, and to her lover's amusement she appealed to a gray-headed official, who confirmed her story; whereupon she carried off Max in triumph to see the tower whence Red Hugh escaped, and to hear all manner of stories about his thrilling adventures among the Wicklow Mountains.

Of Irish history, Max, like most Englishmen, was supremely ignorant, and Doreen's talk and the close study of the people they met during their tour served to make him growingly conscious that he was a foreigner of a totally different race, one who could only hope to understand the true state of the case by making an effort of the imagination and reversing the position of the two countries.

"'Put yourself in his place,' seems to me the motto which every Englishman should adopt before trying to study the Irish," he said once to Doreen, when the frightful misery of the people on the Galtees had given him some little insight into the crying evils of the present system.

"That is what most of your countrymen are so utterly unable to do," she replied sadly. "England is my mother's own country, and I have good reason to love it well; but I must say that, though the English at heart love justice, and will often go out of their way to champion those whom other people oppress, yet they have a great tendency to bully the weak who belong to them. Their attitude to Ireland always makes me think of that philanthropist at whose meeting you spoke last week; he will plead most movingly for the miserable people in the sweaters' dens at the East End, but I know from personal observation that he tyrannizes over his own wife, and will hardly let her think, much less speak, for herself."

Max resolved to come over again to Ireland alone, and to try to get a more intimate knowledge of the great problems which have so long baffled every effort at solution. It was impossible, while travelling with his mother, to remain long in that desolate region; the accommodation was too rough; and they were obliged to move on to Killarney, where the exquisite beauty of the scenery charmed them back for a while into their lovers' paradise of hope and joy, and entire confidence in the good time coming.

"It seems strange that I, an Irish girl, should never have seen Killarney before," said Doreen, "and that you saw it years ago, and will be able to lionize me. But, you see, when we lived here there was never any money to spare. I remember delightful summer holidays at Bray and among the Wicklow Mountains; but such a long journey as this would have been out of the question. And then when I was seven, father was sent to prison, and all the money was needed to take us over to England for those disappointing visits which the authorities allowed every now and then."

"Were they disappointing?"

"Yes," she said, her eyes filling with tears. "I wonder how you would have felt if, after months of separation, the Irish government allowed you to come over from England to Ireland, and then when you were just longing for a talk with your father, you were stood up behind a grating opposite a sort of iron cage, into which they presently put a prisoner, cropped and shaved, and dressed in frightful garments marked with the broad arrow. But oh, dear," she said, laughing, "what fun my father did make of those clothes! How well I remember his making a most grim-looking warder shake with laughter as he joked with us about the old-fashioned knee-breeches and hose worthy of a fancy ball."

"Then a warder was always present?" asked Max, calling up a vivid picture of the little Doreen he had known years ago, and thinking what a sunbeam she must have been behind that grating in Portland Prison.

"Yes; the warder was always in the space between us and the cage. It was that which made it so disappointing; the time went so fast, and all the while one felt far away. At first, too, the warders were very brutal men, and they loved to treat the Fenian prisoners with every sort of insult; but as time went on, all that was changed, and during the last year they had the kindest warders and were treated leniently. I believe the last time we went the warder really was sorry that he had to say no when Michael begged so hard to come into his little inclosure, so that he might kiss father through the bars."

"I often wonder that you are not more bitter against the English," said Max, glancing at her.

"That would be against all the traditions in which I was brought up," she replied. "Never was there a more gentle-hearted man than my father. It is the fashion to think of the Irish as bloodthirsty ruffians, who delight in shooting people from behind a hedge; but though, of course, we have some bad people over here, just as you have criminals in England, the bulk of the people are exceptionally sweet-natured and kindly and gentle, ready, of course, to fight for their rights like any other brave race, and naturally hating to be tyrannized over by another nation whose religious views clash with their own."

The two were driving, as they talked, towards the entrance to the Gap of Dunloe, and their driver now interrupted them.

"They'll be upon you in a minute, sir, wanting you to take ponies for the Pass."

And sure enough, a regular cavalcade bore down upon them, and trotted along by the side of the car, shouting and gesticulating, each man urging the claims of his own steed, and declaring it to be the best, the most sure-footed, and the prettiest pony in all Ireland.

"Such a sorry-looking set of nags I never saw," said Max, laughing. "Do they always attack travellers like this?"

"Oh yes, sir," said the driver; "but don't you be too yielding to them. We're not nearly come to the Pass yet."

So the twelve horses galloped along in attendance, their owners laughing and talking, making desperate offers which gradually grew lower and lower, and taking the whole affair as a sort of joke.

"I never drove before with a mounted escort in attendance," said Max, while Doreen laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks, so absurd was the whole scene, so inexpressibly funny the faces of the bargaining guides. At last, for the sake of peace, they selected two ponies from the twelve, Max choosing the best-looking nag, and Doreen picking out the most merry-looking guide; and so, somewhat plagued by the buglers, the blind fiddlers, the stocking-knitters, and all the other tourist paraphernalia, they made their way through that wonderful mountain pass, skirting desolate lakes, and shadowed on the one side by the dark crags of the well-named "Purple Mountain," on the other by the beautiful Macgillycuddy Reeks, whose grand outlines were clearly defined against the soft blue of the sky, which seemed all the more lovely after the heavy rain of the previous day. Descending again into the valley, they walked down to the Upper Lake, where Mrs. Hereford, who had come from the hotel in a boat, was to meet them; and, after a merry picnic on the shore, they set off for that exquisite round of the three lakes, which in its endless variety is nowhere to be surpassed. Doreen sang softly for very happiness. The Gap of Dunloe had been slightly spoilt by the importunate tourist-hunters, but the lakes were perfect, and all the legends and songs which she had learnt in her childhood seemed full of new meaning to her as the boat glided past Eagle's Nest and Old Weir Bridge, shooting the rapids, passing the lovely little nook on Dinish Island, catching beautiful glimpses of Ross Castle and of the ruins of Inisfallen, and ever with the thought that this was her own country, the land for which her father had laid down his life, the country which had been the Holy Island in the past, and for which bright days were, she hoped, in store.

"I should much like to see Castle Karey once more," said Mrs. Hereford. "How would it be if we spent a few days at the hotel near the church there? They tell me it is a very comfortable one." Max glanced a little anxiously at Doreen.

"Should you like it?" he asked.

"Yes," she said truthfully; "with you I should like it very much."

So once more they journeyed to the well-known place, and since the Castle was, as usual, empty, they were able to visit it once more; to walk down the avenue under the very trees which had sheltered them on that wet afternoon ten years ago; to wander through the deserted rooms, recalling the day when they had tried their fortunes over the fire; and to roam through the wood to the fernery where the Keep still stood, looking only a trifle damper and more dreary than it had done on that summer day in the far past.

Doreen's face was unusually grave as once more they sat together on the rustic bench, where years before she had taken that solemn oath of secrecy.

"What are you thinking of?" asked Max, trying to read the expression in her intent blue eyes.

"I was wondering what had become of those others who share our secret," she replied; "wondering where Mr. Desmond is, and what has become of old Larry and his wife."

"I have a great mind to go over to Lough Lee and find out if they are all right."

Doreen turned pale.

"Then I too must come," she said. "After all, though, I shall hate to see the lough again; yet it seems but right to find out what became of the old people. What could we take them?"

"You know best what your country folk would like," said Max. "I might understand the cottagers at Monkton Verney."

"The Irish are not so different as all that," said Doreen, laughing. "There is nothing that old Larry would enjoy more than a shilling's worth of tobacco, and Norah had better have a packet of tea."

"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin," said Max, with a smile, as they left the fernery, and passing out through the first of the gates found themselves on the high-road. "Here, by the bye, is the exact spot where you and I first met; you were standing just over there by the hedge with Michael tucked away behind you, and the agent's dog had a bit of your red cloak between his teeth."

"How frightened we were, and how poor Michael cried!" said Doreen.

"While you, with a white face, kept bravely assuring him that it was only the dog's fun, and that he wouldn't hurt," said Max.

"And oh, what a relief it was to look up and see you, and Mr. Desmond, and Miss Hereford," said Doreen. "I think I never was so glad to see any one before."

"Or since?" said Max, teasingly.

"Well, I can't say that," she said, laughing. "Where was it that we met next? Wasn't it in the wood near the waterfall?"

"To be sure," said Max. "We thought the angels must have come down to the world again, but suddenly discovered that it was our little Colleen Bawn."

"Colleen Dhuv," corrected Doreen. "My hair was as dark then as it is now."

"Yes; but we called you after the red cloak which Miriam told us went by the name of a 'Colleen Bawn.' We saw the glimpse of red through the trees, and the song, we found, was too plaintive for an angel's song. It was, 'I wish I were on yonder hill.'"

"Ah, to be sure, a lovely air, but a very doleful ditty"; and Doreen, with that unconventionality and freedom from self-consciousness which characterized her, sang as they walked along the country road the sweet old Irish song:—

" 'I would I were on yonder hill,
'Tis there I'd sit and cry my fill,
Till ev'ry tear should turn a mill,
Is go d-teidh tu, a mhúirnin! stan.
Since my lover ceased to woo,
I have roamed the wide world thro'
To heal the heart he broke in two,
Is go d-teidh tu, a mhúirnin! stan.' "

"You have spoilt me for singing pathetic ballads!" she exclaimed, breaking off with a smile. "I am far, far too happy to make a good artiste."

The next day, leaving Mrs. Hereford to pay a duty call at the Manse, and to enjoy the lovely grounds of the hotel, Max and Doreen set off, on an outside car, for Lough Lee. The day was not unlike that memorable day in the past,—somewhat gray and misty, but with fitful gleams of sunshine. They dispensed with a driver, having no mind for a third person; and Max, though he professed to long for an honest English dog-cart, was glad enough to have the reins, and, in his heart, rather liked the motion of the jaunting-car. They were merry enough at starting, but as they drove through the narrow pass among the mountains, and gradually approached the too-familiar place, a silence fell between them. Doreen, at every abrupt turn in the road, feared to catch sight of the lough, and as they gradually descended, gaining nearer and nearer views of the mountains which surrounded it, her heart sank. At last the cold gleam of steely gray flashed into sight. She softly touched her lover's arm.

"There it is, Max," she said with a shudder.

He glanced at her a little anxiously.

"I don't believe I ought to have brought you here," he said. "Yet I fancied it might be a sort of relief to see it once more all these years after. How deserted it all looks! Ah! there is the little place where we hired the car. We will put up the horse there, and then walk along the shore. That is, unless you would rather go in the boat."

"No, no; let us walk!" said Doreen, a sort of horror seizing upon her at the idea of gliding over that cold, gray sheet of water, beneath which lay the body of the dead agent.

Max helped her to alight; it relieved her to hear him ordering tea to be ready in an hour. Something in his matter-of-fact tone reassured her, and she began to look forward to gladdening the hearts of old Larry and his wife with the presents they had brought. To reach the little cabin, it would be necessary to walk the whole length of the lake and round to the extreme corner. She tried to forget the horrible scene in the past, and the wild grandeur of the mountains in advance of

them appealed to her and for a time diverted her thoughts. She began to talk of other things, and to gather a bunch of the beautiful London pride, or Erin's pride, as she said it should be called, which grew in great abundance. Suddenly an exclamation from Max roused her.

"The cabin is gone!" he cried, looking across to the head of the lake. And there, sure enough, on the little plateau above the steep, rocky shore, Doreen saw that sight which is so painfully familiar in Ireland,—the rude outline of a stone cabin, deserted, roofless, telling its piteous tale of unwilling emigrants, or of harshly evicted tenants.

"Let us ask whether they have emigrated," she said. "See! there are three men over to the left, cutting turf in the bog. I dare say they will know all about it."

Turning away from the lake, they made their way towards the turf-cutters, who all paused to watch them as they approached, leaning on their curiously shaped spades, and evidently not sorry to be interrupted in their dull, monotonous work.

"Can you tell me what has become of old Larry Cassidy, who used to live here some years ago?" asked Max, addressing a pleasant-looking man of about thirty.

"It would be ould Larry that lived in the cabin by the lough that you are manin'," he replied, crossing the deep trench at which he had been working and coming towards them. "He's dead, yer honour; both of them are dead and buried these many years."

"Both dead!" said Doreen, with a little shiver. "But why is their house roofless and deserted?"

The man gave her a curiously cautious look, and apparently debated within himself what answer he should make.

"I'm thinking may be that the lady is Irish herself?" he said, eying Max somewhat more doubtfully.

"To be sure I am," said Doreen. "You'll have heard of Patrick O'Ryan that was so long imprisoned? I am his daughter."

"Sure then you're as welcome as the flowers in May," said the turf-cutter, his whole face lighting up and his manner altogether changing. "And proud is it that I am to be spakin' with ye. As for ould Larry and Norah, it was a cruel, hard case. Most of the land about here belongs to Colonel Mostyn, a rale good landlord, the best in the country. But as luck would have it, the bit down yonder belonged to Lord Byfield, and he, why, he niver comes near the place, and his agents have iver been a rascally crew. There was Mr. Foxell, who disappeared ten years ago,—the people they just hated him, and many think he was put out of the way. Then afterwards there was another, just as bad, named Stuart, and 'twas he that ruined ould Larry. 'Twas all for the laist little bit o' ground he'd made with his own two hands out of an ould stone quarry. Many's the time I've seen the crathur carryin' soil on his back to the place, and it took him years to do it. Then by and bye comes the agent and wants rint for this small little piece of land; but Larry he had sinse and spirit, and he stuck to it, that he'd made the land himself, and that 'twas his and not Lord Byfield's. The magistrates they agreed with him, and said 'twould be a cruel, hard thing to make him pay for his own work. But the agent he made Lord Byfield carry the case up to Dublin to the courts, and they said the law was against Larry, and so after all the crathur had to pay the rint. But by that time he'd fallen ill with the worry of it all, and the ould wife died, and Larry he lost spirit and said 'twas no use to work."

"And then," said Doreen, "the English tell us that we Irish are a lazy lot, and that all the distress is our own fault."

"When did this happen?" asked Max, with a pang of remorse for having neglected to come before and see how the sharer of his secret was prospering.

"Sure thin, yer honour, it must be many years ago now that he died. We did what we could for him, but there was no rousin' him up. He would sit by the hour together, spakin' niver a word, and at last after many threats there came the day when he was to be evicted; and thin it was that a bit of the ould spirit stirred again in him, and he barred the door and resisted to the last. Thin the agent gave orders to break open the door, and they dragged out the ould man and threw out his bed and his bits of goods. 'Twas little enough he had, the crathur, and we did what we could to hearten him up, and told him he should come home with us. But it was niver a word he was spakin', being past himself entirely. It was a cowld day in March, but there was no gettin' him away from the place; he stood yonder, all of a tremble, starin' at the men as they tore down the roof that he'd thatched himself nate enough in past times, and it wasn't till the agent had taken his cruel face out of sight that we could coax him back with us. My wife, she made him warm himself by the fire, and I

gave him a drink of potheen; but still he niver spake a word; only once late that evenin' as we sat round the hearth we saw him stare across with a kind o' wonderin' look at my wife as she sat there with little Dennis on her knee. He was a twelvemonth then, and sat up straight and strong on his mother's lap and stritched out both his hands to the ould man, for he was iver a friendly hearted child. And Larry he stared and stared and seemed pleased like, but still said niver a word; only we saw him cross himself, and his lips moved as if he was sayin' a prayer, and it's my belief that he thought he'd seen the Blissed Virgin and her Son. After that he fell asleep peaceful enough in the chair by the hearth, and my wife and I went to bed, but in the mornin', when we looked round, Larry was gone.

"'He's back to the ould home, you may be sure,' I said to my wife, and went out to find him; for we thought the cruel cowld wind would make him ill. But I'd not gone many steps when it came to my mind that I'd niver said any prayers that mornin', and I jist turned aside to St. Patrick's Cross before walking to the other end of the lough in search of Larry. Well, bein' in a hurry, I said my *Pater Noster* as I went, to save time, and was jist at the end of it, and about to kneel at the steps and say an *Ave*, when I saw that some one was there before me. It was Larry. He was with his two knees on the lowest step, and his head restin' against the foot of the cross. I let him be for a while, niver noticin' that he was too still by half; for the wind it blew his white hair and a ragged cloak he had to and fro. But by and bye, when it came to me that he was sayin' his prayers too long, I touched him, and he was as cowld as a stone. Then I took him up and carried him back to our cabin,—he was no great weight; but he was dead, yer honour, God rest his soul,—stone dead."

Doreen moved away, unable to keep back her tears. She heard the turf-cutter telling of the wake they had given him, and of how people came from far and near to it; but her mind had gone back to the past, and she was thinking of the kindly old face of the "Potato man," as Michael used to call him, and of the piteous desolation which had befallen him towards the close of his hard, monotonous life.

Max looked very grave when he rejoined her.

"I have told that fellow that we will just walk on to the cabin," he said; "and I gave him the things we brought. What a miserable thing it is to come back to a place too late!"

"It was through no fault of yours," she replied, ever ready to make excuses for him. "The eviction had nothing to do with that past time. The same thing about the ground made out of the disused quarry struck the new agent; poor old Larry's eviction was but hindered for a time by Foxell's death."

"Oh, if I had but been a few years older then!" exclaimed Max. "If I had only had the sense to induce John Desmond to speak the whole truth! The affair would have been a shock to my mother, and his idea of silence was honourably meant; but how much better it would have been to have had the whole thing above board from the first!"

"Yes," said Doreen, musingly; "a man in Mr. Desmond's position—practically an Englishman—would have had justice done him. They could scarcely have called it murder. I wish so much that we had not lost sight of poor old Larry and his wife. We ought to have thought of helping them."

"I ought to have thought," said Max. "You were a mere child; and after all, inquiry might possibly have roused suspicion at a time when the authorities were trying to discover the truth about Foxell's death. Yet I might have helped him quietly."

"How strange it is to think that we two alone in the whole world know about it," said Doreen. "It almost frightens me to think that. My old childish fear of telling it in my sleep comes back now and then. Ah, this is the place," she added, shrinking closer to him. "Just here they fought together, and here is the overhanging rock from which he fell."

But to Max that scene in the far past seemed less tragic, less terrible, than the tale they had just heard of the poor, ruined, miserable old man, ruthlessly dragged from the home that was dear to him, and dying broken-hearted at the foot of the wayside cross. More and more he began to feel that he was partly to blame for Larry's eviction and death. He might easily have managed to send money to the old man. It had simply not occurred to him. He had contented himself with hoping that Lord Byfield's new agent might be kind-hearted, and a great contrast to Foxell, and then he had done his best to dismiss as far as possible from his memory the whole of that disagreeable incident in the past.

Max, in common with most people of a sanguine temperament, sometimes fell into the mistake of too easily banishing uncomfortable topics from his mind. He was lacking, too, in that strong sense of responsibility which would have suggested that to all time Desmond and Doreen, and those other two who shared in the secret, had a special claim on him. That habit of putting away unpleasant thoughts was at once his strength and his weakness. It made him full of

buoyant trust in the present; it fitted him for his work as an ardent reformer, enabling him to kindle enthusiasm and hope in a thousand hearts; but it also occasionally led him into error, as in the case of old Larry, making him neglectful of plain duties which many a less noble nature would not have left undone, and at times blinding him to the truth in a way that sorely puzzled those who loved him. This sad story had startled him now into a perception of things as they really were. He stood at the threshold of the roofless cabin, conscious of his own shortcoming, saddened and humbled by all that he had heard. The very stones seemed to cry out to him to rise and do his part in helping those to right who suffered wrong. Indignation and strong sympathy replaced the sort of vague, hesitating pity with which he had hitherto regarded Irish grievances and Irish hopes. He drew Doreen closer to him.

"Dearest," he said, "I promised long ago on Kilrourk to speak for Ireland, and I renew the promise. But there is much I might have done that has been left undone. It is you who must help me in the future, you who must keep me true to my best desires. Do you promise?"

"I do," she said, with the same grave strength of simplicity with which she had taken her confirmation vow.

He pressed her to his breast. It seemed to her that the kiss that passed between them was the kiss of her life. Surely no other could ever be like it.

Slowly they retraced their steps, paused to speak a few words to the turf-cutter, and stood for a minute by St. Patrick's Cross, Doreen instinctively saying a prayer for Larry and his wife, Max too entirely wrapt in sad thoughts of the old man's hard fate to dream of any such thing. Then, after a silent tea at the rough little inn, they drove back again, Doreen, at the last moment, putting a gold coin into the hand of the child Dennis, who stood beside the jaunting-car, looking at the travellers with those friendly blue eyes of his, which to old Larry had seemed indeed divine.

CHAPTER XX.

"Sweet Wicklow Mountains! the sunlight sleeping
On your green banks is a picture rare.
You crowd around me, like young girls peeping,
And puzzling me to say which is most fair,
As tho' you'd see your own sweet faces
Reflected in that smooth and silver sea.
Oh! my blessing on those lonely places,
Tho' no one cares how dear they are to me."— LADY DUFFERIN.

"Doreen looks to me a little sad and depressed," said Mrs. Hereford, as that evening she walked with her son in the pretty gardens of the hotel.

"She is tired," said Max, "and this place is rather relaxing,—it makes me even lazier than usual," and he yawned comfortably with the same expression of relief and satisfaction as a dog.

"I don't like to hear you call yourself lazy," said his mother, glancing with pardonable pride at the well-knit muscular frame and at the fresh, glowing face that was so dear to her.

"It is a melancholy truth, though," said Max, smiling. "Had I not had you beside me, mother, I should have been the idlest vagabond in all creation. If I do any work in the world at all, why, it is nurture, not nature, that is to be thanked for it. I am lazy enough to be heartily glad now that Firdale is represented by a Conservative, and that John Steele is at this moment grilling in the House of Commons, while I walk in this garden of Eden with you."

"Well, I, too, am glad we are all here together," said Mrs. Hereford, smiling. "Doreen does not look as strong as I could wish, though, and I can't help thinking that she is fretting over old memories. No doubt this place makes her think of the days when she was here with her mother, and I well know that there is no time when a girl so longs for her mother as when she is just engaged."

"How well you understand her," said Max, touched by the words. "I think probably the place is a little trying for her; what do you say to moving on elsewhere?"

"Let us go to County Wicklow," said Mrs. Hereford. "I know she longs to see the Valley of the Seven Churches, where she was born. Perhaps, among her native mountains, she will get back her strength; when one comes to think of it all, the hard work and the anxiety and sorrow and then this sudden reaction of feeling has been a great strain upon her."

"Yes," assented Max, and he wondered to himself what his mother would have said could she have known all that Doreen had been called upon to bear.

It was arranged that they should go to Glendalough in two days' time, and Doreen seemed delighted at the prospect. They were fated, however, to come across yet another sad story as they drove to Kilbeggan Station. The driver, who had quickly discerned that there was no risk in talking openly to them, told them many details with regard to the various estates they passed.

Donal Moore had estimated the evictions throughout Ireland during the last six months at one thousand, and they questioned their coachman as to the state of things in the neighbourhood.

"There's one eviction case ye can see with yer own eyes," said the man. "I know the farmer meself, and he was a good, hard-working man; but there were over-many children, and then for three years the harvests were bad, and to pay the rent was just as difficult as to fill a sieve with water. Doheny would have paid, though, if his landlord would have given him time, but he showed no mercy at all."

"Was he one of the Castle Karey tenants?" asked Max.

"No, yer honour. Mr. Pethrick was his landlord, and it's true enough that he himself was pressed for money; but still he keeps up his carriage and pair, and his town house and country house, and has his guests and his amusements and a grand display. Such things can be afforded, but time for a tenant half ruined by the failure of the crops,—that he couldn't afford. They evicted Doheny two months since, and pulled down his well-built house that had cost him two hundred pounds, and now he's forced to shelter in a miserable shanty that we shall pass in a few minutes. There, miss, to the right, on that bit

of waste ground; that's what he's come down to, and he a respectable farmer."

"You don't mean that wretched shed!" said Doreen, glancing at a miserable collection of loose planks, and furze, roughly put together so as to bear some distant resemblance to a hut. "Why, no pig in England would be allowed to sleep in such a place. Look! there are some children playing outside. Poor little things, what a fate for them!"

"Stop!" cried Mrs. Hereford; "let us get out for a minute. We can, at least, give them our lunch."

And so the three travellers got out of the carriage, and to the no small delight of the evicted people, climbed up the bank to the door of the wretched shed, where a turf fire blazed in one corner, and the blue smoke wreathed its way out through the many yawning crevices which, on cold and wet nights, proved equally convenient apertures for incoming wind and rain. An extemporized bed, a few ragged shawls, a table, and some pots, pans, and crockery completed the furniture of this miserable shanty in which lived the ruined farmer, his wife, and eleven children. Doheny himself was away at work; he had obtained summer employment in the neighbourhood, and earned ten shillings a week. This kept them from starving, but it could not be expected to last, after which all that stood between them and that dreaded institution, the workhouse,—a place even more detested by the Irish than by the English poor,—was the kindness of the neighbours, who, one and all, sympathized with Doheny and execrated the landlord's cruelty. As Doreen talked to the mother,—a comely, blue-eyed, well-mannered woman,—a sort of fury of pity filled her heart; the sight of the little wan children, just as pretty and innocent and helpless as Mollie and Bride, made her eyes fill with tears. She remembered, with a shudder, that this eviction case was only one of a thousand. What was to set right this terrible wrong? How was the injustice of centuries to be remedied? Who would free her countrymen from the intolerable state of bondage under which they groaned? Who would deliver them from "Castle" rule, and give them a national Parliament, and remove those bitter grievances which had rankled so long in their hearts? Was it wonderful that from time to time there should be kindled, even in a naturally quiet and patient people, a blind wrath which threatened to break out into a revolution as overwhelming and terrible as that of the French peasantry when, maddened by long ages of tyranny, they rose and swept their foes from the land? She emptied her purse in that forlorn shanty, all the time miserably conscious that no temporary almsgiving could heal the sores of her country, that no tinkering legislation would suffice, but that before misery and distress and hatred could cease, the injustice itself must be removed, and Ireland, self-governed and self-respecting, must work out her own salvation.

Max was not sorry to get away from the south to a region where the distress was less severe, and where the relations between landlord and tenant were less strained. It was on a singularly beautiful summer's evening that they were set down at Rathdrum, and the beautiful valley of Clara, with its winding river, its verdant woods, its gorse-covered hills, seemed to Doreen even more lovely than in her childish recollections. If, perhaps, the mountains were not quite so high as she had imagined, there was yet all the time that indescribable charm of recognition, and happy memories seemed to flood the landscape with a glory which no Alpine scene could have possessed for her. Max enjoyed her pleasure unfeignedly; even the trivial little huts of the poor—the house with a stable door in the form of a horseshoe, the curious rhyme on the Rest House, the cottage where the old woman lived who had cried herself blind at the death of her husband—interested him, just because they brought into Doreen's face such a glow of excitement and happy recognition.

"And now look to your left," she cried; "there is the first of the seven churches, that tiny ruin down below us; and there is the round tower of Glendalough; and there the little lake; and on beyond, nestling among the mountains, you just catch a glimpse of the larger lake. Oh, how homelike it feels! How glad I am we came here!"

"What are all those cars?" asked Mrs. Hereford. "Why, look; there are dozens of them waiting outside the hotel."

"A funeral, I think," said Doreen. "There is a little graveyard close by, I remember."

Max having ordered dinner at once, the ladies went to their rooms to dress; but on coming down at the appointed time, found no dinner ready, only a worried-looking old waiter, who came up to them with many apologies. "You'll excuse us being a little late, ma'am," he said to Mrs. Hereford. "Dinner shall be ready in a few minutes, but we are all in a bustle. You see, ma'am, we didn't like to refuse the funeral."

"Oh, we are in no hurry," said Mrs. Hereford, pleasantly. "Was it some one from the neighbourhood who had died?"

"No, ma'am; from a great distance," replied the waiter. "'Tis a sacred place, you see,—Glendalough; people come here from all parts of the country to be buried."

The notion of people "coming to be buried" upset Max's gravity; he went out into the garden, shaking with laughter.

"That's a nice, cheerful remark to make to tired travellers who have come here to regain their health," said Doreen, gaily. "He might at any rate have waited till we had had dinner and were feeling a little better."

There still remained a week before they need return to London. The weather was perfect, and the two lovers enjoyed to their hearts' content the lovely shady walks by the lake; while Mrs. Hereford, who was something of an antiquarian, delighted in St. Kevin's chapel and kitchen, and made friends with the talkative old man, who loved to show off all the quaint relics that had been discovered. On the Monday they drove through the lovely vale of Avoca, and Max and Doreen spent one long day right in the heart of the mountains, driving by that magnificent road made in the time of the rebellion, and revelling in the keen, fresh air which blew through and through them as they climbed higher into a wild region of bog and mountain lake, while all about them rose a perfect sea of hilltops, stretching as far as the eye could reach in wave upon wave of gray and purple.

Doreen was full of anecdotes of the country; she remembered her father's stories about Holt and brave Susy Toole of Annamoe, and knew precisely the right path to take for a walk down to Lough Dan, where they borrowed a boat, and rowed slowly past the exquisitely wooded heights, grieving to think that they had only one more day left for County Wicklow, and making many plans for a return next year, possibly on their wedding journey.

The last morning proved gray and cloudy; but after a sharp shower, the sun came out, and Mrs. Hereford proposed that they should take a car.

"We ought to pay another visit to the Upper Lake," she said. "Let us take advantage of the sunshine. Surely a day that clears at eleven is promising even in Ireland."

So they set off together in excellent spirits, planning a drive in the afternoon to the Devil's glen if the weather should permit.

"You must certainly go there either to-day or on our way to the train to-morrow," said Doreen; "for unless my memory plays me false, it is one of the loveliest places in the whole county. Our waiter made another good remark yesterday when we asked about it. 'Oh, the Devil's glen,' he said, 'is well worth visiting; but the proprietor is in England, so you can't drive through, but must go on foot.'"

Max laughed. "I see you love to dispose of the devil and of the snakes in my country. But we will walk through the glen. What is the origin of the name, by the bye?"

"Oh!" said Doreen, with a smile that rippled over her whole face; "it is rather a nice old legend. St. Kevin, you know, was the greatest of saints; but he had one human weakness: he loved gadding about, and was not content always to remain in Glendalough, but would visit now one part of the country, now another. People wondered at this, and one day the saint's niece found out the reason. St. Kevin was bathing in the lake, and she kept watch at a little distance by his clothes to see that no one ran off with them. What was her surprise when she caught sight of two little devils sitting in his brogues. She called her uncle's attention to them, and he threatened to send them down to the bottom of the lake. 'Don't send us there,' implored the devils; "tis no great harm, after all, that we have done to your riverence; we only made you somewhat too fond of travelling.' Then St. Kevin felt sorry for the poor devils, and he said he would not send them into the lake, but instead he banished them to a certain wild and beautiful glen at a little distance; and ever after the good saint remained at Glendalough, nor desired to roam as before."

"I like those old legends about the human weaknesses of the saints," said Mrs. Hereford. "Stop the car, Max, for a minute; we shall get a good view of St. Kevin's bed across the lake just here."

There was a little break of about a hundred yards in a plantation of firs growing on the shore; the bank went sheer down on to a tiny strip of rocky beach, and across the calm lake they had a lovely view of the rugged Purple Mountains, and of the entrance to the cave known as St. Kevin's bed.

"I think Moore has been hard on Glendalough," said Mrs. Hereford. "This is not at all my idea of—

> " 'That lake whose gloomy shore
> Skylark never warbles o'er.'

Anything more peaceful and lovely I have never seen."

Max, who was driving as usual, felt just then a sudden strain upon the reins in his hand, and in another instant the horse was kicking and plunging desperately. A poor, half-witted man, in a white suit and outlandish straw hat wreathed with ferns, had suddenly emerged round the corner, and the horse, startled by the stealthy movements of this strange apparition, gibbed violently. A dreadful moment of uncertainty followed. They were within a hair's breadth of the little cliff above the lake, when suddenly the poor, half-witted creature settled the question. Seeing the great peril, yet powerless to help, he uttered a piercing cry, and threw his arms above his head. The horse, in spite of all that Max could do, gibbed again more frantically, and in an instant the car and its occupants were precipitated over the edge of the rock. Doreen was flung far out, but before there was time for more than the reflection, 'It is all over with us,' her dress had caught in a thorn-bush and she was thrown violently upon the bank.

She felt bruised and shaken, unable to think clearly, and when a bicyclist, who had chanced to pass by just at the time of the accident, came to her help, she scarcely realized for a minute that it was not Max who asked her whether she were hurt, and helped her to disentangle herself from the bush, which had probably saved her life.

"You are sure you are not hurt?" asked the traveller,—a pleasant-looking Trinity College student in bicycling dress.

"Not at all, thank you," she said half dreamily. Then with a sudden agony of recollection, "Where is Max? Is he hurt?"

"Your friend is over there by the car," said the student; "he is not hurt, but the lady is, I fear, injured. Don't go just this minute; they—they are trying to reach her."

But Doreen was not to be hindered; she struggled to her feet, and grasping the stranger's arm, made him help her over the rocks to the place where Max and two other men were lifting away the car from Mrs. Hereford's prostrate form. She pressed forward, and it was upon her knee that they placed the deathly white face. The only sign of injury was upon the left temple, but Max at the first glance knew that his mother was dead.

Perhaps it was owing to his own fall that he, as yet, felt nothing; he stood silently gazing down at the inanimate form; but Doreen, to whom the dread truth had also been revealed, scarcely gathered as she glanced up into his face whether he knew or not. She turned to the student who had helped her, and asked him to ride quickly to the hotel, and bid them to send help and to order the doctor as promptly as possible.

Meanwhile, the poor, half-witted man who had been the cause of the disaster had clambered down to the lake, and now he came shambling forward with his hat full of water, talking incoherently, but evidently imploring Doreen to bathe the deathly white face on her knee. She was touched by the poor fellow's thoughtfulness, and though she knew too well that all endeavours to restore life were vain, she took out her handkerchief and dipped it in the water, softly bathing that one dark spot on the left temple which had caused instant death. Perhaps she hoped that by doing so she might keep Max yet a little longer from realizing what had happened, or it might have been only her innate courtesy towards the poor Irishman, who stood watching them with the frightened gravity of a child. The next person to arrive was the old guide who had so greatly delighted in Mrs. Hereford's love of antiquities.

"Ah, poor lady!" he cried, his eyes filling with tears; "I little thought when we were all laughing yesterday at St. Kevin's chair that this would have been the end of it. 'Twas she herself said she didn't wish a long life, when she found that she could not span the cross down yonder, and fine and pleased she was that you young ones could span it, for she said she would like you to be spared this long while. How did it happen, thin, at all, at all?"

"The horse shied when that poor, half-witted fellow came suddenly round the corner," said Doreen, "and gibbed till the car went right over the bank on to the rocks."

"Poor mad Connor!" said the guide, shaking his head; "he's but a harmless fellow, and wouldn't hurt a soul for all the world. He doesn't belong to these parts, but has lived here since they evicted him from his home in Donegal. And it's mad he's been ever since the day they pulled down his house."

Max made no comment on the words, but he sighed heavily. It seemed to him impossible to stir at that time in Ireland without being confronted by the results of the bad land laws, and the bad harvests, and by the evicting landlord, who, like the servant in the parable, seized his fellow-servant by the throat, saying, "Pay me that thou owest," disregarding the entreaty, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all."

What was likely to be the end of it? He perceived, with the sort of dull pain which was all he was capable of feeling, that this accident which had robbed him of his mother was indirectly caused by the wrongs and sufferings of Ireland.

How long they waited there on the rocks by the side of the lake, he never knew; he had lost all sense of time, but the scene stamped itself indelibly on his brain. He could always see that little group of sympathetic strangers, and his mother's pallid face, contrasting so strangely, in its perfect peace, with the white, anxious, sorrowful face of Doreen. The girl was bare-headed, and the fall had loosened her hair, which hung in disordered curls about her face, making her look curiously like the child Doreen who had steered the boat on Lough Lee. Something, too, of the same expression of strong resolution, holding horror and dismay in check, could be traced in her firmly closed lips and earnest eyes. Beyond her stood poor, mad Connor, in his outlandish garments, still full of pathetic belief in the power of fresh water from the lake to restore life; and, in the background, one of the bicyclists talked with the old guide in a hushed voice, speculating as to when his companion would return with help from the hotel.

Alas! as Max knew too well, the help could do but little. When, at length, the landlord and several others came to their assistance, and the last painful journey had been effected, he needed no words from the doctor to make him understand that his mother was dead.

"There can have been no pain; nothing but the horror of the fall which you yourself passed through; then instantaneous death," said the doctor, turning away from the bedside.

Max tried to speak, but his voice failed him. For some minutes there was utter silence in the room, save for the subdued sobs of the faithful old Harding, who had been Mrs. Hereford's maid ever since her marriage. Then Doreen put her hand into her lover's, and drew him gently aside.

"You had better let the doctor look at your wrist," she said, leading the way to the next room. "I think it must have been sprained in the fall."

How she had noticed what he himself had been unconscious of, amazed Max; but there was relief in being guided like a child,—relief in the physical pain of the doctor's examination, and even in the pang of fear that shot through his heart as, for the first time, he realized the peril she had been exposed to.

"Are you sure you are not hurt, darling?" he said.

"Quite," she replied, disregarding the presence of the doctor, and bending over him with a caress which conveyed to him, better than any words could have done, her perfect sympathy and love.

"If there is anything I can do for you," said the doctor, "pray tell me. I am driving now to Annamoe and could send any telegrams you please."

"Will you send for General Hereford?" asked Doreen, gently.

Max groaned.

"I suppose I ought to ask him to come, and I am afraid he is in London again by this time."

He shrank inexpressibly from the thought of meeting any one; and his uncle, though kindly enough in his own way, was a man who would be likely to jar upon one who was in great trouble. Then he realized that for Doreen's sake it was necessary that some third person should come over at once, and with that thought came a more miserable consciousness of his loss than he had yet gained.

"Leave it to us," said Doreen. "We will see to everything"; and she left the room with the doctor, and going downstairs to the comfortable little private sitting-room, prepared to write the sad news, thankful to be able to spare Max in any way, but breaking down sadly as she drew towards her Mrs. Hereford's own writing-case to search for telegram forms, and noticed all about the room the signs and tokens of the one who had been so suddenly snatched away from them.

The doctor was glad to see her tears blistering the paper as she wrote. He knew that it was the natural and healthy relief in trouble, and that whereas her calmness and presence of mind had hitherto been an inestimable help to her lover, she might do even more for him now by that natural emotion which he would be little likely to yield to if left alone.

When the kindly Irishman had taken leave, and all the necessary arrangements had been seen to, Doreen sought out

Harding the maid, knowing well how much the faithful old servant would feel the death of her mistress. But Harding, who had broken down at first, became calmer directly she saw another in need of help and comfort, and Doreen found great consolation in her homely wisdom.

She looked through fast-falling tears at the peaceful, smiling face of the dead, and Harding, drying her own eyes, was glad to open her heart to one so thoroughly sympathetic.

"I never saw one that looked more happy, spite of the sad and sudden ending it has been," said the maid. "I have not seen my dear lady look so content since her marriage day. And I take it her whole life here has just been one long waiting,—her months of happiness were but few. And oh, miss!" she said, replacing the sheet once more over the beautiful face, "I think it would have broken her heart if the Lord had ordered it otherwise and you or the master had been killed when the car fell."

"But what can we do for him now, Harding?" sobbed the girl. "Oh, what can we do?"

Harding's advice was simple and practical.

"Let me come to your room with you, miss, and do up your hair," she suggested, "and we will ring and order tea to be taken in to the sitting-room, and then I'll persuade the master to come down and have some with you. He'll do anything for your sake, miss."

And so, shielded and helped in every way by these two, Max passed through the first terrible hours of his bereavement. In some ways they were far less painful than many of the hours he had to endure later on. He was partially stunned by the shock, and had not altogether realized what life without his mother would be to him. Doreen, too, had been able to silence his agony of questioning whether, if he had acted differently, the accident could possibly have been averted. For the time her childlike faith had soothed him, and worse doubts, which were to haunt him later on, had not as yet found place in his heart. He had heard of Harding's words about his mother, and as the evening wore on, he more and more realized the great danger through which Doreen had been kept unharmed, and her devotion and perfect understanding made him thank God that he was spared to a life which, without her, would have been blank indeed.

The next day dawned sadly enough for them, and Max, who was a novice in suffering of any sort, shrank inexpressibly from talking with any one; his sole comfort lay in wandering among the woods near the lake with Doreen beside him, and it tried him infinitely less to come within sight of the scene of the accident than to meet the sympathetic looks, still worse to hear the sympathetic words, of those at the hotel.

They kept on the further side of the lough, and presently found a little, sheltered nook beside a tiny waterfall, where they rested for hours, sometimes silent, sometimes talking a little, but always with that sense of perfect unity and rest in each other's company, which was their best comfort in this time of sorrow. On returning to the hotel, they found a telegram from General Hereford, who had reached Dublin early that morning and might be expected at Glendalough that very afternoon. Max sighed heavily and handed the paper to Doreen.

"He must have taken the night mail," she said, trying hard to feel grateful for his promptitude, yet shrinking inexpressibly from meeting one of whose dislike and disapproval she was too sensitive not to be perfectly well aware.

If Max had welcomed his uncle's advent, she would have been delighted to think that he would so soon be with them, but it was quite clear that he dreaded it above all things.

"I will leave you to meet him alone?" she suggested, thinking that probably this would make it less painful for him. But Max would not hear of such a plan.

"Don't go," he cried, snatching her hand in his, as they heard the arrival of the car, and the well-known hearty voice outside. "For Heaven's sake, stay and talk to him, for I can't!"

He threw open the door of the private sitting-room, and with an effort went out to greet General Hereford.

"My dear fellow, I'm so glad you sent for me!" said the old man, with a kindly greeting; "this is a terrible affair, terrible! I can hardly yet realize it."

"It is good of you to have come," said Max, struggling hard to control his voice. "If you will just go into this room for a

minute, I will see that your things are taken up."

And hurrying away upon this pretext, he left the General face to face with Doreen, who swiftly crossed the room to greet him, with the spontaneous warmth and hospitality which naturally came to her aid. He started a little on perceiving her, and his handshake was stiff and frigid.

"I was not aware that you were here, Miss O'Ryan," he said gravely.

Although, of course, he did not add the words, "And I am extremely sorry that you should be," his tone implied them. At any other time Doreen would have been half angry, half amused, but to-day the disapproval pained her.

"I was travelling with Max and his mother," she said, her voice trembling a little.

"Oh, indeed," he said, dropping into an armchair; "I was not aware of that. A most sad ending to your tour; you must, I am sure, regret having planned it."

Doreen was silent. The tour had been entirely planned by Mrs. Hereford, but she could not bring herself to say this; indeed, it was a moment or two before she could trust herself to speak at all, and the tears were still in her eyes when at last she said:—

"As you say, it was a most sad ending, and a terrible shock to Max. The only comfort is that he was not more hurt. His wrist will be well, they think, in a few days."

"It all comes of these abominable Irish cars," said the General, irascibly; "if you had been travelling in a civilized country it would never have happened. But what can you expect, when you have to deal with a lazy, unenterprising people, who rest content with old-fashioned vehicles of that sort?"

Doreen felt her blood grow hot, but she was not going to be betrayed into a quarrel with General Hereford while the dead body of his sister-in-law lay in the room above, and though trembling with suppressed anger, she forced herself to get up in silence and ring the bell.

"I will order tea," she said, after a brief, uncomfortable pause; "you must, I am sure, be very tired, after travelling all night."

The General, who was indeed both tired and sad, was obliged to recognize that this Irish girl, of whom he so strongly disapproved, could, on occasions, show a dignified courtesy which many a duchess might have envied.

"You must not think I meant anything personal," he said, with awkward anxiety, to make up for his unfortunate speech. "I look upon you, of course, as practically English."

He did not at all see that by this well-intentioned remark he had reached the very acme of rudeness, and Doreen could not resist the temptation of giving him a little thrust in return.

"You can't expect a descendant of the O'Ryans to take that as a compliment," she said, with a smile which somehow made him feel uncomfortable.

A knock at the door relieved him from the necessity of replying, but his brow clouded when he perceived a burly priest entering the room, holding in his hand a great bunch of arum lilies.

"Oh, Father Monahan, is it you?" cried Doreen, starting up to greet him.

"Forgive me for intruding," said the priest. "I saw Mr. Hereford outside, and thought I should find you alone. Will you use these lilies for the coffin? There was a hedge of them growing round a little cabin a few miles from here, and I thought you would like them."

"How very good of you!" said Doreen.

"Nay," said Father Monahan; "'tis the poor woman's gift entirely, for she would not hear of taking payment when she learnt what I wanted them for. You'll never find truer sympathy than the sympathy you get among the Irish poor."

General Hereford stalked across the room, and Doreen, rashly concluding that he meant civilly to admire the flowers,

introduced the priest; but the General, with the stiffest of bows, passed in dead silence out of the room.

"Oh!" cried Doreen, with an impatient gesture, "isn't it a miserable thing that even at such a time as this he must parade his contempt for the Irish!"

Father Monahan's kindly, weather-beaten face bore a look of perplexity. He well understood the needs and characters of his own flock. All his life he had been toiling among them, shepherding them with that wonderful individual care which perhaps reaches its highest development among the best and most conscientious of the parish priests in rural Ireland. But before this man of the world, this English officer bristling with the prejudices of his class and race and religion, the old priest stood fairly bewildered.

"I have observed," he said in his mild voice, "that there is a certain sort of Englishman upon whom the sight of a priest acts as a red rag acts upon a bull. I am sorry I happened to come in at so inopportune a moment."

Doreen could only comfort herself with the reflection that Max did not share in his uncle's prejudices, but she went upstairs to weave the arums into a wreath, with a very sore heart.

Sitting beside the open window in her bedroom, however, the peacefulness of the summer afternoon gradually stole into her heart. She was glad that the room had no view of the lake, only a distant view of the mountains towards Laragh, looking higher than they were, in reality, through the soft, luminous haze. Down below she could see the cows wandering into the yard to be milked, and pausing to drink at the round stone fountain in the centre. The cowherd crossed over to one of the sheds with his stool and milk-pail clattering cheerfully, while the beautiful air which he whistled, "Billy Byrne of Ballymanus," took her right back to the days of her childhood, and made her realize how true in many ways is the poet's saying, that "memory is possession."

It was a comfort, too, that she had much to do for Max, and his look of relief, when she appeared again at dinner-time and contrived to keep General Hereford talking serenely about his visit to the Riviera, repaid her again and again for the effort it cost her. Later in the evening, when the General was dozing over his newspaper, the two lovers wandered out in the summer twilight, past the little stream, and into the old churchyard close by. The ruins looked dim and ghostly in the dusk, and the old round tower stood out solemnly against the pale sky. There was something comforting to Doreen in its mere strength and its great age. She loved to think of the old times when free Ireland had held an honoured place amongst the nations, and when this quiet little Glendalough had been the school to which youths from all parts of Europe had been sent for education. Then she sighed as she remembered that the place so especially dear to her must ever have for Max the most sad associations.

"Our last night here," she said softly. "I am afraid you will never wish to see this place again."

"Don't say that," said Max, quickly. "The place where my mother spent her last happy days can never be spoilt for me. I shall certainly want to see it again. You and I will come together."

She gave him a mute caress. Then, after a few minutes, resumed once more, with much more brightness in her tone:—

"I had been half afraid that this must give you a distaste for Ireland. I am so glad it has not done that."

"I think it is quite the other way," said Max. "It has made me more than ever anxious to serve your country, darling."

She looked up into his face, and something in its expression of pure and noble purpose made her heart throb with eager joy, and with all her being she thanked God that it had been given to her to love a good, true-hearted man, who was ready, cost what it might, to take up a cause that was likely to win him infinite disapproval.

CHAPTER XXI.

"Earth, air, and sun, and skies combine
To promise all that's kind and fair;—
But thou, O human heart of mine,
Be still, contain thyself, and bear."— A. H. CLOUGH.

It seemed to Doreen, when afterwards she looked back, that the evening talk in the churchyard at Glendalough marked a turning-point in her life. It was the high tide, so to speak, of her perfect content with her betrothal. The very sadness of the moment only threw into stronger relief the rapture of the consciousness that Max was hers, that she was his. And even the remembrance of General Hereford's hostility only raised in her mind a triumphant sense that Max was the one Englishman she could possibly have married, and that he, at any rate, loved and understood her country.

But no sooner had they left Ireland, and after the night journey found themselves, early in the morning, on the desolate platform at Euston, than the miserable incompleteness of their present position forced itself upon her. It was terrible to her to be sent away with Harding in a cab, and to be forced to leave Max, with the General fussing at his elbow, to superintend all the painful arrangements for the funeral at Monkton Verney. Her heart cried out to be with him through it all, and it was with an intolerable effort that she turned back to her public life and to the weary fulfilment of those July engagements which could not be shirked, however distasteful to her in her present mood. Happily there were the children with their eager welcome and their delight at her return to cheer her failing heart. Chubby-cheeked Bride, with her air of guileless simplicity; blue-eyed Mollie, with her clinging caresses; dreamy, tender-hearted Dermot; and chivalrous Michael,—made a goodly quartette. She tried to forget how soon she would have to leave them again for that dreaded American tour, and lived as much as possible in the present.

The first meeting with Lady Rachel and Miriam took place on the day of Mrs. Hereford's funeral. Max, who had gone straight down to Monkton Verney with his uncle, had written to say that a special carriage would be reserved for them in the ten o'clock express on the day of the funeral, and had specially asked his aunt to call at the house in Bernard Street for Doreen. His *fiancée* would have preferred going alone, but acquiesced in his arrangements as being no doubt the right thing; and, though Lady Rachel grumbled at the task assigned her, she could not well decline it.

"I wish Max had never come across this Irish girl," she murmured, as they drove in the direction of Bloomsbury; "nothing but evil has come of the connection. It was a sad day when your aunt first took it into her head to spend a summer at Castle Karey. I remember it was all in order that Max might read better before he went to Oxford. Poor woman! she little thought what a train of disasters were to follow on that apparently sensible scheme."

"Auntie was very fond of Doreen," said Miriam, "and indeed, mamma, I think she and Max suit each other splendidly. It is great nonsense to pretend that he is making a *mésalliance*, for, as a matter of fact, the O'Ryans are just as good as we are. If the father and the grandfather had been cringing office-seekers, they would have been rich enough by this time; but they were too honest for that, and preferred to be outspoken Nationalists."

"My dear, don't speak of it," said Lady Rachel, with an impatient wave of the hand; "the girl has the most disgraceful pedigree I ever heard of: a great-grandfather killed in the Rebellion; a grandfather forced to fly for his life in '48, and dying of privation among the mountains; a father who began his career as a follower of Smith O'Brien, was afterwards a Fenian, and ended up with being a Home-ruler. What can you conceive worse than that?"

Miriam laughed.

"I detest politics," she said, with a little shrug of the shoulders; "but really, speaking as an unprejudiced neutral, I should say it looked as if the O'Ryans had the courage of their opinions."

"My dear," said Lady Rachel, plaintively, "I do hope you will not get into the way of using phrases like that; they are all very well for an article in the 'Times,' but upon your lips they have a very unwomanly sound."

"Here we are in Bernard Street," observed Miriam, serenely. "I am curious to see whether Doreen will sacrifice her own prepossessions or yours in the way of mourning."

"I do trust you will not catch any of these foolish notions about reform," said Lady Rachel, looking down complacently at her gruesome crape-bedecked raiment, over which the luckless dressmaker's employées had been ruining their health and

their eyesight all the previous night.

"Doreen says that two hundred years ago it was thought absolutely necessary to put even one's bed into black," said Miriam, with a mischievous smile; "perhaps the generations to come will think our mourning clothes just as foolish. Ah, here she comes, in a black serge travelling dress she had ordered for the voyage to America, and with the coloured flowers taken out of her Sunday bonnet. That is a compromise out of regard to your feelings, mamma."

Doreen was pale and subdued; there was no crape on her attire, but in her face there were tokens of a genuine grief which touched Miriam's kindly heart. Curiously enough, though Lady Rachel approved so strongly of grief expressed in millinery, she condemned every other expression of grief as "bad taste," and after a few formal inquiries, she left the two girls to themselves, relapsing, as soon as they were settled in the railway carriage, into a comfortable nap. Miriam had always regarded Doreen with a good deal of admiration, and now she was grateful to her for having saved her from the necessity of marrying Max. She talked kindly of the engagement, and asked many questions about Castle Karey and the last days at Glendalough, learning from Doreen much that she had not gathered from her father's letters. Indeed, the General had been so fussily full of funeral arrangements, that he had told them scarcely anything.

"Papa is in his element at such a function as this," said Miriam, irreverently. "He will, no doubt, have been a great help to Max; though as the one is all for simplicity and quiet, and the other all for pomp and ceremony, there must have been a contest of wills. But papa is a very useful man at a wedding or at a funeral; he always manages things without any hitch. Here is the list of the carriages," and she handed to Doreen a black-bordered card with the order of the guests.

The girl with a little shudder of distaste glanced down it, observing that in the first carriage Max and General Hereford drove alone, and that in the last the names were: Miss Hereford, Colonel Hanbury, Miss O'Ryan, Mr. Claude Magnay.

"Is that Mr. Magnay the artist?" she inquired.

"Yes; he is a second cousin of ours, and not unlike Max in some ways, though a little older, of course. I shall have to walk with Colonel Hanbury, and I detest him; he was auntie's first cousin. Mamma ought to have had him by rights, but I see she is put down to Sir Henry Worthington."

The name brought a momentary relief to Doreen.

"I am glad he will be there," she said. "Ah, there is Rooksbury just coming into sight!" And through fast-gathering tears she looked across the meadows to the firclad hill, the outline of which would always recall so many happy memories.

At Firdale Station they were met by the General, and during the drive to Monkton Verney, Doreen suffered many things at his hands; for Dermot's "Mr. Worldly Wiseman" was full of sore-hearted vexation as he realized that, before long, this girl with no money, and no special beauty, dowered only with a rebel ancestry and obnoxious opinions, would be the mistress of the very house he had so coveted for his own daughter. That Miriam sat contentedly beside her on the best of terms, only increased his annoyance; and though Doreen was too true an Irishwoman ever to be at a loss, and had an enviable gift of turning her antagonist's weapons against himself, yet his utter lack of courtesy and kindness tried her grievously, rousing a storm of indignant protest within her.

It was a relief to turn from his undisguised hostility to the chivalrous sympathy of Sir Henry Worthington,—one of those old-fashioned Tories that the most progressive of mortals would regret to lose from public life. He evidently realized that it was hard upon the two lovers to have to meet formally in the drawing-room, and to shake hands conventionally under the gaze of the assembled guests; but General Hereford seemed bent on keeping them from having even a moment's privacy, and though at lunch Doreen found herself beside Max, they did not derive much comfort from that.

At the funeral she was not even beside him, and afterwards the ladies of the party had tea in the drawing-room, while the gentlemen spent what seemed an unconscionable time in the library over the reading of the will.

Lady Rachel and Miriam intended to sleep that night at Monkton Verney; but Doreen, much against her will, was obliged to return to town for an engagement. As the time approached when it was absolutely necessary for her to leave, she grew more and more restless, and when at length she heard the library door opened and a sound of footsteps in the hall, she sprang up, and with a murmured apology to Miriam, who was in the midst of a description of Henley, went out in the hope of finding Max disengaged.

The time left would be short indeed, but her heart leapt up joyously at sight of the well-known figure standing near the

window at the further end of the hall, trying to look out a train in the railway guide.

"At last we are alone!" she exclaimed, coming quickly towards him. "I thought General Hereford meant to keep us apart for ever."

"I beg your pardon," said Claude Magnay, turning round with an apologetic, kindly glance. "It is not the first time that I have been mistaken for my cousin. I suppose at a little distance there must be a good deal of likeness."

"Yes," said Doreen, startled and a little dismayed; "I was quite deceived. Have they nearly done in the library?"

"Very nearly," said Claude, quick to discern the weariness and impatience which a less keen observer would have failed to notice. "It must have been a dreadful day for you two. Max must be longing to get rid of us all."

"I am obliged to leave for London by the five o'clock train," said Doreen. "Unluckily I have to sing in Farquhar's new Oratorio. No other soprano could be found to learn the music at such short notice."

"You will be very tired," said Claude. "But let us at any rate circumvent the General's plan of campaign," and with a smile which cheered Doreen's forlorn heart, he strolled across the hall to the library, and opening the door, put in his head.

"Max," he said, "just one word with you here. I'll not keep you a minute." Then as his cousin stepped out of the library, glad enough to escape from the weary talk of the lawyer and General Hereford, Claude added in an undertone, "As one side of the family seems bent on keeping you and your *fiancée* apart, I thought the other side had better pull in the opposite direction. Miss O'Ryan has to leave by the 5.5, and so have I. Can't you drive down to the station with us?"

"Yes," said Max. "And for goodness' sake, do go and keep Uncle Hereford at bay for a few minutes, while I speak to Doreen."

Claude nodded assent; and while the lovers retreated into the oak parlour, thankful to snatch even a few minutes of peace out of the miserable day, he contrived to make Sir Henry Worthington understand the situation, and to pacify the General with assurances that Max would return almost immediately. Nor was this his only piece of kindness; for after the General had seen him safely into the closed carriage with Max and Doreen, he discovered the moment they had passed the gates that he had a headache, and that nothing but a cigar on the box would cure it; so that once more the two were left to themselves.

"How good he is!" said Doreen. "We owe this to his management. Oh, Max! I wish I need not run away and leave you like this. If Madame De Berg had been on good terms with me, she could have taken my place to-night; but of course she wouldn't stir a finger to help a rival, and no one else knew the music."

"Have you many more engagements?" asked Max. "I hate to think of your going back to-night to sing that trying part, when already you are tired out."

"I have no engagements in London after the 25th, and little enough after that until we go to America, except an occasional concert in the provinces."

"An idea has just come to me," said Max. "Why should you not bring the children down here for the rest of the summer? I will get some cousin or aunt to see to the house and satisfy the proprieties."

"Not Lady Rachel!" pleaded Doreen. "I am sure she hates me, and indeed I am afraid none of your relations are likely to approve of me, specially just now."

"There is one who already likes you," said Max, "and that is Claude Magnay. If we could persuade him to come down and paint in the neighbourhood, and could induce his little French wife to take charge of things at Monkton Verney, nothing could be better."

"Should I get on with her?" asked Doreen, doubtfully.

"With Espérance? Why, of course you would. She has been through so much herself, poor little woman, that you may be quite sure she will sympathize with you. There are two children who would fit in well with Mollie and Bride."

They became quite cheerful in talking over this plan, and discussed it anew with Claude at the Firdale station. He fell in with the idea readily enough, and secretly enjoyed thwarting the General's unamiable scheme. But he knew that Uncle Hereford was an old campaigner, and was thoroughly convinced that the lovers would find it no easy task entirely to baffle him.

August proved as happy as any month could be which lay between the tragedy at Glendalough and the dark shadow of the coming separation. It was at any rate peaceful, and there were no jarring elements in the house. Espérance, with her tact and sympathy, her little, gracious, foreign manner, and her quick understanding of the two lovers, proved an ideal mistress of the ceremonies. She and Doreen became firm friends, while little Noel and Aimée adopted the O'Ryan children from the first, and kept the saddened household bright with their laughter and play.

With what a grievous struggle Doreen left all this behind and joined the concert party at Liverpool to keep that American engagement, from which there was no escaping, can well be imagined. Max would have travelled down with her and seen the last of the steamer, but, knowing how trying this would be to him in every way, she had persuaded him to remain at Monkton Verney, where the party was not to break up for another week.

"It is better for me," she urged, "to get all my good-byes over at once, and I shall like to think that I leave the children with you. To see people off in a steamer is always a mistake. Nothing accentuates the parting so much."

So Max was forced to content himself with putting her into the train at Euston, his blank depression being for a time relieved by the pretty sight of little Una Kingston's happiness.

The child stood waiting for Doreen on the platform, her violin-case in her hand, and a smart French maid keeping guard over her luggage. There was something forlorn-looking about this fragile little prodigy about to be launched on that long, wearing tour, for which her strength seemed wholly inadequate. But there was no mistaking the intense delight with which she greeted Doreen, or the shy sympathy with which she regarded the lovers in the last hard moments of farewell.

"You see I abdicate in my rival's favour," said Max, glad to relieve his pain by jesting with the child.

Una's pretty face lighted up with an expression he had never seen on it before.

"Oh, I will take such care of her," she said fervently, as the engine slowly steamed out of the station; and the words rang consolingly in Max Hereford's ears, as he glanced for the last time at the blue eyes, and at the lips which smiled for his sake but could not speak.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Like morning, or the early buds in spring,
Or voice of children laughing in dark streets,
Or that quick leap with which the spirit greets
The old, revisited mountains,—some such thing
She seemed in her bright home. Joy and delight
And full-eyed Innocence with folded wing
Sat in her face....
What needed pain to purge a spirit so pure?
Like fire it came,—what less than fire can be
The cleansing Spirit of God?"— WILLIAM CALDWELL ROSCOE.

It would have been well for Max if he had been forced at this time to work for his living, but unfortunately there was no necessity for him to do anything. He could not even do very much at Monkton Verney. The house was so big and desolate that he could not face the thought of spending the autumn there, and it was impossible for him to entertain so soon after his mother's death. The plans for the new scheme about the Priory ruins lost their interest now that Doreen was no longer there to discuss them, and the General, who disapproved of the idea with his whole heart, threw every obstacle in the way. Ultimately, it was arranged that Monkton Verney should be let for a year, and Max took up his quarters in the house in Grosvenor Square, which seemed less dreary. Then began that worst of all stages, when people thought it was time that he forgot his sorrow, though in truth it was just beginning to overwhelm him, to cloud his mind with bitter questionings, to eclipse his faith, and to affect him physically in a way which not one of his friends understood. The Herefords made much of him. He escorted Miriam that winter to one place and another, proving himself just the convenient cavalier that he had done in the old times, and dropping naturally into the habit of going to the house in Wilton Crescent every day; but there seemed no life in him. He drifted aimlessly on, waking each morning with a resentful remembrance that he was called upon to live somehow through another day, and idly wishing that it were ended.

The only things which stirred him a little were Doreen's letters. They were hastily written in the cars, with a stylographic pen, and were hard to read; but nevertheless they were like waters to a thirsty soul, and their graphic, unconventional descriptions of the life in the travelling company for the time stimulated him into a sort of semblance of returning energy. Something of Doreen's breezy, sunshiny, open-air nature seemed to pass into him through those love letters, and generally after receiving one he used to walk round to Bernard Street and see Mrs. Garth and the children. He hated seeing the house without Doreen, but the children refreshed him, and their delighted welcome always pleased him. They seemed to regard him as one who belonged to them. Yet children are quick to discern changes, and Mollie and Dermot puzzled their small heads not a little over the change in their future brother-in-law.

"Is it losing his mother that makes Max never seem to care much for things?" asked Mollie one day at nursery tea.

"He never seems to speak in public now," said Dermot, "and he told Michael he was sick to death of coffee taverns and temperance, and the sort of things, you know, that used to be his hobbies."

"Has he given up all his work?" asked Hagar Muchmore, in her brisk voice. "I thought he looked kinder down-hearted. I guess he's taken offence with the Almighty."

The phrase lingered in Bride's mind. She puzzled much over it, and on Sunday afternoon, when Max happened to find her alone in the nursery with a bad cold, she waxed confidential in the twilight.

"The others will be home soon, from church; then we shall have tea," she said, climbing on to his knee and begging his ring to make seals on her fat little wrist. "I want to know, Max," she added, after an interval, "what people do when they take offence?"

"They don't come to your house and have tea with you," said Max, smiling; "so, you see, I have not taken offence with you."

"What else don't they do?" asked Bride, her inscrutable, childlike eyes gazing far down into his.

"Well, they don't talk to you; they try not to meet you."

"What makes them take offence?"

"I suppose, generally, they fancy that people have treated them unkindly or unjustly."

"But Doreen told me God never could leave off being kind and good to anybody, and of course I know my own self He never could," said the baby theologian, with a depth of conviction in her tone which might have silenced a whole bench of bishops; "and yet Hagar says she guesses you've taken offence with the Almighty."

Max started as though some one had stabbed him; then the humour of the words struck him, and he laughed.

"Mrs. Muchmore is a very shrewd woman," he said. "But you are quite right, Bride, and Doreen—why of course Doreen is right; and now let us have no more theology, but jump on my back, and I will give you a ride."

Instantly the puzzled little face relaxed into the broadest smile of content, and with a vigorous war-whoop of delight, Bride urged on her willing steed, who good-naturedly leapt chairs and foot-stools with an energy which surprised himself.

"I don't know what has come to Max," said Miriam one January day as they lingered round the breakfast-table; "I can't stir him up at all. He is as dull as a dormouse, and does nothing all day long but sit in an armchair and smoke."

"Well, my dear," said Lady Rachel, with a touch of bitterness in her tone, "in the old times you used to complain of all his philanthropic hobbies; you are really rather difficult to please."

"I want him to be like other men," said Miriam, impatiently. "Max never can do anything by halves; if he works, he must work like a galley-slave; and if he idles, he must idle with all his might."

"My theory is that he begins to realize the mistake he has made," said the General. "I have once or twice seen him much moved by the accounts of these dastardly Irish outrages. Think what it must be for a man, brought up as he has been, to find himself tied to a girl who is hand and glove with these Home-rulers,—these dastardly outrage-mongers and moonlighters, these cowardly brutes who torture cattle, and for whom hanging is too good."

"Doreen is the last person to approve of outrages," said Miriam, with the aggravating coolness of one not greatly interested in the subject.

"Oh, depend upon it she does approve in her heart, whatever she may say," replied the General, angrily. "I only wish the whole of Ireland could be dipped beneath the Atlantic for four-and-twenty hours. We need a second flood to exterminate the Irish race; then, maybe, there would be peace and quiet."

"Well, papa," said Miriam, laughing, "you are really worse than the moonlighters, who, at any rate, don't go in for such sweeping measures as that. Why, here comes Max! What can make him so early? And he really looks more alive than he has done for many months."

Even his knock at the door seemed a trifle more energetic than usual, and when he entered the room, the General observed that the dull, listless look in his eyes had utterly gone.

"I just looked in to say that I can't ride with you to-day as we arranged," he said, glancing at Miriam. "I have heard that Doreen's steamer will reach Liverpool this afternoon, and I am going to meet her."

"Tell her," said Miriam, mischievously, "I had just been complaining that you were as dull as ditch-water, and that we all welcome her back with delight, in the hope that she will make you less of a bear."

"Have you read this shocking account of cattle-maiming in Kerry?" said the General, gloomily, holding out the newspaper to his nephew.

But Max evaded it with a murmured excuse that it would keep for the journey. As far as possible, he avoided talking of Irish matters with the General, partly because he disliked quarrelling with his uncle; partly because, in common with many other Radicals, he was honestly puzzled about the whole Irish question; and partly from sheer lazy disinclination for the trouble discussion would have involved.

What did it all matter to him as he travelled down to Liverpool, knowing that before long he should once more see Doreen? The whole miserable wrangle became only infinitely tiresome to think about, and faded utterly from his mind in the passionate enjoyment of his reunion with the one woman in the world who had the power of really touching his heart.

Nearly five months had passed since the lovers had parted, and the time which Max had spent in listless, idle existence, had by Doreen been filled to the brim with arduous work; the tour had been in every way a success, and on the whole the party had been a congenial one. There had been occasional rubs caused by Doreen's hot Keltic temperament, and Madame St. Pierre's somewhat stiff and conventional theories of life; but Ferrier was always a delightful man to work with, and he usually managed to smooth down those storms which will occasionally rise when seven people of different nationalities and tastes travel together for many weeks. Doreen's sunshiny brightness aided him not a little. She had always been popular in the profession, and there was something about her fearless simplicity, her absolute purity of life, that invariably won her respect. To Una Kingston her life and character were a sort of revelation; to the child who had been dragged up anyhow, forced from her very babyhood to mix with all sorts and conditions of men, and tossed out at the age of eleven to fight her way through public life as best she might, with only the axioms of a bad and unscrupulous woman like her cousin to guide her, the friendship of the Irish *prima donna* was just salvation. Unluckily, however, the long railway journeys, and the incessant round of concerts, told severely on the child's physical powers, and it went to Doreen's heart to see how grievous a strain the thoughtless public were allowing her to undergo. All she could do was to take the utmost care of the little violinist, to protect her from the plague of interviewers, to make her rest whenever it was practicable, and to help her to fight against those nervous terrors which generally trouble delicate children, blessed or cursed with the artistic temperament. Her own vivid remembrance of the nightly agonies she had endured after any specially exciting time during her youth gave her the clue to Una's air of weary exhaustion when she came down to breakfast; and, being convinced that the child must be spared as much as possible, she took the forlorn little violinist into her own bedroom, after which her nights improved in a wonderful way, though even with company her terrors would sometimes overmaster her, and Doreen would be roused by a shivering little white figure who, with many apologies, would explain that she really could not endure the horrid feeling of sinking through the bed any longer, and would Doreen hold her and not let her die? At other times it would be a haunting fancy that the room was full of eyes,—eyes of every sort and size,—all staring their hardest at her; or, very frequently, a face which she had seen during the day would haunt her with an intolerable persistence. Doreen being one of those who understood,—being, moreover, a woman in whom the motherly instinct was supreme,—was never impatient with her.

"It makes me laugh," said Una once, "to hear the critics talk of the beautiful tenderness of your voice. What do they know about it? They have never heard it, as I have heard it, in the middle of the night, in the dreadful stillness."

"Indeed," said Doreen, smiling, "I think most women speak tenderly to a child in the night. 'Tis second nature to them."

"But no one ever spoke so tenderly as you do," said Una. "No one ever spoke as if I belonged to them."

It was a good proof of the advance the little girl had made during the American tour, that she greeted Max with cheerful friendliness. If she felt any jealous pang, she kept it to herself, discreetly reading "The Gayworthys" all the way to London at the far end of the railway carriage, and doing her best to smile when, as they drew near to the end of their journey, Max and Doreen began to talk to her, and to make plans as to their next meeting.

"Poor little child!" said Doreen, with a sigh, when Una, and her violin, and her maid had been safely put into a hansom; "she is going back to a hard life and a miserable home. It makes me feel selfish to have so bright a life in contrast."

"Life must always be bright to you, who go about the world cheering other people. But, oh, my dear Daystar," said Max, using one of his favourite names for her, "it has been black as pitch to me while you have been away."

"There shall be no more American tours," she said gaily. "I feel like the Peri at the gate of paradise; my task is nearly done."

"And then, in the summer," said Max, "we will have our wedding tour in Ireland, and come back to Monkton Verney in October, when the present tenants have turned out, and you shall lay the first stone of the new building."

"And with it, lay the ghost," said Doreen, merrily. "You will see he will go when 'the land is freed from stain,' as old Goody told us."

The happy greetings of the children and of Aunt Garth were over, and they were gathered round the drawing-room fire, lingering lazily over afternoon tea, and all laughing and talking together, as only Irish people can talk, when the servant announced "Mr. Moore." With a glad cry of "Donal! Donal's come!" the three children launched themselves joyously upon the newcomer, whose bush of grizzled hair always struck one as contrasting so curiously with his young face.

"I just looked in to see you," he said, "and to welcome you back; for Michael told me you were expected; and as it's my maxim to 'take the good the gods provide you' while you can get it, I lost no time in calling."

"And acting on the same maxim, you must have tea, and potato cakes, and your favourite chair," said Doreen, gaily. "Who can tell when you may not be in prison again?"

"Who indeed!" said Donal Moore, tranquilly, as he stroked little Bride's round, rosy cheek. "I am going this evening to Dublin. The Irish party will fight this Coercion Bill tooth and nail, but, for all that, it is certain to pass, and I go back to work while it is possible. The night is coming, when I shall only be able to chafe in prison at the knowledge that our land is given over to the tender mercies of the Chief Secretary, and the misdirected zeal of those who will be maddened by his repression."

"They will surely not imprison you?" said Max, glancing at the kindly-faced Kelt. He was sitting with Dermot and little Bride, one on each knee, and the firelight played on his broad, intellectual forehead, and lighted up his quiet, thoughtful eyes.

"Well, I don't see how they can do it yet," he replied, with a smile. "But when once the Coercion Bill is passed, I fancy most of the Irish leaders will be furnished with a cell, rent free, in Kilmainham. You see, the Chief Secretary considers me one of the worst of 'those bloodthirsty Land Leaguers' who lead the Irish tenants astray, and poison the love which they naturally feel towards their landlords." His tone was so full of humour, that there was a general laugh. "It is all very fine," he continued gravely; "we are amused now at the fancy sketch he draws, but it will be no laughing matter by and bye. If he imprisons the leaders of the Irish people, there will be the devil to pay; for the leaders guide and restrain; they do their very utmost to discourage violence."

"Of course one can understand," said Doreen, musingly, "that if captain and crew are struck down, the people, more likely than not, will run the good ship upon rocks or quicksands."

"Just so," replied Donal Moore; "if the leaders are imprisoned, and open agitation against grievances be made impossible, the secret societies which are the curse of all oppressed countries will inevitably spring up in a night, like mushrooms."

Max felt stimulated by the Irishman's words, by the entire sincerity of his manner, by the quiet conviction of his tone. This man was no noisy demagogue, no self-seeking agitator, but a patriot, with the courage and devotion which Englishmen so greatly admired in Garibaldi.

"And what is the truth of this new cattle-maiming story?" he asked, with a remembrance of General Hereford's gloomy face over that morning's paper.

"It is correctly reported, I am afraid," said Donal Moore. "It was a dastardly outrage, and one which we all strongly condemn. But turn for a moment from a harrowing and detailed newspaper description to dry statistics, and let us see if the English are justified in the outcry made, or the abusive words used as to Irish barbarity. During ten months in Ireland —ten troubled months—there were forty-seven cases of killing and maiming cattle. Whereas, during twelve months in England there were three thousand five hundred and thirty-three convictions for cruelty to animals. We don't dub you fiends, or propose to destroy the liberties of a nation because a certain percentage of Englishmen are blackguards. There has been enormous exaggeration of the outrages in Ireland, and that was clearly proved by one of your own countrymen the other night in the House."

"There are a few Englishmen, then, who will stand by us?" asked Doreen. "I have, of course, missed the papers for some days."

"A few Radicals," said Donal Moore; "but you may count them on the fingers of one hand."

"Donovan Farrant is among them," said Max. "He is the sort of man who is not likely to be swept away with the general wave of indignation which has passed over the country. Maybe the slight strain of Irish blood in him gives him the power to understand you better than others."

"You are thoroughly English, and yet you have the power," said Doreen, with a glance of loving confidence. But Max shook his head.

"No; I am more and more convinced every day that my sole hope of understanding the Irish problem is through you. While you have been away I have been altogether out of touch with the subject. It is a good thing, after all, that I lost that election, or you might have lived to see me voting for the Coercion Bill."

"Oh no, no!" protested Doreen; "I think you would surely have taken the line Mr. Farrant has taken."

"And lost my seat at the next election in consequence."

"Perhaps; but that would have been glorious, and you would have been secure of a seat in Ireland."

"Be very sure of this, Mr. Hereford," said Donal Moore, gravely, "the more repressive the Chief Secretary becomes, the more stubborn will be the resistance made by the Irish. Already he has interfered with the right of public meeting. The new year began ominously with the forcible dispersion of a meeting by one of his emissaries, who, not content with a huge body of police with fixed bayonets, threatened to have the people shot down. Now, I ask you candidly, would Englishmen endure this even from their fellow-countrymen? Of course they would not endure it for a moment. Yet you expect us to put up with this sort of thing from people of an entirely different race, who understand us as little as the Russians understand the Poles."

At this moment Mollie's coaxing little voice intervened. "Donal, dear," she said, "your head is so hot that I really think your feet must be cold. Bride's and mine are just dreadfully cold. Do let us dance and get warm. You know we always do every night. Sunday's the only night when we have to go to bed with cold feet."

Doreen, with a merry laugh at this practical interruption, went to the piano. The furniture was pushed aside, and soon, to the inspiriting strains of "Garry Owen," the children were dancing to their heart's content; Mollie claiming the patriot for her partner, and whirling round and round on her tallest tiptoe with fairylike lightness, while Dermot lumbered good-naturedly in their wake, dragging the far more solidly built Bride in a somewhat laboured, straight galop. Max, comfortably installed in the shady nook close to the piano, watched the scene with amusement, and Aunt Garth, as she sat by the fire with her knitting, noticed with satisfaction that the clouded look his face had borne for so many months vanished entirely when he glanced from the children to Doreen's happy, smiling lips and radiant eyes. Presently, when the dancers were tired, Doreen sang to them, and the sweet air of "Kathleen Mavourneen" lured Uncle Garth from the deciphering of mummy curl-papers in the study, and brought Michael upstairs, three steps at a time, on his return from Bermondsey; and to please the one she sang "Hope, the Hermit," and to please the other, "Savourneen Deelish." Finally, the children clamoured for "God save Ireland," and joined with such vigour in the chorus that Uncle Garth stole back to his congenial work, leaving the kindred spirits to enjoy to the utmost Doreen's wonderful rendering of the national song.

At last Donal Moore was obliged to take leave.

"If I am to dine with Flannery, and to catch the night mail at Euston," he exclaimed, "I must tear myself away from this paradise."

"And I am afraid you will have a rough time," said Doreen. "The sea was anything but pleasant."

"If Irishmen had only rough seas to grumble about, they would not be so badly off," said Donal Moore, laughing. "It's the rough times on the land that we find hard to take philosophically."

He knew that he was little likely to see his wards again for some time to come, and there was a wistfulness in his face which did not escape Max Hereford's notice; yet he responded brightly enough to the children's fervent farewells, and stood chatting till the last available moment with Doreen, receiving her messages to his wife, and determined to cast no shadow of a cloud on this happy evening of her return.

CHAPTER XXIII.

> "Certain classes of persons in England have always maintained that successive Irish leaders and patriots were mere mischief-makers, the cause, and not the exponents, of the prevailing discontent. If their mouths could be stopped, they imagined there would be no more disaffection in Ireland, or such as would be easily repressed. This was their manner of judging of Flood, of Grattan, of Curran, of O'Connell. They could not learn, and are as far from learning to-day as ever, that you cannot heal the broken heart of Ireland by gagging those whom she sends over here to plead for her. They were relieved when the prison doors closed upon one after another of Ireland's patriotic but unhappy sons."—JOSEPHINE E. BUTLER.

The shadow came all too quickly. The happy return to those she loved was sadly marred for Doreen by the events of the next few days. The public excitement over the Irish question rose to fever heat, and unable entirely to approve of the methods of her own party, yet wholly sympathizing with their strenuous resistance, she found life far from easy. When, on the third evening after Donal Moore's departure, Max again found himself in the familiar drawing-room at Bernard Street, about six o'clock, he found her looking pale and harassed. He himself seemed agitated; and if Doreen had not been preoccupied, she would have noticed the anxious air with which he scanned her face as though to read there how much she knew.

"You are tired, my darling," he said. "I hear you had a grand reception at the Ballad concert last night. Why, what invalid have you got on the sofa? Dermot?"

The boy sprang up and began to swathe himself in a plaid.

"It's nothing but a cold," he said, pausing for a frightful fit of coughing, from which he emerged breathless, but still smiling with his habitual quiet good-humour. "I think I'll go up to Mollie; for three's trumpery, you know."

"Well, keep the plaid over your mouth on the stairs," said Doreen, with a sigh. "I wish we had the American system of warming houses throughout."

"Has he had one of his bad turns?" asked Max.

"Yes, we had a dreadful night with him. Brian Osmond overhauled him thoroughly this morning, and his report was anything but cheering. All the three younger ones are delicate, but Dermot has come off the worst. He was the first one born after my father came out of penal servitude, you see. They say there is no actual disease, only a consumptive tendency; but I can see that Brian Osmond thinks it doubtful whether he will grow up. He is a man of very few words, but there was such a kind look in his face as he said to me, 'You must reckon him among Ireland's unknown patriots.'"

"Poor little fellow!" said Max, with a sigh. "Yet I remember my mother always spoke hopefully about him, and said she had known far more delicate children who yet struggled through. Have you any engagement this evening?"

"Yes, unluckily," she replied. "It is that long-talked-of performance of 'St. Paul' given in aid of poor Ciseri's widow and children. The tickets have gone like wildfire; for Carlo Donati is coming over on purpose to sing, and everyone is curious to hear him, particularly as it will be his first appearance in oratorio."

Max seemed to consider for a moment; she noticed his lack of response, and glancing into his face read there a trouble and hesitation which alarmed her.

"Max!" she cried. "Something has gone wrong? Oh, tell me quickly!"

He put his arm round her tenderly, but no longer attempted to delay the evil tidings he had brought.

"Donal Moore was arrested to-day in Dublin," he said gravely.

There was a dead silence. Doreen seemed like one stunned. When at length she spoke, her voice had a strange tone in it.

"How can he be arrested?" she said, with a bewildered look; "the Coercion Bill is not yet passed. Surely there is some mistake. It is just a false report. The street boys will call out anything to sell their papers."

"Dearest, there is no mistake," he said. "Would to God there were! I was with Donovan Farrant this afternoon, and he had heard a rumour of the arrest. He took me down to the House with him, and at question time the truth transpired. They said that his conduct was not in accordance with the conditions of his ticket of leave, and that he was remitted to penal

servitude again."

As he spoke those last words, Doreen's bewildered expression changed; a look of horror and indignation swept across her face. Then, with an impulsive gesture, she tore herself away from him, and, with her face buried in the sofa cushions, sobbed as if her heart would break.

Max, who had heard the exultant cheers of his own countrymen as he waited in the lobby, and had learnt from Donovan Farrant that their jubilation was caused by the news of this same arrest, felt each of these sobs like a sword thrust. As he recalled Donal Moore's kindly face and the merry scene with the children in that very room only a few evenings ago, he fully understood Doreen's indignant grief; nor did even a thought of jealousy cross his mind. Only twice before had he seen her utterly broken down, and the remembrance of those former times stirred him now strangely, bringing back the surroundings of the scene, the wooded banks of Glendalough, and the round tower away in the distance on the day after his mother's death; and that long-past time in the grotto at Castle Karey, when the horror of the secret which she had sworn to keep had pressed so sorely on the child's mind. There was no one now for whose sake she must make an effort to control herself, but a remembrance of her work came to help her.

"What is the time?" she asked, choking back her sobs resolutely, and drying her eyes.

"It is just seven," he said.

"And in an hour I must be in the Albert Hall before an audience of eight thousand people," she exclaimed. "There is no time for tears nowadays."

"But time for love," he said, drawing her towards him once more, and raining kisses on her face.

"Yes; oh, thank God!" she said. "Love is among the timeless, eternal things,—else how could one bear to think now of Donal's wife and child? Seven o'clock, did you say? He will just be leaving Dublin, no doubt,—coming back to the life that killed my father. Oh, Max! when will you English understand us?"

"Not until we are strictly just, I fancy," said Max, musingly; "and have made amends for what Lecky calls 'a crime of the deepest turpitude,'—the robbing Ireland of her parliament at the beginning of the century."

It was arranged that Max should dine with Mr. and Mrs. Garth; and Doreen having hastily dressed, settled her invalid in bed and left him in charge of Mrs. Muchmore, setting out for Kensington under her lover's escort, and with Michael to play propriety. The boy could talk of nothing but the great news of the evening, and was still vehemently discussing the all-absorbing topic when they entered the Albert Hall, and made their way to the regions at the back of the orchestra, where Doreen was greeted by Madame St. Pierre.

"Come!" exclaimed the great lady, in the tone of gentle raillery with which she was wont to touch on Doreen's views; "Melville will be quite relieved; we were afraid this Irish *coup d'état* would perhaps hinder your coming; I thought you would be quite broken down."

"Irish people are not so easily crushed," said Doreen, with a proud smile. There was, nevertheless, a slight quiver of her lip which did not escape the notice of one of the bystanders,—a slightly built Italian, whose dark liquid eyes had a way of observing those about him with a sympathy which gave him extraordinary insight, and a quietness which never allowed people to feel that they were being observed. He turned a little aside now with a question to the tenor Sardoni, a singer who after quitting the operatic stage had, during the autumn and winter, sprung into sudden popularity as a concert singer and composer of ballads.

"I want you to introduce me to the Irish *prima donna*, Jack," he said in Italian. "And by the bye, who is that Englishman who came in with her? I never saw a face so full of possibilities."

"That," replied Sardoni, "is her *fiancé*. Handsome fellow, isn't he? They say he is a rattling good speaker; but he was thrashed at the last election, and since then has done nothing but loaf about. Miss O'Ryan," he added, approaching her, "my friend, Signor Donati, wishes to have the honour of an introduction to you. I have been telling him how much you did to prepare the way for me in England by singing that song about the eviction."

"He will not soon equal the pathos of that song, to my mind," said Donati.

"And yet, so bitter is the feeling just now in England," said Doreen, "that when last night I sang it as an encore at the Ballad concert, I heard one or two hisses, which from a kindly and particularly appreciative audience showed plainly enough which way the wind blows."

"It must be a sad time for you to return to England," said Donati, thoughtfully. "And it is strange that you and I should meet on this night. There is a link between us, I believe, for our fathers both laid down their lives in an apparently useless struggle for entire national liberty."

"Was your father a political prisoner?" asked Doreen, eagerly. "Mine fell a victim to five years of penal servitude, though he was spared to us for a while after his release."

"And mine," said Donati, "died a few weeks after Aspromonte, from a wound which he received there. It is very strange to me that the English, who sympathized so strongly with the Italian struggle years ago, should be so extraordinarily slow to understand the aspirations of the Irish."

"Oh," said Doreen, bitterly, "they are ready enough to see the mote in their brother's eye, but they conveniently ignore the beam in their own until self-interest and discomfort force them to remove it."

"I can understand that you must feel angry and indignant," said Donati; "yet I venture to think that speech a little harsh. I love England and the English. They may be slow to see an unpalatable truth, but when once they do see it, you may trust them to do the right, cost what it may."

"I think that is true," said Doreen, thoughtfully; "yet sometimes their slowness is almost maddening, their obtuseness and want of imaginative power really extraordinary. But after all, sweeping phrases about a whole nation are very unfair, and come with an ill grace from one who is to marry the best Englishman in the land. May I introduce Mr. Hereford to you?"

The three stood talking together for some few minutes, while through the swing door close at hand there floated the wild medley of sounds from the orchestra in the process of tuning up, and the subdued hum of conversation from the vast assembly. Doreen liked Donati all the more when, glancing from one face to the other, she observed the curious similarity of feature which would have made his likeness to Max remarkable had not the colouring been so utterly different. The Italian was a typical Italian, small, slightly made, extraordinarily graceful; but spite of certain tokens that he had passed through no easy apprenticeship, his face, with its rich, warm Southern colouring, was singularly happy in expression. He gave one the impression of a man who had fought and had conquered. The Englishman, taller and more muscular, with square shoulders and fair Northern colouring, had features cast in the same mould, but his clear, light hazel eyes, though frank and true as ever, had in their depths something of disappointment and perplexity, of pain not rightly understood. He bore the expression of one who had not fought very energetically,—one who was now watching the battle from afar, loath to turn his back upon it altogether, yet with none of the zeal which will carry men to death or victory. It was, however, as Donati had been quick to observe, a face full of noble possibilities. The talk naturally turned upon Donal Moore,—his was the name upon all lips that night,—and Donati listened with interest to what Doreen told him of the Irishman's story. All too soon came the summons to go into the concert hall, and Doreen was led forward by Sardoni.

"I wish I could turn myself into a *bona fide* Italian," he said, "just for to-night. I am sure you are vowing vengeance on all of us Englishmen."

She laughingly protested against such a notion.

"If you only knew how grateful I am to you for saving me from having to sit next Madame St. Pierre," said Sardoni, with a wicked twinkle in his eye. "That worthy woman takes all the starch out of me. There's something really awful in the feeling when she fixes you with her cold gray eye."

"If you tried with all your might for a year, you would never make Madame St. Pierre see a joke," said Doreen, smiling; "but she is really kind hearted, though she certainly can administer snubs with deadly effect."

Sardoni, glancing to the other side of the conductor's desk, shook with suppressed merriment.

"Good heavens!" he said, under cover of the tumultuous applause; "'tis a sight to make the angels laugh. She is patronizing Donati in the most exquisite way, and he hangs upon her words as deferentially as if he were a raw novice."

"Well, so he is in oratorio singing," said Doreen; "and Madame St. Pierre has had enormous experience. Perhaps, after all, he may fail to please as much as he does in opera."

"You have never yet heard him sing?" asked Sardoni. "Ah, then you just wait"; he rubbed his hands with satisfaction; "you'll think yourself in heaven presently."

"Very well, so much the better," she replied, with a smile and a slight gesture of the shoulders; "at present I am very conscious of being in hostile England, with many of my countrymen in disgrace, and with the best of them a prisoner."

The overture now began, and Doreen's sad heart took comfort; for Mendelssohn's music always had on her something of the same effect as the Psalms, appealing to whatever mood she happened to be in. In the first of the noble old chorales she joined heart and soul, not as she sometimes did for the sake of trying her voice, but because her whole being seemed to respond to both words and music,—

"To God on high be thanks and praise,
Who deigns our bonds to sever;
His cares our drooping souls upraise,
And harm shall reach us never.
On him we rest with faith assured,
Of all that live, the mighty Lord,
For ever and for ever."

When, later on, her voice rang through the great hall in the most pathetic of all songs, "Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets," Max realized that something was giving her power to sing as she had never sung before. Was pain a necessary part of an artist's training? Could it be that the arrest of Donal Moore at Dublin in the nineteenth century would, through the instrumentality of a singer, give all these thousands of people a clearer insight into the mystery of pain, the true spirit of martyrdom, the hatefulness of persecution?

Donati's first solo was perhaps a disappointment to everyone; it did not suit him, and though magnificently declaimed, it failed to touch the audience. Not until his second great aria, "Oh God, have mercy," did people at all realize that a new exponent of sacred music had arisen who eclipsed all others of his generation. To Doreen it was like living through some great spiritual experience. Sardoni's playful words, "You will think you are in heaven," seemed to her no exaggeration; all the aspirations of her life seemed to be summed up in his wonderful rendering of the climax of the song, "Then open Thou my lips, O Lord! and my mouth shall show forth Thy glorious praise."

It was not, perhaps, of Saul of Tarsus that she thought as, immediately after, she stood up to sing her brief recitative, the message to Ananias; and there was a ring of joyfulness and triumph in her tone, which strangely stirred the hearts of all present, when later on she sang, "Straightway he preached Jesus in the synagogues and said, 'I thank God, who hath made me free through Christ.'"

In the interval between the parts, as she sat in the passage at the back of the orchestra, with Max and Michael beside her, discussing the performance, Donati again joined them. He had been much struck by Doreen's singing, and he knew now, what he had instinctively felt at first sight of her, that between them there existed links far closer than that similarity of which he had spoken in the life story of their fathers.

"I am going to ask you a favour," he said. "My wife and I hope to be in London early in April for four months; we have just taken a small house in Avenue Road, and if you would be so kind as to call on us, should you ever have time in your busy life, it will give us great pleasure."

"I have heard much of you from Signor Marioni," said Doreen, smiling; "so much, that you seem almost like an old friend to me. You know after the break up of Merlino's company, Marioni went out to the States with us as pianist. I am afraid he didn't much like it; he was always sighing for his orchestra again. And the dreadful sameness of the concerts drove him almost distracted."

"But he always was distracted," said Donati, smiling; "he grumbled just as much in the old times. He is one of those who cannot patiently bear the restrictions and limitations of life down here."

"He has many to keep him company in that," said Doreen, with a sigh. "Are we meant to endure them patiently?"

"We don't gain anything by knocking our heads against a stone wall," said Donati, smiling. "Isn't it Ruskin who says that

the limitations of life are the guidance of choice?"

At this moment he was interrupted by a touch on his shoulder. "Val," said Sardoni, "if you love me, come here. I have put my foot into it awfully with the St. Pierres, and they will certainly be uncivil to Domenica next time they meet her, unless you patch up the quarrel for us."

"The limitations of time are the hardest of all to put up with," said Carlo, glancing at Doreen with a smile as he turned away.

Max, strongly drawn to the Italian, though hardly able to explain wherein his great fascination lay, followed him with his eyes, and watched with keen interest the little drama that was enacted, by the swing door. Slowly and gradually he saw Madame St. Pierre change from haughty gravity to gracious interest, and, at length, wonderful to relate, both she and her husband laughed, Sardoni joined in, and the most amicable relations were apparently established between them.

"I wonder how he did it," said Doreen, in a low voice; "a genuine laugh in that quarter is as rare as snow in June. If I get through 'I will sing of Thy great mercies' to-night with the right spirit, it will all be owing to Signor Donati."

Max thought of the words later on, when, having gone with Michael to a distant seat in the great building, he watched the slim, white-robed figure rise after the chorus, "How lovely are the messengers," and with the few bars of recitative as introduction break forth into the song of thanksgiving, which, in its devotion and simplicity, is, perhaps, the most beautiful in the whole oratorio. That song, and the pathos of Donati's last solo, "I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die," lingered with him for the rest of the night, haunting him strangely, when, having left Doreen and Michael in Bernard Street, he wandered southward, with no very settled purpose, but utterly disinclined to go home. Strolling by and bye into his club, he there learnt that great things had been happening in the House of Commons while he had been listening to "St. Paul"; and the news disquieted him so much that he promptly made his way to Westminster, and there, from the member for Greyshot, heard a full account of all that had passed. The two paced home together to Donovan Farrant's house in Connaught Square, talking long over the crisis which had arisen; and when he had parted with his companion, Max felt less inclination than ever for sleep. In the dead quiet, which falls upon London between four and six in the morning, he tramped restlessly about the deserted squares and streets of Bloomsbury, more shaken out of his dreamy indifference than he had been for months past, more troubled than he had been all his life long over the griefs and wrongs of others. Many times he passed the silent, dark, somewhat grim-looking house in Bernard Street, and, looking up to the top windows, knew that the faint light he could just discern came from the little hanging lamp beneath the crucifix which he had given to Doreen in her childhood. He was glad to know that, as yet, she was unconscious of the fresh troubles that had fallen upon Ireland; glad to believe that after her arduous work she slept as tranquilly as little Mollie, and that her face still retained that serene look of peace and happiness which it had borne as she sang her great solo.

Wandering on, lost in thought, he presently found himself in Oxford Street. De Quincey's "Stony-hearted Stepmother" seemed well-nigh deserted. It was now nearly six, but the February morning was still dark; the stars shone clearly in the frosty atmosphere. He paused for a minute before turning down James Street, and was surprised to hear in the distance the sound of an approaching cavalcade. "Surely they do not make any unlucky soldiers take exercise at this hour in the winter!" he thought to himself. But as the horsemen drew near he saw that they were mounted police, and instantly it flashed into his mind that Donal Moore had been brought over from Ireland by the night mail. Straining his eyes in the dim lamplight he was just able to discern, for a moment, the well-known features of the Irishman, as the cab, surrounded by the mounted police, passed swiftly by. The prisoner was looking pale and worn, and there were signs of exhaustion about the strong, patient face, which at all times was stamped too visibly with the marks of the previous term of penal servitude.

Max, with a feeling of shame and wrath such as he had never before experienced, realized that these things were being done in his name, by his own country, and all with the best intentions in the world. Until the procession had passed out of sight and hearing, he stood absolutely still; then turned homewards, full of a sore-hearted sense of coming retribution, and a wretched perception that untold sorrow awaited Doreen.

CHAPTER XXIV.

" 'Tis delight to the earth when your little feet press it;
'Tis delight to the earth when your sweet singings bless it;
'Tis delight to the earth when you lie, Love, upon it;
But, oh, his delight who your heart, Love, has won it!" —(From the Irish) DR. GEORGE SIGERSON.

The lovers had arranged that their marriage should take place at the end of July, when Doreen's work in town would be finished; then they were to spend two months in Ireland, returning to Monkton Verney in October, when the present tenants would have left. The spring and summer were not happy to either of them. Max, it is true, had, upon Doreen's return from America, recovered the energy which for a time had seemed crushed out of him. It was scarcely possible for him to be daily under the influence of her eager, enthusiastic nature without regaining something of his former zeal; contact with her fresh, ardent nature made it impossible for him to vegetate as he had done through the autumn and winter. But neither of them realized how greatly the shock of his mother's sudden death was still affecting him, or how much of his physical inertia and irritability of temper was due to this cause. Doreen, on the other hand, was also suffering a little from the effect of her American tour. The weary journeys, the excitement, the flattery and homage she had received, all told upon her; and to come straight back from such a life to the strain of her professional work in England, and to the thousand and one disagreeables which Home-rulers had to put up with at that time, was a severe test. She was very human, and did not come out quite unscathed. When goaded beyond endurance she would occasionally astonish people by an indignant and passionate protest, which startled them all the more because it contrasted so curiously with her usual patience, and genial, happily-expressed courtesy.

Nor was the outer world any more harmonious than their small inner circle. A fearful dynamite outrage in another country had shocked all Europe; in England itself there had been four attempts to wreck public buildings; a bitter religious controversy was convulsing the nation and drawing forth piteous exhibitions of narrowness and bigotry, and as for poor Ireland, it was daily falling into deeper slavery; its leaders one by one being arrested and thrown into Kilmainham, while, to the great chagrin of the Chief Secretary, this process did not in the least tend to quiet the country, but rather the reverse.

It was, however, a very different matter that caused that first "little rift within the lute," which was gradually to spread and spread with such disastrous results to Max and Doreen. Shortly before the American tour Doreen had received a call one day from a certain Mr. Hawke, who purported to be arranging a charity concert, and had solicited her services. A little annoyed that he had called in person instead of writing to her agent, she had refused to sing, and had bowed her unwelcome visitor out. But she had by no means seen the last of him. No sooner had she returned from America than he began to haunt her wherever she went, until the very sight of his sleek beard and trim moustache became hateful to her. It was in vain that she ignored him, cut him, avoided him; the infatuated man was not to be got rid of.

"That fellow is actually skulking on the door-step," said Max, wrathfully, one day, when at his usual hour he had called to see her. "I had all the mind in the world to kick him."

"Don't do that," said Doreen, laughing; "it would get into the papers, and that would be dreadful."

"It all comes of your being a public singer," said Max, irritably; "I wish you would consent to retire."

"Come, come," she said gaily, "we settled that question long ago. You know that I should be only half myself without my vocation, and this troublesome man has nothing to do with my singing. Why, only the other day the papers were full of that case where a girl in private life was badgered in precisely the same way, until she was actually forced to prosecute her tormentor."

"I hate to think that by paying a few shillings he can stare at you through an opera glass," said Max, "and when we are married, I don't see how you can expect me to allow it."

Doreen winced at the word "allow." It displeased her, but on second thoughts it struck her in a ludicrous sense.

"I am sure," she said, heaving a mock sigh, "I don't see how I can possibly allow you to go into Parliament, dearest. Without paying anything at all, the ladies in the gallery will be able, behind that comfortable lattice, to level their opera glasses at you. And as to the public meetings,—I really don't think I can allow you to speak in public any more when we are married!"

Max was obliged to laugh.

"You know, dear," she said coaxingly, "in the average man there is still a dreadful amount of Eastern feeling with regard to women; but I don't think there is really much in you."

"I am not so sure," said Max, thoughtfully. "You see, men have for so many generations been in the habit of regarding their wives as Petruchio did, and asserting, 'I will be master of what is mine own; she is my goods, my chattels,' that it is not so easy for them to hold fast to the high ideal of unity which is really involved in the parable of Christ, and his Bride the Church. Good heavens! how sick it makes one to hear those words read at the marriage of some brute of a fellow who has no earthly right to marry an innocent girl, and who is certain to turn into a selfish, hectoring tyrant."

They fell to talking of other things, and no more was said as to the obnoxious admirer, who still continued to haunt Bernard Street, until, one day, Uncle Garth was moved to remonstrate with him, after which, for some time, he was no more seen. It was rumoured that when quiet Mr. Garth did lose his temper, he lost it right royally, and that the result was terrible.

All this time poor Una had been struggling through the arduous work of the season, still spending her Sundays with the O'Ryans, and then going back to the weary round of practice, lessons, concerts, scoldings from her cousin, and restless nights disturbed by tormenting fears and nervous imaginings. At last the crisis came; quite suddenly, as it seemed to the world, Una broke down. It was early in July, and a wave of intense heat was passing over the land; in London, there seemed absolutely no air, and the child's look of exhaustion struck Doreen at once when she entered the artistes' room at St. James' Hall for a benefit concert at which they were both to perform.

"What is the matter, darling? Is this hot weather too much for you?" she asked. "Your eyes are only half an hour high, as we say in Ireland, and you look as if you ought to be in bed instead of being decked out in this pretty Liberty silk."

"Do you like it?" said Una, with momentary pleasure, as she looked down at the soft, sheeny folds of her little short-skirted frock strewn with a delicate pattern of forget-me-nots. "Cousin Flora said it was no use getting me pretty frocks if my face was to be the colour of tallow. She wanted to rouge me to-night, but I wouldn't let her because you don't use rouge, and I want to be like you. I wish, oh, so much, that I were in bed! I have got to play the Kreutzer Sonata with Marioni, and he frightens me."

"He is much less severe than he looks," said Doreen. "And I shall tell him that you are not well. What have you been doing with yourself since Sunday?"

"I have practised rather longer than usual; but it doesn't seem any good; I can't get it as it ought to be," said Una, despairingly. "And often now I get such a horrid pain in my chest, and when I tell Cousin Flora, she says I eat too much, though you know at every meal-time she scolds me for being dainty and eating too little."

Doreen could not help smiling, and yet her heart burnt within her at the thought of the cruel way in which this child was being worked to death. It was with deep anxiety that she watched the fragile little face as the sonata proceeded; not even Madame De Berg could have complained that Una was colourless now. A vivid flush had mounted to her cheeks; her expression, as usual, when she was playing, was perfectly tranquil and absorbed; people remarked how naturally it all came to her, how entirely at ease she seemed, how beautifully unconscious and childlike she was, little knowing of the anxious thoughts that were at that moment passing through the child's mind, or of the weary effort it cost her to get through her task. But at last it was over, and Doreen's strong arm was round her once more, guiding her through the narrow little waiting-room out on to the cool, stone staircase, where Sardoni kindly brought them chairs, and Ferrier came out in his fatherly fashion and insisted on fetching her some iced lemonade.

"I will leave you to look after her, and Mrs. Muchmore to superintend," said Doreen, as the stern-looking Norwegian attendant came to tell her that it was time for her song.

Something in the man's face made her look at him a second time. She liked him, and had long felt sorry for him.

"You, too, look ill to-night," she said pleasantly. "This heat must be a contrast to your climate in Norway."

"It is a great contrast in every way," he said, his sternness melting a little beneath her sunshiny smile. He held open the swing door for her, and, with a word to the accompanist, she was led up the steps on to the platform. At the close of her song, a little boy stepped forward and presented her with a bouquet; and, as she rejoined Una on the stairs, she found,

deftly fastened to the stem of a white rose, a small envelope sealed with green wax. Handing the flowers to Una, she slowly mounted the stairs to the dressing-room, reading the little note with astonishment and dismay. It ran as follows:—

> "You have faithfully kept the promise, made many years ago in the fernery. I, for whose sake you then swore to keep silence, beg that you will come to see me this evening immediately after the concert. It will be my sole chance of speaking with you, and of enabling you to help M. H. in a danger which appears to be threatening him. Say nothing to any other person, but come alone to the Café mentioned above, and inquire at the private door for Dr. Duval. I know that I am asking you no light thing, but, for the sake of helping your *fiancé*, feel sure you will be willing to risk much."—"J. D."

To hear from one who seems utterly to have passed out of our life, suddenly to be drawn back to the remembrance of a past that one would fain forget, must at all times be painful. Doreen's heart beat uneasily. What was the meaning of it all? Why had Desmond so unexpectedly and so mysteriously summoned her? And what could be the danger that threatened her lover?

"I must be imagining all this—it can't be real," she thought to herself, looking up from the unwelcome little note and glancing round the room. But there was the well-known looking-glass, at which for years she had put the last touches to her toilette before going down to sing. There was her red "Colleen Bawn" thrown across the chair, and Una's blue opera cloak, and Mrs. Muchmore's familiar Paisley shawl. She was in her own every-day world, and into it there had fallen suddenly this startling letter, this summons to go alone at night to meet the man who had caused James Foxell's death.

It was characteristic of Doreen that she never hesitated for a moment as to obeying the summons. Of course, if a danger threatened Max, and his old tutor could enable her to avert it, it was to one of her character the most natural thing in the world to go without hesitation. She vaguely disliked her errand. It flashed through her mind that if by any chance Madame De Berg, her pitiless enemy, were to become aware of what she was doing, she would probably put a false construction upon it. But Patrick O'Ryan's daughter was not likely to be daunted by the dread of consequences. A disagreeable duty lay before her, and, as was her habit, she walked up to it like a Trojan.

"I must explain to Hagar Muchmore as we drive home that I have to call at this place," she thought to herself; "and she can wait outside in the brougham. She is a sensible woman, and I can make her understand that nothing is to be said."

But this arrangement was frustrated; in fact, everything was driven for a time out of Doreen's mind by Una's sudden collapse. The little violinist just got through her last solo. To satisfy the *exigeant* public, and perhaps to save herself the weary effort of again and again mounting the platform to bow her acknowledgments, she even gave them an *encore*, playing a bright little Irish jig, which was a favourite at Bernard Street. The people liked to beat their feet in time; it pleased them to be stirred into a longing to dance, and it pleased them to fancy that the child was only wishing to dance herself,—that she was just a light-hearted, careless little soul, whose happy playtime of youth was rendered brighter by the great genius which had been bestowed on her.

But Una, as she went down the platform steps, vaguely knew that it was all over; she had endured the long strain for many months, but at last the end had come, and she could bear no more. While the audience still applauded her Irish air, she was making her way back to Doreen, blinded by tears; she would have fallen had not the Norwegian attendant caught her in his strong arms, and, at Ferrier's suggestion, carried her straight out on to the staircase, where what little air there was could be had. Though very faint, she was still partly conscious, and begged piteously to be taken home; in her wretchedness, the one comforting thought in the world was of the little white-curtained bed, in which she now thought she should like to lie forever.

"Hagar," said Doreen, "you must take her at once to Madame De Berg's. It will be another quarter of an hour before I am free, and you know I promised that we would see her safely home to-night. Take her back in the brougham, and if possible stay and see her into bed. You might leave a message asking Mr. Brian Osmond to call and see her as you go home."

"You are a bold person to take the law into your hands like that," said Ferrier, smiling. "You may be quite sure Madame De Berg won't approve of paying for the doctor."

"I can't help it," said Doreen, her eyes flashing. "I am not going to sit still any longer and watch the massacre of the innocents. Madame De Berg is dining to-night at Richmond, and can't possibly be home till midnight, and in the mean time something must be done for Una. You had better stay there, Hagar, as long as you are needed."

Here the Norseman interrupted the discussion.

"Your carriage is waiting in Piccadilly," he said. "Perhaps I had better carry little Miss Kingston; she is hardly fit to walk."

"Well, thank you," said Doreen, "if she is not too heavy."

For the first time she saw the grave, downcast face lighted by an irrepressible smile.

"Scarcely that, I think," he said, lifting her up as if she had been a mere feather's weight. Doreen stooped to kiss the little tear-stained face, then stood watching the drooping golden head as it lay back on the arm of the tall Norseman, while close behind Hagar Muchmore, in her Paisley shawl, followed, talking in her usual brisk, business-like fashion.

Doreen's last solo came very late in the programme. She was thankful when at last it was over, and hurrying up to the dressing-room she threw on her cloak, and catching up her music and her bouquet, ran swiftly down the stone stairs, hearing strains of a quartette from "Il Barbiere" as she passed the door, and at the foot of the stairs encountering Frithiof Falck, the attendant.

"Can I call you a cab?" he said. "Your carriage has not come back yet."

"It will not come back," she said. "I will have a cab, please. No, not a four-wheeler; it is far too hot." Then, as he returned to put her into the hansom, "Did little Miss Kingston get off all right?"

"I think she was unconscious by the time we reached the carriage," he replied. "This heat is enough to affect any one."

"Thank you for all your help," said Doreen, pleasantly. "We have given you a great deal of trouble to-night."

Frithiof Falck's polite rejoinder a little startled her, for the Norseman had the character of being extremely taciturn and proud.

"What address shall I give the driver?" he asked as he closed the doors of the hansom.

"I will speak to him myself," said Doreen, her face changing a little at the recollection of what lay before her. "Good evening."

Frithiof Falck bowed and withdrew, while Doreen through the door in the roof bade the driver go to a certain Café in the neighbourhood of Leicester Square.

The cool night air was refreshing. She picked up her bouquet and let the soft night breeze blow through the fragrant roses and heliotrope. There was one specially beautiful *Niphetos* which took her back to the time of the Firdale election, when Max had been delighted to find a similar rose for her to wear in one of the greenhouses at Monkton Verney. She wished she could give him this one to-night, when sultry London was so much in need of everything that could make it sweet and pure. And then she remembered that this uncomfortable errand, which she so little liked, was all for his sake, and a great anxiety as to the danger that was threatening him drove out every other thought. Before long the hansom drew up in what seemed a sufficiently quiet and orderly street. She sprang out, leaving her bouquet behind her, and rang the bell in the manner of one who does not wish to be kept waiting. A feeling of vague discomfort stole over her as she stood on the doorstep. She watched the steady approach of another hansom, and was conscious of an inexplicable desire to be safely sheltered within the house before it passed by. Her wish was gratified, but barely gratified. She breathed more freely when the door was closed behind her, and she found herself in a dingy passage confronting a smart maid-servant whose looks she did not like.

"Dr. Duval is expecting you, lady. Will you step this way?"

She led her upstairs into a small sitting-room, where, to her relief, she at once recognized in the haggard, dark-eyed man who greeted her, Max Hereford's former tutor.

"I should have known you again, Mr. Desmond," she said, taking his hand; "though in some ways you are much altered."

"I might make the same remark," said Desmond, drawing forward a chair for her. "We have both of us lived through much since the days at Castle Karey. I am afraid you feel this room warm."

"Yes," said Doreen, throwing off her red cloak; "it is stifling. Can we not have the window open?"

"I am afraid the conversation you and I must have together is not altogether consistent with open windows. Believe me, I would not have asked you to come here to-night could I possibly have avoided it. But I am in the greatest danger of being arrested. When a man has public and private foes, and both of them set their bloodhounds on his track—well, he has to walk warily. I hope to leave London in two or three hours, but I didn't dare to risk coming to your house, or meeting you anywhere but here. A house of this sort is the last they would expect me to be in. You were a brave child, and I made sure you would prove a brave woman, and would come."

"A woman must be a coward indeed who would not risk much for the man she loves," said Doreen, quietly. Her eyes grew soft and tender, a delicate colour stole over her face and neck. Desmond sighed, and began to pace the room restlessly.

"I will tell you what it is that threatens him," he said. "It has come to my knowledge—how, I am not able to tell you—that our secret has been discovered, or in part discovered. You remember the French valet at Castle Karey? It seems that he, from certain words I let fall during my illness while I was delirious, guessed that I and my pupil had been present at Foxell's death; the man knew much more English than he allowed. Years afterwards, having ferreted out a little more, apparently by eavesdropping, he was dismissed by Max in sudden anger, and to revenge himself he went to Ireland and industriously tried to find out further details of Foxell's death. He got to know the widow, who eagerly caught at his scraps of information on the subject, and the two of them are now taking active steps to hunt me up, and they are keeping a very sharp watch on Max also. They threaten to have Lough Lee dragged, but that's an expensive affair, and it may not come off; if it should be done, I think Max might find himself in difficulties. This valet can swear to his having been at the lough on the day of Foxell's disappearance, and Max is fettered by his oath of secrecy, which I am quite certain he would never break. I shall be safely out of the country and difficult to trace; but they can lay their hands on Max at any time, and he would find himself in an awkward enough position. Now I want you, if anything of this sort happens, and Max finds himself falsely accused, to step forward at the right moment and say that you met me here on this 5th of July, and that I released him wholly from his oath of secrecy, and desired that in that case everything should be revealed to the authorities."

Doreen had listened with breathless attention; she interposed now with a hasty question.

"Why could you not have told all this to Max himself? It would surely be far better for him to know that he is in some danger."

"On the contrary," said Desmond, "that is the very thing to be avoided. Let him go about the world unsuspiciously; it is by far his best chance. But there are other reasons. I could not consent to his knowing that I am or have recently been in London. It might greatly injure his whole career, if it became known that he was mixed up in any way with me. I will neither see him, nor write to him, nor communicate with him in any way. Neither can I authorize you to speak to him about this release from his oath, unless the danger I spoke of should arise. Until that time comes you are both bound as before. And I trust to your silence now as I have trusted to your word all these years."

"I do not understand why I may not tell Max now. I have no secrets from my future husband; you have no right to expect me to keep silence as to this interview."

"It is not a question of rights. It is a question of absolute necessity," said Desmond, smiling a little at her vehemence. "It might be, as I told you, the shipwreck of your *fiancé's* political career, if he knew the whole truth about me. It is for his sake that you must keep silence."

"I will not promise until you have clearly made me understand how it could harm him to know the truth," said Doreen, resolutely.

"Very well," said Desmond; "I will tell you. And by telling you I put my life in your hands; but your hands, I am well assured, are strong to save, and would not willingly destroy. You are aware that there have within the last few months been four attempts to wreck public buildings in England with dynamite; already the police have got hold of some of the lesser members of our society, but they have not yet got the member who was mainly responsible for the four attempts. I am that member. At present we have failed. But by and bye you will see we shall succeed very well."

Doreen sprang to her feet.

"You are a dynamiter!" she gasped, in mingled wrath and horror to think that this man, for whose sake she and Max had

endured so much, should have fallen to such a depth.

Voice, manner, look, were so expressive that Desmond faltered a little.

"As I said just now," he remarked quietly, "I put my life and liberty in your hands by telling you the whole truth at your express desire."

"Do you think I would betray you?" said Doreen, indignantly. "Your life and liberty are perfectly safe as far as I am concerned. As you said just now, my hands are, I hope, strong to save; certainly God did not make them to be instruments of destruction. And yours too, they ought to save, not to destroy. Oh, Mr. Desmond, by all you most reverence, I do beg you to give up this awful work!"

Her voice had grown soft and pleading again, tears gathered in her eyes and slowly fell. John Desmond looked at her in surprise, but he was visibly moved by her appeal.

"I don't understand you," he said at last. "You, a Fenian's daughter, ought to realize that there are other ways of effecting reform besides constitutional agitation."

Doreen dashed away her tears.

"The Fenian rising," she said indignantly, "whatever its faults, was an honest attempt at revolution; it was ill-conducted, ill-timed, and, as I think, altogether mistaken. My father himself lived to think that constitutional methods would do more to help Ireland; but the Fenians were just as honest as the English Revolutionists who fought against the Stuarts: they fought with the recognized weapons of war, not with a devilish thing like dynamite."

"You are no more logical than the rest of your sex, Miss O'Ryan," said Desmond. "I defy you to prove that the weapon of dynamite is one bit more immoral than any other weapon of warfare."

"I don't care a rush for logical proof," said Doreen, scornfully. "But I know that where most brave and honourable men would consent to fight with sword or gun, no man I could respect would stoop to use such a horrible thing as dynamite."

"You hit hard," said Desmond, "and yet you should be grateful to me, for believe me I have sacrificed much for your country."

"Do you call this sort of work sacrificing yourself for Ireland? Alas, poor Ireland! Many people are anxious to serve her, but it seems to me their efforts generally end in riveting her chains yet more firmly. How can you be so mad as to think you are really serving Ireland by attempting to blow up public buildings in England?"

"Ever since Queen Elizabeth's, time," said Desmond, "there has been an English proverb which says, 'Look to Ireland, if you would have peace in England.' We who play upon the English imagination—the stolid imagination of John Bull—by dynamite scares, endeavour only to act that proverb in dramatic fashion. We put an end to peace in England, and thus compel them to look to Ireland. It is just what you constitutional agitators do in tamer fashion."

"In honourable fashion, you should say," said Doreen; "while you stoop to dishonourable efforts, which can only make Ireland and the Irish hateful in the eyes of honest men. Why don't you turn back while yet there is time? You might help the cause in a thousand ways."

But Desmond shook his head. "I am pledged," he said; "and I have a strong conviction that I shall lay down my life in this work. By the bye, in case anything does happen to me, you had better know the various names under which I pass. Dr. Duval, you see, heads the list." He handed her a paper, on which he had scrawled a number, a German name, and an English name. "Shall you remember them?" he asked, thrusting the paper into the gas till it was consumed.

"Yes; I shall remember," she said, with a shudder; and turning away, she took up her cloak from the back of the chair.

"The 'Colleen Bawn' has grown taller, like its owner," said Desmond, with a smile, as he helped her to put it on. "By the bye, tell me, how is Miss Hereford? And is she still unmarried?"

"She is unmarried, and still living with her father and mother in Wilton Crescent," said Doreen. "She is very little altered, and as pretty and light-hearted as ever."

Then Desmond told her of the set he had fallen in with in America, and of the man who had specially influenced him.

"I have your promise of entire secrecy?" he added, with a stifled sigh. "You will swear not to mention to any one that you have seen me here to-night? You will keep absolute silence with regard to all that has passed, unless this valet and Mrs. Foxell get Max into difficulties?"

"I swear it, so help me God," said Doreen, giving him her hand. "And if, at any time, I should need to write to you, where are you to be found?"

Desmond slightly shrugged his shoulders.

"I have no home, no headquarters even," he said with a melancholy smile; "in a couple of hours I hope to be on my way to America. But there is nothing more I could do for you and Max save to avoid all communication with you. I am far from being a desirable acquaintance, and have brought you nothing but annoyance since that unlucky day at Lough Lee, when Foxell went to his account."

"Would to God we had never chanced to go near the lough that day!" said Doreen.

And Desmond, who had learnt to contemplate callously enough the thought of the sufferings he might cause to hundreds of innocent people in the course of his dynamite campaign, felt a pang as he saw the burdened expression on the face of this one Irish girl, who for years had been forced to bear the consequences of his deed.

"Think of me kindly when you can," he said; "and remember that I, too, have suffered much."

She once more gave him her hand.

"I will remember," she said. "Good-bye."

He went down the stairs with her, and opened the door. Doreen gathered up her white dress more closely, rapidly crossed the pavement, and had her foot on the step of the hansom, when suddenly the horse began to kick and plunge. Desmond hastened out to her assistance, and put her safely into the cab; then noticing that from the further end of the street rapid steps were approaching, he beat a retreat into the house, and promptly closed the door.

Doreen leant back in the hansom, utterly spent with the excitement and fatigue, and sick with anxiety, as she thought of the trouble that threatened to shadow her lover's career. And yet, after all, was it not much that she herself had been entrusted with the power to save him? It could be but a passing trouble, a brief annoyance; she was half inclined to think that it might really in the end be better if the whole truth should transpire. Unpleasant as all the publicity would be, neither she nor Max had done anything to be ashamed of; and as for Desmond, it was little likely that they would be able to track him.

"How late you are," said Michael, opening the door for her, when she arrived in Bernard Street. "Mrs. Muchmore has come back, and from her account she seems to have got the better of Madame De Berg. At any rate, Una is safe in Brian Osmond's hands, which is some comfort."

Doreen was relieved to find that the boy was so much taken up with Una's story that he asked no awkward questions as to the reason of her late return; and gradually she, too, became absorbed in thoughts of the poor little infant prodigy, and the painful recollection of her talk with John Desmond faded from her mind. Early the next morning Brian Osmond called to see her. She and her aunt were still at the breakfast table, but Mr. Garth and Michael had already set out for their day's work, and the children had dispersed to their lessons.

"I have come to make a very bold request," said the young doctor. "You are, I know, the best friend in the world to little Una Kingston. I am very anxious about her. She has utterly broken down, as one might have foretold, after all she has been subjected to."

"What is wrong with her?" asked Doreen, anxiously.

"She has a sharp attack of pericarditis. The great risk is that the heart itself should become affected, and her only hope is absolute quiet and the greatest care. She will never get those from Madame De Berg, who has no idea of nursing, or even of speaking to a sick person in the right way. If she has a sick-nurse to take the night work, do you think it would be possible for you to take charge of her?"

"There is nothing I should like better," said Doreen, eagerly.

"Let the poor child be moved here at once," said Mrs. Garth, kindly. "The visitor's room is empty, and we should like to have her."

"But how about Madame De Berg," said Doreen, doubtfully. "She cordially detests me, and is hardly likely to consent to such a plan."

"I think we must lay a little plot. I am going round to see her now. Can you not manage to call and inquire after her while I am there? Then, between us, with your gift of blarney and my stern medical verdict, we may surely contrive to induce such a selfish woman to part with a patient who will certainly give a good deal of trouble."

Doreen laughed. "I will be round in good time," she said; "and we will be ready to receive her here this afternoon."

CHAPTER XXV.

"O perfect love that 'dureth long!
Dear growth that, shaded by the palms,
And breathed on by the angels' song,
Blooms on in heaven's eternal calms!

"How great the task to guard thee here,
Where wind is rough and frost is keen,
And all the ground with doubt and fear
Is chequered, birth and death between!

"Space is against thee—it can part;
Time is against thee—it can chill;
Words—they but render half the heart;
Deeds—they are poor to our rich will." —JEAN INGELOW.

At this very moment Max was sitting over his solitary breakfast in Grosvenor Square. The morning was not his best time. He had never been one of those people who rise with a glad sense of life and energy; but to-day an unusually heavy cloud brooded over his face. He had scarcely slept at all, and whenever he had sunk for a few minutes into an uneasy doze, he had been haunted by wretched dreams about Doreen. Though apt at times to be somewhat over-nervous about his health, he did not at all realize to-day that he was physically ill, but put down all his wretchedness to the disturbing thoughts which had been preying upon him ever since the previous evening. Finding himself unexpectedly released from an engagement, he had most unfortunately strayed into St. James' Hall, about half way through Ferrier's benefit concert. Immediately after Doreen's last song, he had left, with the intention of going round to the small side door in Piccadilly Place used by the artistes, that he might have the pleasure of seeing her home. But there was a little delay in getting out of the Regent Street door, and he had not got further than Piccadilly Circus when, chancing to look up, he saw, to his astonishment, Doreen quite alone in a hansom. He observed that the bouquet, which he had seen presented to her, was raised to her face; and, acting on an impulse which he did not pause to analyze, he sprang into a passing cab and bade the driver to follow her. To his amazement, instead of driving to Bernard Street, her cab drew up at the private door of a disreputable Café near Leicester Square. Surely he must have made a mistake; but even as he wondered, the well-known red cloak passed swiftly across the pavement, and in a moment Doreen had disappeared within the house. For a minute he thought he must be going out of his mind, and that the whole thing was but a phantom of his disordered imagination. He let his man drive on for some distance. Then, suddenly dismissing him, he walked slowly back, half expecting to find that the affair had been a dream; but there stood the hansom at the door of the house, and as he paced by he saw lying upon the seat, not only the bouquet, but Doreen's music-case, a perfectly unmistakable music-case of green plush, worked by Una with a pattern of shamrock leaves. Miserable thoughts rushed to his mind. What had she done with Mrs. Muchmore? How came it that Doreen, who was fastidiously particular,—or had professed to be,—should come alone at such an hour to such a place? He never knew how many times he walked the length of that street, but at last, when he was at the extreme end, a sound of kicking hoofs made him hastily turn and retrace his steps. He was just in time to see Doreen helped into the hansom by a man whose features he could not at that distance distinguish. By the time he had reached the house the door was closed, and the cab had turned the corner and disappeared. The incident looked much worse after a restless night. Max felt in a fever to hear her explanation, and as the clock struck eleven, he rang the bell of the house in Bernard Street, only to learn that Doreen was out.

"Inquire at what time I can see her," he said shortly, and the servant returned with a message from Mrs. Garth. Doreen was expected every moment; she hoped Mr. Hereford could come in and wait. So he went in and waited alone in the drawing-room, chafing impatiently at the delay. The room faced south, and in spite of open windows it was intensely hot; the smell of mignonette from the balcony made him feel sick. He paced restlessly about, looking at two or three of the wedding presents which Doreen had received, turning over the songs which lay on the piano, finally picking up John Mitchel's "Jail Journal" from the table, and reading fitfully a few lines here and there. There were pencil marks in the margin, and he knew that they were Doreen's. He read first one marked passage, then another. The first occurred just when Mitchel had received a sentence of transportation for fourteen years, and was about to leave Ireland:—

"No doubt he thought me an amazingly cool character, but God knoweth the heart. There was a huge lump in my throat all the time of this bald chat.... At Claremont Bridge, in Dublin, this evening there is a desolate house,—my mother and sisters, who came up to town to see me 'for the last time in case of the worst,'—five little children, very dear to me; none of them old enough to understand the cruel blow that has fallen on them this day, and above all—above all—my wife.

What will they do? What is to become of them? By this time, undoubtedly, my office, my newspaper, types, books, all that I had, are seized on by the government burglars.... And did I not know all this? And knowing it, did I not run all the risk? Yes, and I did well. The possible sacrifice, indeed, was terrible, but the enterprise was great and was needful."

"But be my prison where it will, I suppose there is a heaven above that place."

"We must, in short, make final protest against this same law,—deny that it is law; deny that there is any power in the London Parliament to make laws for us, and declare that as a just God ruleth in the earth, we will obey such laws no longer."

Max moved to the window and looked out; there were no signs yet of Doreen. At the further end of the street he could see the trees in Russell Square, looking temptingly green and cool. With an impatient sigh he threw himself back in a chair, and turned over the pages till he came to the description of John Mitchel's first introduction to the hulks at Bermuda.

"In the very centre of the ship, opening from a dark passage, appeared a sort of cavern, just a little higher and a little wider than a dog-house. It is, in fact, the very hole through which the main mast formerly ran down into the ship, and would be quite dark but for two very small and dim bull's-eyes that are set into the deck above. I cannot stand quite erect under the great beams, but half of my floor is raised nine inches, and on that part I cannot stand at all. The whole area is about six feet square. 'Here's your place,' said the mate.

"A hammock was brought into my dog-hutch, and in order to make room for it, they had to swing it diagonally. A cup of milkless tea and a lump of bread were then brought to me, and when I had despatched these, a piece of candle was left upon a narrow board or shelf, and my door was locked. The light of the candle showed me a great many big brown cockroaches nearly two inches long, running with incredible speed over the walls and floor, the sight of which almost turned me sick. I sat down upon my bench and deliberately reviewed my position. They have not taken my books from me nor my portmanteau. They have not taken this scribbling book away, nor put me in company with the convicts. As for my dog-hutch, the mate muttered something, before he left me, about another and a better place being made ready for me in a few days. And for these huge brown beasts crawling here, I presume they don't bite; other people sleep among them, and why not I?...Here goes then for my first swing in a hammock, and I feel myself a freer man to-night than any Irishman living at large, tranquilly in his native land, making believe that he feels himself a respectable member of society.

"I do whatever I am bidden at once, and without remark, which seems to surprise my keepers a little. They did not expect me to be so quiet; ascribing my conduct in Ireland, of course, to mere turbulence of disposition, and general insubordination of character."

Max had become interested in spite of himself, so much interested that he had not heard Doreen's return; it was not till she actually came into the room that he looked up. Her entrance was thoroughly characteristic,—swift and eager, and suggesting, as usual, a fresh, invigorating breeze.

"How delightful to find you here already!" she cried, utterly disarming him for a moment by her kiss and by the gladness of her greeting. "Why, you are actually reading John Mitchel! That is quite right and proper, for you ought to take a special interest in him. Was I not enacting John Mitchel heavily ironed, when you made your first call on us long ago?"

"To be sure you were," said Max, smiling, as he contrasted that memory of the past with the sweet oval face and the laughing blue eyes which confronted him.

At that moment his eye happened to fall upon the lovely hothouse flowers in a great china bowl close by; they were evidently just released from a bouquet, and there had hardly been any attempt to rearrange them.

"Who gave you those?" he asked.

"They were given me at Ferrier's concert, last night," she said, leaning back rather wearily in a chair just opposite him, and slowly drawing off her gloves, and tossing her hat on to the sofa.

"I thought I recognized them," he said gravely.

"Were you there?" she said, in surprise. He watched her intently, and was certain that he saw her colour rise a little; his anger increased when she launched out into a long account of Una's illness, for he fancied that she was trying to lead him away from a dangerous topic.

"I have had the greatest difficulty," she continued, "in persuading Madame De Berg to let me have the poor child here. But at last, by Brian Osmond's help, she has been brought to consent. A more selfish, hard-hearted woman I never met."

"Never mind Madame De Berg's character," said Max, with some impatience. "There is much that I want you to explain to me. What had you done with Mrs. Muchmore last night?"

"I sent her home with Una," said Doreen; "the poor child was almost fainting, and we had undertaken to see her safely home. I could not, of course, keep her till my work was done. My song was the last but one on the programme."

"And you were probably not sorry to be without Mrs. Muchmore?" said Max.

"I was glad that she should be with Una."

"And you were also particularly glad to be alone," he said, in a tone which stung and irritated her. She made an effort, however, to control her rising temper.

"Max," she said, crossing over to him, "if you sit facing me like that and examining me as if I were in a witness-box, I shall certainly get cross. Come, dear, it is much too hot to quarrel. Let us sit in our usual nook on the ottoman. And you mustn't be of the opposite opinion to-day, for I am so tired of arguing, and Madame De Berg rubs one entirely the wrong way."

Her appeal touched him for a moment; he put his arm round her tenderly, as they moved to the ottoman and established themselves in their customary place.

"I will not argue, darling," he said; "but there is one thing I want to ask you. Years ago you once said to me, 'I have no secrets—at least, none from you.' Can you say that still?"

He felt her heart throb violently as he spoke. The colour rose to her face in a sudden, vivid blush.

"Max," she said hesitatingly, "I can't say that now—but—"

He interrupted her.

"Don't begin to make excuses," he said angrily. "Just tell me the plain truth. What were you doing last night? I saw you in Piccadilly Circus with those flowers pressed to your lips. Who gave them to you, and what were you doing?"

Doreen, in spite of herself, could not help laughing.

"May one not smell a rose in a stifling London street?" she said. "As a matter of fact, I was, at that very moment, thinking about you."

The tears started to her eyes; she began to see that a great ordeal lay before her.

"Who gave you the flowers?" said Max, once more.

"I cannot tell you," she said quietly.

"Then you force me to assume that they were given you by the man you visited immediately after the concert. Doreen, I insist on knowing the truth. What took you, between eleven and twelve at night, to a disreputable street in the purlieus of Leicester Square, to a place where no woman who respected herself would think of being seen?"

He was standing now, confronting her once more in that way which had suggested the witness-box. She grew deadly pale; but the words "I insist" had roused her Keltic nature into angry resistance. A Kelt may be led, but never driven.

"You followed me, then!" she exclaimed, in a low voice in which there were strange vibrations. "You followed me like a spy?"

Had she then risked her reputation for a man who did not trust her,—a man who stooped to the most petty jealousy?

"I followed you," said Max, "as your guardian angel probably followed you."

"Don't blaspheme my guardian angel," she cried. "If angels can weep, I am sure mine wept at the sight of your faithless heart."

He shrank a little at these words.

"I followed you because I loved you," he said.

"No," she replied quickly. "Say rather because you were jealous and suspicious."

A gleam of hope crossed his troubled face.

"Doreen," he cried, "perhaps you went to see some old political friend of your father's; that, of course, would explain all."

"I did not," she said in a low voice, swiftly dashing his hopes to the ground.

"Then who was the man that I myself saw in the distance, when he put you into the hansom? You must tell me, Doreen. I have a right to know."

"I cannot tell you, Max," she said, breaking down at last, and shedding the most bitter tears of her life. "Oh, why cannot you trust me?"

He turned away, and paced angrily to and fro.

"She has been false to me," he thought. "And now thinks to set all right by a scene and a few tears. But I shall insist on knowing the truth. It is my right, my undoubted right. I will not be made a fool of in this way."

"Can't you see," he said indignantly, "how your mere position as a public singer made such conduct doubly rash, doubly wrong?"

Doreen dried her eyes. Her grief was fast changing to wrath.

"I will beg you to leave my profession alone," she said angrily. "And I will tell you this: not one man in all the profession would have been so distrustful of me as you are. They would know that it was impossible for Doreen O'Ryan to compromise herself. Good God!" she continued, as her own words made her realize a little what his distrust meant, "of what do you suspect me? Speak! Of what do you suspect me?"

All at once she had broken forth into one of those storms of violent indignation which, in the Italian and Irish temperaments, occur with such appalling suddenness and contrast so strangely with the sunny brightness, the unselfish courtesy, usually manifested.

As for Max, he was just as angry, but in a cold fashion. His voice was hard and cruel as he replied to her indignant question.

"Do you suppose," he said, "that any jury in the land would acquit a woman who confessed that at that hour and in that place she had had a private interview with a man whose name she refused to reveal?"

A wave of burning heat seemed to scorch Doreen's whole frame.

"Am I to put *you* on a par with a British jury?" she cried. "You, to whom I have pledged my whole life? You, who professed to love me? But you do not love me. What sort of marriage would ours have been, do you think? Why, a mere mockery, if your faith is so lightly overcome."

"You are right," said Max, hastily. "I should certainly expect my wife to be more careful of appearances. I might even expect her to treat me with entire confidence."

"And you would jealously suspect her on the smallest provocation," said Doreen. "But we are not married, and you are quite at liberty to go if you like. We can mutually consent to end our engagement."

For a moment her vehement words startled him, but he was far too angry to realize the madness of acting upon a wrathful impulse in the heat of the first quarrel that had ever arisen between them.

"Under the circumstances we had certainly better do so," he said icily.

He turned away without attempting any sort of farewell; and Doreen, after the first wild desire to call him back as the door closed behind him, sank down once more on the ottoman, trembling from head to foot. She had spoken quite truly when she said that not a single man in the profession would have dared to suspect her; for she had won for herself, by virtue of her absolute purity, her transparent sincerity, a position that was almost unique. She knew perfectly well that if Ferrier or Sardoni or the St. Pierres had seen her, they would have known that her errand must be for the sake of helping some one in distress; for there is, happily, a certain sort of character which protects its owner from some suspicions more effectually than convent walls. It was the indignant feeling that Max of all men ought to have known this that had moved her to such a storm of anger. She was utterly incapable of making the smallest allowance for him; she forgot that his cold manner only meant that he, too, was a prey to that same distorting anger, nor did she in the least imagine that he was physically ill, and liable to take a morbid view even of the merest trifle. He had outraged all that was most sacred to her, and her wrath and indignation overpowered every other feeling; it drove all before it, making her for the time another being.

How long she endured this hell of fury and hatred she never knew, but by and bye the door opened, and in trotted Mollie, with her pinafore full of buttercups.

"Only think, Doreen," cried the child, running up to her, "Bride and me have been picking all these flowers in Signor Donati's garden, and the new baby was out there,—the sweetest little baby you ever did see."

"Go away!" cried Doreen; "I can't listen now."

The child looked up in astonishment, for never before had she been spoken to in such a tone. She went to the other end of the room and began to arrange her buttercups in bunches, and before long forgot the rebuff and sang to herself in a soft little voice,—

"So as I grew from boy to man,
I bent me to that bidding—
My spirit of each selfish plan
And cruel passion ridding;
For thus I hoped some day to aid—
Oh can such hope be vain?
When my dear country shall be made
A Nation once again."

"Don't sing!" said Doreen, peremptorily; for the sweet voice, and Thomas Davis' noble words, and the thought of Ireland's needs, all tended to draw her back to love and life, while her outraged heart longed to stay for awhile in the deathly stage of wrath and hatred.

Mollie was instantly silenced, but presently she came timidly across the room and slipped a bunch of buttercups into her sister's hand, looking up wistfully, through wet eyelashes, into the face which had never before frowned upon her.

Beneath that wounded, bewildered look Doreen's pride broke down. She caught the child up in her arms and kissed her.

"Don't look like that, Mollie mavourneen," she said. "I love to hear your voice. You shall come with me and help me to make Una's room ready. Poor Una is ill, and we must nurse her."

"Will she like some flowers?" said the child.

"Yes, yes; bring the flowers," said Doreen, "and let us make haste and prepare for her."

With relief she threw herself into the busy preparations, and Una's arrival in the afternoon helped her to banish other thoughts, though still her cheeks burned with that miserable scorching heat, which had never cooled since Max had made her realize his lack of trust.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"The love that fed on daily kisses dieth:
The love kept warm by nearness lieth
Wounded and wan:
The love hope nourished bitter tears distils,
And faints with nought to feed upon.
Only there stirreth very deep below
The hidden beating slow,
And the blind yearning, and the long-drawn breath
Of the love that conquers death."—JEAN INGELOW.

"My dear," said Aunt Garth that afternoon, "I begin to be afraid that we have not done wisely in offering to house poor little Una. You look to me tired already. In such heat as this I am really a little anxious for you. It would be a serious thing if you were to knock up within a month of your marriage."

Doreen's colour deepened.

"You need not be afraid, auntie," she said. "All that is at an end. I meant to have told you before, but could not speak while the children were here. Max Hereford and I have mutually agreed that our engagement had better be ended."

"My dear child," said Mrs. Garth, in great consternation, "after all this time have you allowed a lovers' quarrel to part you so suddenly?"

"I cannot explain it to you, auntie, and I cannot talk," said Doreen, desperately. "To-night I have to sing at Clinton Cleve's benefit. I must save up for that. Please tell Uncle Garth and Michael and the children, and let no one say a word to me about it. It is all over; and ten years hence we shall be thankful, I suppose, that we found out our mistake in time. What does one do with wedding presents under these circumstances?"

She went away without waiting for an answer, perhaps fearing lest Aunt Garth should again refer to the folly of letting a lovers' quarrel end the betrothal. But it was impossible to avoid the subject, and she had not been five minutes in the artistes' room that evening when Ferrier approached her with a kindly greeting.

"Well, and when is the wedding to be?" he asked.

"When Kelt and Saxon learn to be of one mind in a house," she said. "Or, in other words,—never."

Ferrier raised his eyebrows. Though he had not altogether approved of Doreen's engagement, this unexpected news gave him a slight shock. "You have quarrelled?" he said, much as though he had been talking to his own daughter.

"We have agreed to separate," said Doreen, a vivid blush suffusing her face, "and you will be a very good friend to me if you will make it generally known."

"I will do just what you wish," he said kindly.

"Then see Freen for me," she begged, "and tell him that after all, I shall be able to go on tour this autumn; and please make people understand that Mr. Hereford is not to blame, that we have mutually agreed to end our engagement."

"Very well; I will do all I can for you; here comes the Norseman to summon you. What are you singing to-night?"

"This, by way of mockery," she said, with a slight quiver in her voice, which did not escape Ferrier's notice. "It was down in the programme."

The song was Blumenthal's "Love, the Pilgrim."

"You had better substitute something else," said Ferrier, fearing lest she should break down.

"No, that I will not," she said resolutely; "you mustn't tempt me to be a coward. Don't you know that a soprano is bound to sing about love, as much as a baritone is bound to sing about the sea?"

With a little laugh that made Ferrier's heart ache, she picked up the music and made her way down the stairs, through the little anteroom and up to the platform, pausing only to nod her greetings as she passed the other singers, and glad to think

that she had deputed some one else to tell them the news. Ferrier managed the task discreetly enough, and then stood listening to the close of her song, with its pathetic repetitions of "Love is passing!"

"It is all very well for her to say her *fiancé* is not to be blamed," he reflected, gnawing the ends of his moustache savagely; "the man must be a fool to let such a prize as Doreen slip from him, and he must be a brute to give her so much suffering. I could horsewhip him with pleasure!"

When the concert was over, Doreen drove home, wondering to find herself so little tired. In truth, she was as yet too much excited to be conscious of the great strain to which she had been subjected. She had sung better that night than she had ever sung in her life before, and something of the triumph of success lingered still with her, buoying her up strangely, half leading her to think that her artist life in itself was enough to satisfy her. She was glad to be alone; for Mrs. Muchmore had been obliged to stay with Una, as no sick-nurse could be had until the following day. It had been arranged that Doreen should sit up for part of the night with the child; and having made a hasty supper, she bade good-night to her uncle and aunt, and went out into the hall, where Michael was lighting her candle.

"Here is something for you," he said, producing a packet from a particularly obscure corner, where he had of purpose stowed it away, determined that Doreen should have her supper in peace. She glanced at it, saw that the direction was in her lover's handwriting, and knew in an instant that it contained her own letters, and that Michael had guessed as much, and had, with his usual tact, kept it well in the background.

"Good night, dear lad," she said; "don't worry about me. It is all right. 'Least said soonest mended' applies to hearts, you know." She smiled, but it was one of those forlorn smiles that are sadder than tears, and Michael turned away, reflecting even more wrathfully than Ferrier had done, that Max Hereford was clearly to blame.

"He is in a great hurry to get the whole thing wound up. He is glad to be free," thought Doreen, angrily. "He doesn't care how much he makes me suffer!"

Her mind was so full of this crisis in her own life that for the moment all else was forgotten, and it was with a shock of surprise that, on opening her door, she found herself in a dimly lighted room, and heard a pitiful, moaning little voice from the bed.

"How can I go to sleep till Doreen comes? No one else understands"; then catching sight of the face she had been hungering for, Una gave a cry of joy.

"And now perhaps you will settle off," said Mrs. Muchmore. "She has been fretting sadly for you, Miss Doreen; I guess she's kinder frightened and upset like. I'll come in again to you at six o'clock, and if you want anything in the night, you will be sure and call me."

And having left Doreen comfortably installed in the sick-room, Hagar Muchmore went to bed with a sigh of relief.

"Guess I feel more tired than I should 'a done with a whole day's scrubbing," she reflected. "What with that child's ideas that there was spirits in the room and burglars in the cupboard, and that she was goin' to die every other moment, 'twas enough to turn one's brain. But I reckon Miss Doreen, who has got an accommodating way with her, will understand that infant prodigy better than a plain New England woman can do."

The sight of the little, shadowy face on the pillow, and the clasp of the hands that felt like little live coals, had utterly banished from Doreen's mind all thought of her own trouble; her sweet, soft voice seemed to act upon Una like magic, and she had, as Mrs. Muchmore said, a most accommodating way with her. She seemed to assume that to be ill was at that time the best thing in the world for Una. There was an air of matter-of-fact ease about her very movements which was most refreshing. Una watched in dreamy content as she laid aside her pale pink silk dress and donned a cool white dressing-gown, thinking how different this was to Madame De Berg's scolding fussiness, and Hagar Muchmore's well-meant but distressing anxiety and perpetual questions.

"I don't feel afraid now you have come," she said. "I think I should not be so very much afraid even to die, if you were here."

Doreen came and sat beside the bed, softly stroking the slender hand with its long, skilful fingers which had known so little rest.

"There is One who loves you much better than I do, and who is never obliged to go away," she said.

"I am afraid He is angry with me for not loving Him much."

"Sorry, perhaps, but not angry any more than your father or mother would have been. His love for you is not measured by yours to Him,—and nothing can alter it."

"I wish you would light your little lamp under the crucifix," said Una. "I have never seen it lighted, and you said you burnt it every night."

Doreen crossed the room; her hands trembled a little when she lit the lamp, as she had done every night for the last eleven years. Her own words rang persistently in her mind: "Nothing can alter it—nothing can alter it." Had she not truly told Una that love—ideal love—might be grieved, but never angry with personal anger? Out of her own mouth she now stood condemned.

"Does the light shine in your eyes?" she asked.

"No; it just lights up the cross, and I like to see that;" said Una. "I like to think that the evil spirits hate the sight of the cross and stop their ears when they hear the church bells, like Mephistopheles in Faust. But I can't at all understand why Christ died, and all the sermons seem to make it more complicated."

"You can understand the verse about 'God so loved the world,' and that is better than all the sermons," said Doreen. "And now I want you to sleep, and not to talk any more. Lie quite still, and I will say you some of St. Patrick's hymn, which the Irish people have said at bedtime for more than a thousand years."

Una lay peacefully watching the crucifix on the opposite wall, while Doreen's hand softly stroked her tired head, and the clear, mellow voice she loved so well repeated the old Irish invocation,—more beautiful in its grand simplicity than prayers of a later date.

"'I bind to myself to-day the Power of God to guide me, the Might of God to uphold me, the Wisdom of God to teach me, the Eye of God to watch over me, the Ear of God to hear me, the Word of God to give me speech, the Hand of God to protect me, the Way of God to prevent me, the Shield of God to shelter me, the Host of God to defend me.

"'Against the snares of demons, against the temptation of vices, against the lusts of nature, against every man who meditates injury to me, whether far or near, with few or with many. Christ protect me to-day. Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ within me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ at my right, Christ at my left. Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me. Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks to me. Christ in every eye that sees me. Christ in every ear that hears me.

"'I bind to myself to-day the strong power of an invocation of the Trinity, the Faith of the Trinity in Unity, the Creator of the Elements.'"

By and bye, when the tired child was sleeping soundly, Doreen stole quietly across the room and sat down beside the little lamp, and unfastened the packet which Max had directed to her. Her anger with him had all died away. It was impossible to be angry in the solemn stillness of the night. She had soothed herself as well as Una by the grand old words of St. Patrick. Had Max been in the house, she would have gone to him, and frankly confessed that she regretted her angry words, and her impulsive suggestion that they should part, and a hope darted through her mind that he, too, might have become conscious of the great wrong he had done her by his faithlessness. Surely the packet would contain some letter from him? But no; there was absolutely nothing, save her own letters, a ring, a pencil-case, and a little book of Irish love-songs, which she had given him. She sat looking at them in a dazed way, slowly realizing what it is to be taken "at our own rash word." Then she glanced at one letter after another. They were chiefly written during her American tour. She read a sentence here and there. Her mind went back to those weary months when she had been parted from him. She remembered the desolate, hurrying life, the eager counting of the days until their reunion, the relief it had been to open her whole heart to him in these letters as they travelled wearily on through the States.

And now she had cut herself off from it all!

A sort of terror crept over her. What frightful mistake had she been betrayed into by her impulsive nature? Had she ruined not only her own life, but his? And all, as Aunt Garth said, for the sake of a lovers' quarrel,—the first that had

ever risen between them? Her eye fell on a sentence in one of her letters, which seemed to stab her to the heart:—

"I like you to say that it is through me that you understand the Irish problem. To think that in any way I can help you to work for Ireland makes me more proud and happy than all the applause I have had in my whole career. The interviewers torment me terribly, but I comfort myself by thinking that when once we are married, I will have no more of them. We shall no longer be working as wretched units, but together, and I will be—

> "Faithful to Ireland, to God, and to you."

"O God!" she cried in her heart, "what am I to do? What can I do? For his sake I cannot tell him the truth, and I have sworn to keep silence: I can't prove my innocence, and there is no means of tracing John Desmond. If I saw Max, I could only tell him that I was sorry for losing my temper. And he did wrong me most cruelly; he distrusted my very honour! It is he who should seek first to be reconciled. No, I won't write to him. I can't. It was his fault, and I had tried to serve him—had risked much for him. He ought to have guessed—an Irishman would have had the wit to guess in a moment. I suppose I must send him back his letters, and this—" She slowly drew off her betrothal ring. "And yet what a farce it is! the outward sign may go; but just as long as he is in the world am I not, after all, in heart betrothed to him? People who have been genuinely mistaken, and made a wrong choice, can surely never feel like this when they break their engagement. Why, the mere thought of being betrothed to any other man while Max is in the world is intolerable. I love him. Nothing can alter that; but he must first come to me to apologize."

A breath of cool night air stole in just then through the open window; the lamp beneath the crucifix flickered a little. Doreen glanced up. Through many times of fear and anxiety, through the age-long hours of bereavement and grief, through perilous hours of artistic success and the world's praise, she had looked, as she looked now, at Max Hereford's first gift to her. With all the fervour and devotion of her Irish nature, she believed in the victory of the cross; and yet here she was, hotly declaring in her indignation: "He must first come to me and apologize."

Was this a true thing that she had said? Was it right that she should wait in offended silence until he sought to be reconciled? Was she to maintain her attitude of injured innocence, and allow their lives to be shipwrecked for the lack of a word she was too proud and indignant to speak? If it were indeed right for the wronged one to wait in absolute silence for the return of the injurer, why then the whole foundation of Christianity was gone, and there was no such thing as divine forgiveness, no call to imitate it,—in which case she must range herself as a follower of the world's wisdom, and no longer delude herself with the idea that she was a follower of Christ.

When Doreen had once clearly seen the light, she was always ready to follow it; yet the following now was hard. The night passed on, and still she lay back in her chair, rigidly still for the sake of the sick child, but inwardly fighting a desperate battle, her love struggling with her pride, her heart torn by the strife.

The room was absolutely quiet; Una scarcely stirred; a faint gray light began to show itself round the edges of the window blinds; the lamp beneath the cross still burned brightly. Presently the first sparrow wakened and began to chirp; then, after an interval, a second answered, until gradually, all the bird life of the neighbourhood roused itself for the work and praise of another day, and the gray sky changed to rosy dawn.

Again there rang through Doreen's mind the familiar words:—

"I bind to myself to-day the Power of God to guide me, the Might of God to uphold me, the Wisdom of God to teach me."

And a sudden, glad realization that the battle she had fought so long was not too hard for her, that she had all the love and all the strength in the universe at her disposal, if she would but use it, to kill her own false pride and selfishness, filled her with a rapturous relief. Covering her face with her hands, she prayed with her whole being.

Then she softly crossed the room to her writing-table, lit a candle from the little hanging lamp, shaded it carefully from Una, and wrote swiftly the following letter:—

> "MY DEAR MAX:—I have received your packet, and return your letters and presents to me. All this can be done, but I find there is much that I cannot do. I cannot cease to love you, or to believe that we still belong to each other. Max, I was wrong—very wrong—yesterday. I must have said many things in anger that never ought to have been said. Forgive me if you can. If I had been more patient, perhaps I could have made you understand how possible it often is to be deceived by appearances. I could not have explained the reason of my visit to that Café, I could not have told you the name of the man I met there, because for the sake of others I am sworn to secrecy. But surely, surely you can trust me? I will try to believe that you meant the harsh things you said yesterday as little as I meant whatever I said in that storm of anger; my blood was on fire; I cannot tell now what I did say. If I had seen you entering a disreputable place, do you think I should have dreamt that you went with any evil

purpose? Why, of course I should have known that you went to serve or help some one else. You ought to have known perfectly well that this was the sole reason I went. "I was the one who in anger proposed to end our engagement, but, Max, when you believe in me once more, then come back and let us talk things over quietly; do not let us wreck our lives in this miserable dispute. If you neither come nor write, I will understand that your faith in me is gone past recall.—"DOREEN."

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Far, far from each other
Our spirits have grown;
And what heart knows another?
Ah, who knows its own?"— MATTHEW ARNOLD.

The shock of his interview with Doreen had startled Max into a sort of unnatural energy; he felt that he must plunge straight into hard work of some sort, and having hastily put together all the things connected with his betrothal, and committed to the post that packet which Doreen had opened late in the evening with such a miserable pang of realization, he sought out a certain well-known philanthropist who was usually glad to secure his services.

"You are the very man I wanted," was the hearty greeting he received. "Here is a telegram just arrived to say that John Whitaker is ill and unable to speak to-morrow at Manchester. Can you possibly go down?"

"I should like nothing better," said Max.

"Perhaps you can also take his place at Brighton on Saturday," said the philanthropist, who never lost anything for want of asking.

Max willingly consented to step into the breach, and going home, began to prepare his speeches. It was not until the next morning that he wrote to General Hereford announcing that his engagement was broken off, and he took good care that the letter should not be posted till he had left for Manchester. His hansom was at the door, and he was actually on the point of starting, when the old butler brought in the packet in which Doreen had placed the jewels he had given her, his letters, and the letter which she had written to him during the night watches. He held it for a moment in his hand, a curious pain stirring at his heart as he looked at the well-known writing; then, with compressed lips, he turned back into his study, thrust the packet, unopened as it was, into an old despatch box which he seldom used, and unlocking the safe which stood in a cunningly contrived cupboard beneath his bookcase, stowed away the box with the reflection that he had done his duty in securing the family diamonds, and that at some other time he could destroy his letters. The excitement of the Manchester meeting did him good, but there was an appalling dulness about London when he returned. The solitude of his home seemed unbearable to him; he even welcomed a visit from the General.

The old man with more tact than usual alluded very slightly to Doreen; he kept his overwhelming satisfaction within bounds, and sat talking in an easy, pleasant fashion of family matters, and of Lady Rachel's hay fever, which had necessitated her going to Brighton.

"Miriam and I go down to-morrow to join her," he explained; "why shouldn't you come with us? We can put you up there well enough."

And so it happened that on Saturday, Max found himself *vis-à-vis* with his cousin in the far corner of a first-class carriage at Victoria, while in the corner near the door, the General, with the roseate hue of the "Globe" reflected on his contented face, sat reading the account of a wedding in high life, which seemed to afford him the keenest satisfaction. The train was signalled to start, when some one came running up the platform; the guard flung open the carriage door, and, to the amazement of the travellers, helped in Doreen as the wheels began to move.

"Pay at the other end, miss," cried the guard, and Doreen sank breathless into the seat opposite the General. Then came the dreadful moment when she suddenly realized that the man who had formally raised his hat to her, in the far corner, was Max; the General greeted her in his usual fashion.

"Never run for a train, Miss O'Ryan," he said in his patronizing manner; "it is the surest way you can take to shorten your life."

"I have an afternoon concert at Brighton," she said, feeling as if every word she spoke must choke her, and remembering, with a horrible pang, that this train did not even stop at Croydon, that there was no release for her for a whole hour. Miriam, taking pity on her burning cheeks, moved to the vacant place beside her, and shook hands with her pleasantly.

"I am quite sure it was those children that delayed you," she said, laughing.

"No," said Doreen, with a bewildered feeling that she must learn to adapt herself to a new order of things, in which

Miriam would be her kindly shield and helper, and Max her foe. "It was poor little Una Kingston. She is lying very ill at our house and was so much worse this morning, that I was in doubt whether I could leave her; but they seem to think her out of danger for the present. I shall try to catch the five o'clock train back."

"I believe you have been up all night with her," said Miriam, glancing curiously into the girl's careworn face.

"Only since three o'clock. The sick-nurse called me then, thinking that she was dying. Perhaps, after all, that would be the happiest thing for her; she is so utterly alone in the world, poor child, that one dreads the future for her."

"Why do you not get a sleep?" said Miriam; "I will wake you before we get to Brighton."

Doreen blessed her inwardly for the suggestion, feeling that to lean back with closed eyes in her corner, was the only tolerable way of getting through this dreadful hour. As for Max, he remained to all appearance absorbed in his "Daily News" until they were close to Preston Park, then he gave one swift glance at Doreen, and at sight of her sad, weary face, a pang shot through his heart, and her own words about Una returned to him, "One dreads the future for her."

As the train stopped at the Brighton station, there were hasty general farewells, and Doreen swiftly disappeared in search of her luggage; Max, following in the same direction a moment later with the General, suddenly perceived the ever-persistent Mr. Hawke hovering on the outskirts of the crowd round the luggage van, with the evident intention of addressing Doreen who, as yet unconscious of her persecutor's presence, was giving directions to a porter. Affected, however, at last by his persistent stare, she glanced round, visibly annoyed and disconcerted when she saw the predicament she was in. Raising his hat, Mr. Hawke approached her with smiling deference; but Doreen, ignoring him altogether, walked deliberately up to Max Hereford.

"Will you get a fly for me, please?" she said, as though they still belonged to each other; and together they walked down the platform, to the great chagrin of the baffled Hawke.

"I am sorry to have been obliged to trouble you," she said falteringly. "It is the first time that wretched man has tormented me out of London. I never dreamt of having trouble elsewhere. When once I am out of the station, it will be all right. My friend, Mrs. Moore, is staying here, and she will go with me to the concert."

Max, who had been curiously pleased by the fearless way in which she had claimed his protection as her right, was, nevertheless, uncomfortably conscious of the awkwardness of their present situation. He was perfectly courteous, but his answers were monosyllabic, and his nervousness made them sound cold and distant. His politeness was a degree less genial than it would have been to a casual acquaintance. Poor Doreen talked bravely on; no stiff English self-consciousness shackled her tongue, but she could very truly have echoed the words of John Mitchel: "There was a huge lump in my throat all the time of this bald chat."

She talked of Una, of Brian Osmond's last report, of the changes in the Brighton station, of the capture of a certain murderer, and of the latest bulletin about the President of the United States. But all the time she was thinking—"It was on Thursday morning that he had my letter; he might have come to see me; he might have written; his faith in me is gone—quite gone."

At this moment the porter came up with the valise containing her concert dress. Max held out his hand in farewell.

"They gave you my packet that Mrs. Muchmore left at your house?" she asked, a vivid blush dyeing her pale cheeks.

"Yes, thank you; I received it all right," said Max, stiffly. "Good-bye!" He raised his hat, gave the address to the driver, and turned away.

Doreen wrung her hands. The parting in hot anger had been nothing compared to the agony of this calm, deliberate, parting as mere acquaintances. But she dared not let herself break down. However much her own heart ached, it was imperatively necessary that in an hour's time she should be singing ballads before a critical audience. Driving down West Street, she received the one gleam of comfort, however, which she could receive that day: her eye caught the announcement of a meeting at the Dome that evening, on the Better Housing of the Poor, and beneath it the words, "Unavoidable absence of Mr. John Whitaker. Address by Mr. Max Hereford."

He was not going to fall back into the listless idleness which she knew too well had beset him during her absence in America. He had instantly turned to work as a refuge; he was trying to redress the grievances of others. Into her mind

there flashed the glad remembrance that Max, though no paragon of perfection, was absolutely honest and good; that his suspicious jealousy sprang, probably, in part, from the low view which he, in common with most of his class, held of the musical profession, and from the distorted notion of the Irish character which Englishmen, after oppressing Ireland for centuries, inevitably hold. She recollected how, long ago, when Miriam had asked her what she regarded as the essentials for a husband, she had replied that for her there were only two essentials: he must be radically good, and a good Radical. And with desperate resolution she clung to this thought of his goodness as the one thing left her. The light sea-breeze fanned her hot cheeks soothingly; the broad, green stretch of rippling water, as it sparkled in the sunshine, seemed to fill her with hope and courage. Max had failed her, but she felt that he would not fail the world,—the world that waited for the work which his pure heart, and his winning persuasiveness, and his broad sympathies could so well supply.

How far the faith of one spirit can influence another, or in what subtle manner the law of prayer fulfils itself, no one can positively say. But it somehow happened that Max, who had gone down to Brighton not in the least knowing what his next step should be, woke on the Sunday morning with a perfectly clear perception that he must go to Ireland. It was the last country he desired to go to; he shuddered at the thought of visiting alone the places he had intended to visit with Doreen, and the memory of their last tour, and of his mother's sudden death, made him shrink from the idea of revisiting the same scenes. And yet it was borne in upon him that his work lay there, and, turning a deaf ear to General Hereford's suggestions of a summer on the continent, he set off by the mail train on Monday evening; and, with his usual ardour, plunged straight into that close study of Irish difficulties which he had long talked of attempting. Happily, he found in an Irish friend of Donovan Farrant's a guide who very speedily put him in touch with the life of the people. Moreover, Dick McGlynn was the best of companions; the ten days during which they worked together were by no means dull, and, for the time, Max held his trouble at arm's length. But one evening, after speaking at McGlynn's request at a Land League meeting, in the neighbourhood of Dublin, he suddenly realized that something was wrong with him. As they got out of the train at Harcourt Street, his legs seemed to double up beneath him, and he would have fallen headlong down the stairs if McGlynn had not gripped him by the arm.

"Are you faint?" asked his companion. "You had better drive home."

"No, no," he replied, with a vivid consciousness that the people passing by thought him drunk. "That place was hot enough to upset one. I shall be all right; it is only a few minutes' walk."

But it seemed the longest ten minutes of his life. Along the dreary length of Harcourt Street, past the little house in which Doreen had spent her childhood, along two of the sides of Stephen's Green, until at last the friendly portals of the Shelbourne were reached. He dragged himself across the entrance-hall to the lift, and bade McGlynn good-night.

"Good Heavens, my dear fellow!" said the Irishman. "Your hand is on fire; I believe you are in a raging fever. Well, I shall look you up to-morrow, and, after all, it may only be this confounded heat that has knocked you up."

But the next morning Max found himself in the doctor's hands, fast bound with an attack of rheumatic fever, forbidden to move hand or foot, not even allowed to feed himself, and with the prospect of a long illness before him. Shut up for the whole of that summer in one of the large, airy rooms at the Shelbourne, he endured with much fortitude and patience the weary tedium of the long days and the dreary nights. His somewhat taciturn red-cross nurse wrote letters at his dictation to General Hereford and to Claude Magnay. It was well, he thought, that they should know he was laid up with an illness which might possibly end fatally; but he gave strict orders that no one was to come to him unless he grew worse, for he dreaded seeing any one who might talk to him of his trouble about Doreen, and was always fearful lest he should let fall, during his restless, feverish nights, any word that could harm her, or betray to others the cause that had parted them. He was far too ill to think out calmly and reasonably the unlikelihood of Doreen's infidelity to him; and, although now and then the craving for her presence became intense, he was, as a rule, too physically weak to do more than endure his wretchedness with a sort of sad resignation.

McGlynn was kindness itself to him, and he had the best of doctors; numbers of hospitable Irish people sent him gifts of flowers and fruit and books, while, as to the hotel staff, there was nothing they would not have done for him.

At length his eager craving to be able to work once more seemed about to be gratified. For there came a morning when the fever left him, when his nurse looked into his changed face with professional satisfaction, and his doctor allowed him to sit for an hour in an armchair by the window. It was rapture to him just to be able to look at the trees in Stephen's Green, at the long line of old brick mansions, and at the blue Dublin mountains away in the distance. He felt that morning

that he should get well, and spite of all that had passed, he was far too young not to look forward eagerly to going forth once more into the world.

Anxious that he should be out as much as possible, his doctor sent him, as soon as he was fit to travel, to the neighbourhood of Castle Karey, and here, in the still autumnal days, he quickly regained his strength. It was here, too, that gentler thoughts of Doreen returned to him; her brave, sweet face haunted him as he drove among the familiar mountains, or as he paced slowly to and fro in the hotel garden, where, but sixteen months before, in the first bright days of their betrothal, they had walked together. Had he not, after all, misjudged her? Surely there was some possible explanation of her strange conduct on that summer night? The whole place seemed full of memories of Doreen—the very mountains seemed to plead with him to reconsider his harsh judgment. Again and again her indignant words, during their interview at Bernard Street, recurred to his mind—"Don't blaspheme my guardian angel. If angels can weep, I am sure mine wept at the sight of your faithless heart."

One day he drove over to Lough Lee, and, hiring a boat, was rowed to the further end. There stood the roofless cabin, while the bit of land which old Larry had made with such infinite pains had relapsed into a desolate wilderness once more. Deep down at the bottom of the lake lay the bones of James Foxell; his successor, the agent who had evicted Larry, still flourished and evicted other people from their homes, while Lord Byfield enjoyed himself in England, only troubling himself to put in an appearance in the House of Lords, now and then, to vote against such measures as the Compensation for Disturbance Bill, or to help in mangling and mutilating the Land Bill.

"But sure, yer honour," said the boatman, as they discussed the latest contest, "I don't blame the House of Lords, at all, at all. Yer see they're born imbeciles,—they can't help themselves!"

Max laughed aloud; there was something irresistible in the humorous look and the fine contempt of this blue-eyed Kelt.

> "O would some fay the giftie gie 'em
> To see themselves as others see 'em,"

he muttered to himself, as they glided once more over the calm gray waters of the lough. And then that haunting vision of Doreen as a child steering that very boat with a white resolute face, drove all other thoughts from his mind.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"O what a thing is man! how far from power,
From settled peace and rest!
He is some twenty, several men at least,
Each several hour.
Now he will fight it out, and to the wars;
Now eat his bread in peace,
And snudge in quiet; now he scorns increase;
Now all day spares."— GEORGE HERBERT.

Max soon grew weary of the quiet country place, and one morning, happening to see an announcement in the "Freeman's Journal" to the effect that Miss Doreen O'Ryan had joined Madame St. Pierre's concert party, and was making a tour in England, and that she would also sing in Belfast, Dublin, Cork, and Waterford during the third week in October, he suddenly resolved to return once more to his old quarters at the Shelbourne. He did not exactly own to himself that he meant to see her; he blinded himself with an ingenious pretext of wishing to be present at a Land League meeting which was to take place towards the middle of the month; a political meeting in the second week could have no remotest bearing upon a concert in the third week! If it should chance that he stayed on in Dublin, why, it was of course purely accidental.

His doctor was astonished to see him looking so much better; for how should he know of the secret hope that had begun to dawn in his patient's heart? McGlynn, too, gave him hearty congratulations, when, on the night of the meeting, Max joined him at the office in Upper Sackville Street. He even persuaded him to speak, and Max, partly from a wish to try how far his powers had been impaired, and partly from his growing sympathy with a people struggling against such desperate odds, made a short speech.

The effort tired him greatly, and it was not until noon on the following day that he rose, and feeling more inclined for a comfortable sofa than for food, strolled into the drawing-room at the Shelbourne. A widow sat writing letters at one of the tables, in an armchair by the fire sat a careworn and peevish-looking old lady, who was accounted the greatest adept in the art of grumbling to be found in all Ireland, while with his back to the hearth stood a weather-beaten old gentleman who was vehemently abusing the Irish people.

"Thieves, ma'am, thieves, every one of them; that's what they are. They would take the very teeth from your head, if they could get them, and if they were worth anything."

The old lady, conscious of possessing a valuable set of what the Americans call "store teeth," looked uncomfortable.

"I'm sure it's a great providence that these dreadful land-leaguers are in prison," she exclaimed. "Have all of them been taken, did you say?"

"The leaders, ma'am, Fitzhugh and O'Carroll and the rest of the vile agitators who lead astray the ignorant peasantry. There's not been such a *coup d'état* in my recollection. The Chief Secretary has done his duty at last."

Max was struck dumb with astonishment and dismay. He thought no more of his fatigue, but hurried off in search of McGlynn, and remained with him till late that evening, far too much excited to remember anything but the sudden blow which had fallen upon the Irish people. What would Doreen think, he wondered, when she read of the imprisonment of all the leading men of her party, many of whom were her personal friends? She would hear of it, too, in the midst of her concert tour, when she was travelling, perhaps, with people who could not in the least sympathize with her. And soon a wild desire to go to her there and then seemed to overpower every other consideration. Had she not claimed his protection that day at Brighton? The conviction that had gradually come to him with his returning health, that Doreen was perfectly innocent, that it was his approaching illness which had so blinded him to the truth, became now a certainty. Doubtless it was some rash political errand that had taken her that night to so strange a place; some hare-brained and thoughtless compatriot had bound her over to secrecy, and she was too generous to betray him. He would go straight back to England and beg her forgiveness for his unworthy suspicions.

"McGlynn," he exclaimed, "come back with me to England. You run great risk of being arrested over here. Come back with me to-morrow."

"And desert a sinking ship?" said McGlynn, his bright, humorous face clouded with care.

"It's not a question of deserting. You can serve Ireland far better if you are at large. It won't do for every Nationalist to be under lock and key."

"I will walk back with you to the Shelbourne, and we can talk it over," said McGlynn. "Anyhow, you must get out of this, or the excitement will be making you ill again."

The two friends had no sooner left McGlynn's lodgings and stepped out on to the pavement, than they became aware that the city was far from quiet. The sound of a great multitude made itself heard, that strange, hoarse roar, indescribable, but more stirring than anything on earth. They pressed on until they found themselves in Sackville Street. Here women rushed past them, shrieking with terror, and the whole broad thoroughfare presented a scene of the greatest confusion; for, on the pretext that they feared there might be a riot, the police, in large bodies, were charging furiously into the people, showing no mercy to age or sex, but, with drawn batons and clenched fists, striking all who came in their way.

"Hell let loose," said Max, his blood boiling as he saw an unfortunate postal-telegraph messenger felled to the ground and brutally kicked by a huge constable. They drew the poor fellow aside and helped him up, and his first thought on recovering from his bewilderment was of the telegram he had been carrying. McGlynn began to feel anxious for his companion. It was no place for a man who had so lately recovered from a dangerous illness, and when once they had crossed O'Connell Bridge, he drew him aside into quieter regions.

"Good God!" exclaimed Max, with a shudder, as he thought of the faces he had seen covered with blood, and of the sight of Sackville Street literally strewn with the bodies of unoffending men, women, and children, beaten down by the blows of the police in their headlong charge. "I wonder, McGlynn, that you are willing to walk with an Englishman. How you must loathe us all!"

"Well, there are exceptions," said McGlynn, with a humorous look. "And you are one of them, for you neither patronize us benevolently, nor tyrannize over us."

After talking things over, McGlynn was persuaded to go to England the next morning, with his friend, and promised to join him at the Shelbourne in time for the 6.45 train at Westland Row. After he had left, Max, not in the least inclined to sleep, made his preparations for departure. Then, taking out his writing-case, filled up a telegram form with the following words: "Boniface, Regent Street, London. Telegraph Miss Doreen O'Ryan's addresses during this week to M. Hereford, North Western Hotel, Holyhead." Then for the rest of the night, half asleep, half awake, he thought out his plans for meeting Doreen once more, and wondered where and how their interview would take place, and felt that he could no longer endure the wretchedness of being utterly ignorant of her whereabouts. When they met, when they talked things calmly over, when he had asked forgiveness for his jealous and unworthy thoughts, there would be something, he was convinced, which she could explain, and their quarrel would be at an end. They might even be ready to call

> "Blessings on the falling out
> That all the more endears."

So he fondly hoped, and when the man waked him at six o'clock, he sprang up eagerly to begin this new day from which he hoped so much, not pausing to realize that the excitement of the previous evening had told severely on his strength, and that he was anything but fit for the work he had mapped out.

McGlynn made an exclamation of dismay when he saw his flushed face.

"I don't know what your doctor would say to your going off in a hurry at this time in the morning."

"Oh, I shall be all right when once I am in England," said Max. "Dublin always feels to me relaxing. Help me to get this portmanteau shut; there's a good fellow."

At this moment there was a loud knock, and before Max could reply, the door was thrown open by one of the waiters who had always been specially good to him during his illness.

"Sir," said the man, "you have only a moment to save yourself; the Superintendent of Police is in the entrance hall, asking for you and Mr. McGlynn. He will be on the stairs by now. Come to the lift, sir, and I will see that you get out of the place safely."

"You go," said Max to his friend; "I will wait; they can't do much to me."

"I shall do nothing of the kind," said McGlynn, warmly; "down with the paper Union, and three cheers for the Union of hearts! We will go together."

Before any more could be said, two officials appeared at the door, and the superintendent, a particularly quiet, courteous man, whose keen, sad eyes had a curiously wistful expression, came forward and presented a warrant first to Max Hereford and then to his companion. McGlynn at once accepted the situation and knew all that it meant, but Max looked bewildered and indignant.

"It is a warrant for your arrest, sir, under the Coercion Act," explained the superintendent, respectfully. "I must trouble you to come with me as quickly as you can."

"There must be some mistake," said McGlynn. "Of what can Mr. Hereford possibly be guilty? You can hardly accuse him of leading the people astray or pretend that he is a dangerous agitator."

The other official, who was of a different type, answered him.

"We are quite aware of all Mr. Hereford's movements, sir; and his interest in Irish matters began years before he knew you, when he was staying in the neighbourhood of Lough Lee."

Max felt an extraordinary sensation at his heart as the man, with a keen glance at him, uttered these words. He knew that he changed colour and that the detective had observed it. He was about to make an angry reply, when the superintendent touched him on the arm.

"Sir," he said, courteously, "let me advise you to say nothing, but to come without delay."

With an impatient shrug of the shoulders, Max adopted the friendly counsel, and drew on his light overcoat; but a sudden exclamation of wrath escaped him when he saw the detective take up the telegram form from the table, coolly read it, and with a significant glance hand it to the superintendent.

"What are you about?" he cried, forgetting that he was a prisoner, and in no position to command. "Give that form to me."

"Sir," said the superintendent, "you are not going to Holyhead now, and the form can be of no use to you. I am sorry it is my duty to keep it."

With that he folded it neatly and put it in his pocket-book, while Max inwardly raged to think that Doreen's name in full should have been on the paper, and that he should thus have dragged her down with him. As this thought flashed through his mind, however, a sudden qualm of agonizing doubt seized him, a fear so horrible that it was half paralyzing. As in a dream, he bade farewell to the friendly waiter, and walked beside the superintendent, along the corridor, down the broad staircase, across the tiled entrance hall, and out into the damp, misty October air. The cab that was to have taken them to Westland Row was still in waiting; they all four got into it and drove off in the direction of Kilmainham.

As they rattled over the paving-stones in Stephen's Green, the horrible fear that had clutched at his heart changed to grim conviction. This was the explanation of Doreen's strange conduct, this the reason of her sudden, angry suggestion that their betrothal should be ended. John Desmond's words long ago had fulfilled themselves. Sooner or later, as he had prophesied, the secret of that disastrous day on Lough Lee had leaked out, and it had been through her. Led on, no doubt, by some misplaced confidence in an Irish friend, she had been duped into betraying that her lover had been present at Foxell's death, and the detectives had been set upon his track. That something was known by them of that day on Lough Lee, he was certain from the words that had passed, and he was convinced that no living being but Doreen could have supplied the information. Had not the man, moreover, seized on the telegram form with the eagerness and satisfaction of a vulture pouncing on his prey? The request for Doreen O'Ryan's address was to form some link in the evidence that was being got up against him. That was perfectly clear, and his arrest under the Coercion Act, which enabled him to be imprisoned without any trial whatever, was, no doubt, highly convenient to those who were unravelling the Foxell mystery. He cursed his folly in having taken part in those two Land League meetings, for thus, as he clearly saw, he had put himself into their power.

By this time they had passed down Grafton Street, and had reached College Green. He caught sight of Grattan's statue, and there came to his mind a story which Doreen had told him of the great patriot, as she showed him that same statue eighteen months before, and the very poem which she had quoted as they looked across to the old Parliament House, rang now in his ears:—

"She's not a dull or cold land,
No! she's a warm and bold land
Oh! she's a true and old land—
This native land of mine.
No men than hers are braver,
Her women's hearts ne'er waver;
I'd freely die to save her,
And think my lot divine."

A vehement struggle began in his heart: his better nature striving hard to draw him back to faith in Doreen, his proud, stubborn temper urging him not to yield, while devils' voices filled his mind with every attack conceivable on the Irish character. Were not the people of Ireland, after all, mere pleasant acquaintances, but radically unsound; smooth-tongued, but false-hearted; headstrong, mendacious, given up to secret plotting, vain, garrulous, and quarrelsome? Here was he, with his whole career blighted by the idle talk of the very woman who should have been his best helper. She had sworn to keep silence in the past, and she had plighted her troth to him, and now was doubly forsworn. It was all in vain that his conscience brought before him a clear perception of his own anger and bitterness, and harsh, unjust judgment; he deliberately yielded to those other blind guides who bade him think of what the world would say to his imprisonment: how some would laugh and some shrug their shoulders, and how his name would be bandied about contemptuously, while General Hereford would be careful to add that it all came through his foolish attachment to that Fenian's daughter.

"And, after all, the old man is right!" he reflected bitterly, as they turned from Dame Street into Parliament Street; "it has come from that. If I had never seen Doreen, how different all would have been! But I will see her no more, will think of her no more. I have been fooling myself all this time, have dreamt that she was the very ideal of all that was noble, and she is, after all, not even a trustworthy woman. Yes, I *will* judge, I *will* condemn. If I can't go where I please, I will at least think what I please."

While Max had given place to the spirit of injustice, and wrath, and hatred, McGlynn was chatting away in an easy, unconcerned fashion to the superintendent. The prospect of imprisonment did not in the least daunt him; he regarded it as a necessary part in the career of a patriotic Irishman, and rejoiced in the thought that, by enduring a slight amount of discomfort for a time, he was helping to purchase his country's freedom. As they drove along the quays, Max listened to his cheery talk and marvelled at it. It was difficult to maintain his contempt for what he was pleased to consider the typical Irish character when in the presence of this blithe, brave-hearted Land-Leaguer, with his high ideals, and his readiness to take whatever came in the way of personal inconvenience and restriction.

At last they drew up before the grim portals of Kilmainham, and Max, feeling like one in a dream, speedily found himself installed in a cell, and learnt the sort of treatment he was to receive. He might wear his own clothes; he could have what books or writing-materials he pleased; he could order in a bed if he wished to do so; and could provide his own food. Also, he was permitted to associate for several hours in the day, if he liked, with the other prisoners under the Coercion Act.

It was some relief to him the next day to see McGlynn's bright face and feel his hearty grip of the hand. The Kelt was in excellent spirits, and seemed ready to make fun of everything, but he readily understood that the imprisonment which to an Irishman was an honour, must seem to the Englishman in every way a disgrace. It was not so easy to endure a punishment at the hands of one's own countrymen, and in a cause that as yet found, in England, scarcely any supporters.

"Beyond the loss of freedom and the annoyance of having one's letters looked at, I don't see that we have much to complain of," said McGlynn. "Think what it would be to endure penal servitude like Donal Moore, to be classed with criminals, and forced—as many political prisoners here have been—to wear prison dress, the badge of crime!"

"You make light of the discomforts," said Max, hotly; "but do you know that I can't see a doctor without having a warder all the time in the cell? It's abominable!"

"Oh yes, I know some of them chafe against that rule," said the young Irishman. "They say Fitzhugh raged like a lion when the warder insisted on staying, while O'Carroll said nothing whatever, but courteously handed the man a chair. It was just like him. Here he comes! By the bye, let me introduce you. Mr. Hereford," he said, laughing, as the two prisoners greeted each other, "does not think Kilmainham a bed of roses."

"Oh, you will grow very much accustomed to it," said O'Carroll, his quiet, melancholy eyes keenly scrutinizing the young Englishman's face for a moment, and reading in it something which told him that Max was passing through a difficult

stage of his life and had not come out conqueror. "It is wonderful how soon you can adapt yourself to entirely different conditions if you try."

Max thought O'Carroll had succeeded admirably as regarded his mind, but his physical frame told a very different tale.

"You go on the philosophic principle of taking things as you find them," he replied.

"Well, yes, we must *take* things as we find them," said O'Carroll, smiling; "but we must leave them better. I see you think that's an impossibility for a prisoner; but if ever you spend as much time in prison as I have done (which Heaven forefend), you will understand what I mean. Anyhow, this is grand training for a future legislator."

"To me it seems like the utter shipwreck of my career," said Max, gloomily. "Imagine the Firdale electors having me as their candidate after this!"

"Well, I can't judge how it may affect you over there," said O'Carroll, "but you will find that the Irish are not ungrateful to one who has suffered in their cause."

Max did not reply; he fell into despondent musing over that strange web of fate which had gradually coiled about him since the time of old Larry's threatened eviction. It was the Foxell mystery which had really led to his imprisonment, he fancied,—not the few vehement words he had spoken at the Land League meetings in defence of the rights of free speech, and in condemnation of land-grabbers.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"Brave eyes! brave eyes, and trustful too, as brave,
In which thought follows thought as wave on wave;
True mirrors clear, reflecting ev'ry feeling,
Now bright, now blank, now full of soft appealing.

"Yet there is one phase which they do not show,
A shy reserve beneath the light and glow,
A dim, soft veil, with a sweet, subtle art,
Keeps hidden still some chambers of the heart.

"Brave eyes! brave eyes, 'tis not your form or hue,
That wins our love, that draws all hearts to you;
It is the radiance of pure womanhood,
Shining so clear with ever-changing mood."—ELLEN O'LEARY.

"MY dear, nothing you can say will make me like Madame Sardoni; and the ridiculous fuss the Hastings people made over her last night was really pitiable. Very bad taste, too, on her part, to sing that song as an *encore*; she might have known that I have sung it for years and have made it my own."

So spake Madame St. Pierre as, with a ruffled and displeased air, she took her place in the saloon carriage specially retained for Ferrier's company. Doreen, in a very becoming ulster and dainty little travelling-hat, sat beside her.

"Well, you know," she replied, "Domenica has not long been in England, and I am quite sure she would not have chosen that song had she known that it had almost become your special property. It is a mistake that any one who has been for years in America might make. I made the very same mistake at that city dinner years ago, and you have been very kind to me, you know."

There was something in the winsome smile and in the half coaxing tone that proved irresistible. Madame St. Pierre gave her hand a little friendly pat.

"No one could have the heart to be unkind to you, I should think," she said. "And as to that song, why it was, after all, one of your own Irish melodies. Ah, here comes that woman! To think that this is only the second week in October, and that we are to travel together till the middle of November!"

"I always notice," said Doreen, laughing, "that for the first week we are all so good and polite to each other, but after that the little rubs begin."

The rubs had begun for her on the previous evening, when the startling news of the wholesale arrests in Dublin had set Ferrier's concert party talking vehemently on political matters; and to hear people talking of the Irish when they had never taken the trouble really to study the history of Ireland always severely tried Doreen's temper. It was maddening to have the slight smattering gained from some hostile English newspaper hurled at her in argument as Gospel truth, and at dinner on the previous day something very like a quarrel had come about.

"I can't conceive," said Stainforth, the violinist, a somewhat cynical-looking Englishman, "how you can allow yourself to be carried away by sentiment, when you must be aware that not a single educated person is in favour of Home Rule."

"I would rather be 'carried away,' as you call it, by honest national feeling," retorted Doreen, angrily, "than be stuck in a bog of crass ignorance as you are."

Naturally, the violinist did not like this frank repayment in his own coin, and the war of words had raged more hotly.

"You can't maintain that the upper classes are in favour of it."

"The upper classes are chiefly English and Scotch settlers, and no more Irish than you are. They think of themselves and of their own interests, with some few noble exceptions. There, as here, all reform is brought about by the people."

The violinist's reply to this had been so fiery that Ferrier had intervened.

"It's all very well for you, my dear fellow, who don't keep your shop in your throat, but we shall be as hoarse as ravens if we have any more politics now. A truce to hostilities. Fitzhugh is safely in Kilmainham, and there let him rest."

The little unpleasantness which had arisen between Madame Sardoni and Madame St. Pierre during the concert had diverted the thoughts of everyone from the Irish *coup d'état*, and Doreen, who was a born peacemaker, had done her best to smooth things down, and had been confided in by both ladies. But Stainforth had not quite forgiven her for having presumed to speak of his "crass ignorance." It was quite true that he knew no more of Irish history than a child of seven, and had not the smallest intention of troubling himself to study it; but still, to be ruthlessly told by a woman—and still worse by an Irishwoman—that he was "stuck in a bog of crass ignorance" was more than he could patiently endure. He was so much accustomed to sneering at Irish patriotism, and dismissing it from serious consideration with the contemptuous epithet "mere sentiment," that he hardly realized how rude and how irritating his speech had seemed to Doreen. Nor did he pause to consider that if an Irishman had dared to call his national feeling mere English "sentiment," he would have been furious at the insult.

That afternoon, at the Hastings station, he caught sight of a line on the newspaper posters which assured him of revenge upon the Irish *prima donna*. Sardoni and Ferrier had apparently noticed the same thing, for they stood talking together in low tones beside the bookstall. The violinist purchased two papers and made his way to the saloon carriage, where Doreen, with a certain amused look lurking about the corners of her mouth, was trying to beguile her two companions out of their stiff and uncompromising mood. He offered the "Graphic" to Madame St. Pierre, who thanked him graciously.

"I don't know if you care to see this, Miss O'Ryan," he said, smiling, as he handed her an evening paper of Radical proclivities. "I am afraid none of them are exactly of your way of thinking."

"Thank you," said Doreen, pleasantly. "I take that as an *amende honorable* for last night. This paper is, at any rate, less unjust to Ireland than the others; as the children say of their lessons, it is the 'least worst.'"

She settled herself at the further end of the carriage, opened the paper, and almost immediately saw the large type announcement,—"Wholesale Arrests in Dublin. Imprisonment of Mr. Max Hereford." After that for a few moments everything swam before her eyes, though, with an instinct of self-preservation, she still held up the paper as a shield between herself and the rest of the world. She was vaguely conscious that the other men of the party got in,—she heard them talking, in a confused way; heard the guard's shout of "Eastbourne train! All for Eastbourne, Bexhill, and Pevensey!" was dimly aware that they were slowly moving out of the station. Then she felt a touch on her hand, and glancing up, saw that Ferrier was bending over her. His broad shoulders sheltered her from the observation of the others, and Sardoni had dexterously contrived to set them all laughing over one of the practical jokes in which he was an adept.

"My dear," said Ferrier, "we had hoped you would not notice this."

She looked up at him in a dazed way.

"I do not understand it," she said. "I did not even know he was in Ireland. Think of it, oh, just think of it! He was over there in my own country, and I never knew! Oh, what am I to do? What can I do?"

Ferrier, touched by her distress, racked his brain for some word of comfort, and in a moment of inspiration recollected the way in which she had told him that her betrothal was at an end.

"Perhaps," he said, in an undertone, "Kelt and Saxon are nearer to understanding each other than you thought."

She gave him a grateful look, then once more caught up the paper.

"Let me read all that it says before we get to that tunnel!" she exclaimed, and Ferrier read with her the following lines:—

"At an early hour on Friday morning, Mr. Richard McGlynn and Mr. Max Hereford were arrested at the Shelbourne Hotel, and conveyed to Kilmainham. Both gentlemen were about to leave for England. Mr. Hereford unsuccessfully contested Firdale at the General Election, and is well known on Radical platforms, and as a temperance advocate. Some surprise has been felt as to his arrest under the Coercion Act, but it appears that on Wednesday last he spoke at one of the Land League meetings, and denounced land-grabbers in no measured terms, while at a meeting in July he used equally strong language as to the Irishman's right to free speech. Considerable indignation has been expressed in Dublin, where, during a long and dangerous illness this summer, Mr. Hereford has made for himself many friends."

He had been ill, then, and she had never known it. And now, only just recovered, they had thrust him into that hateful Kilmainham, the gloomy jail she remembered so well visiting as a child, while her father had been awaiting his trial. If he had been through a long illness, he must have been taken ill almost directly after she last saw him,—must, at the very

time of their quarrel, have been affected by the coming trouble. In a moment it became clear to her that this illness must have been coming on for months, that it was probably accounted for by the terrible shock of his mother's sudden death, and that all that listless idleness, that tendency to be irritated by trifles, had been fully accounted for. Why, oh, why, had she not realized this in time?

Ferrier said a kindly word or two, and then rejoined the others, while Doreen mechanically turned over the pages of the newspaper, scarcely seeing the words that her eye travelled over, because her thoughts were far away with Max. But suddenly a paragraph in quite another part of the paper startled her into strained attention.

"A French gentleman—M. Baptiste Charpentier—forwards us the following extraordinary anecdote. It seems that he and a companion, while fishing in Lough Lee, caught a remarkably fine trout which they bade the cook at their hotel to dress for supper. On opening the fish, a gold watch-key was discovered bearing upon the seal the initials J. F. The anglers very rightly placed the key at once in the hands of the police."

The face of Baptiste, the valet, flashed back into Doreen's memory, and with it the recollection of that same face which had perplexed her at the Firdale election. Instantly her quick Keltic perception had grasped the truth of the case; this valet who had helped to nurse Desmond through his illness, must have gained some sort of clue to what had happened on Lough Lee while the tutor had been delirious. She remembered, too, with a horrible pang, that she herself had been speaking to Max about that disastrous day years ago during her first visit to Monkton Verney, and that the French servant had suddenly emerged from the shrubbery with a message for his master. Max had assured her that he would not, in any case, have understood, but not long after he had caught the man reading his letters and had angrily dismissed him. Surely, it was only too clear that Baptiste had been a spy, eagerly trying to win the reward offered by Mr. Foxell's widow for the discovery of the murderer, and that he had been Max Hereford's bitter enemy ever since his angry dismissal. In a sort of despair she looked out at the flat, desolate shore, with its dreary martello towers. If Max were in difficulty or danger, Desmond had bade her set him free from his oath. And here he was in prison, possibly on account of this very discovery of Foxell's watch-key, and of Baptiste's revelations; yet she dared not open her lips to any one else, lest, after all, Foxell's murder had nothing whatever to do with his present imprisonment, and he had really been arrested only for his speeches. Well, she would write to him, and tell him that it was John Desmond she had met in London on that summer evening. That mystery at least might be done away with, and she would say that he was free to tell the whole truth. Taking out her pocket-book, she rapidly scribbled the outline of a letter to him, and found relief in unburdening her heart. Then suddenly, with a bitter sense of disappointment and baffled hope, she remembered that all the letters he would receive would most certainly be read by the authorities. It was no use to write,—no use at all,—and as they reached their destination, she tore the pencilled lines to pieces, and watched them drift away in the stormy autumn wind.

"Come," said Ferrier, kindly; "let me take your bag for you. The train is behind time, and our dinner will be waiting for us."

But the very thought of eating was intolerable to her. Like one in a dream, she took her place in the long hotel omnibus, and heard the others praise the picturesque streets, with their golden and russet elm trees, and felt a momentary sense of companionship as she caught a glimpse of the stormy sea with its white-crested waves.

"It's no good, Domenica," she said presently, as Madame Sardoni came to her bedroom to urge her to come down to the four o'clock dinner, which had been prepared for Ferrier's company. "The only chance of my being fit to sing to-night is to keep quiet. If I went down, I couldn't eat, so where is the use? I'm going out by the sea. I must have time to think."

Domenica Sardoni was one of those delightful people who seldom argue. She only looked musingly into the girl's haggard face and sad eyes.

"Well, don't take cold," she said. "These autumn afternoons are treacherous. If you will go, then take your fur cape."

Doreen, with a forlorn smile, unstrapped her wraps, and obediently took out the fur, then, with a sudden impulse, turned and kissed her companion warmly.

"You are a very good friend to me," she said in a broken voice.

"I wish Carlo Donati were here," said Domenica, as they went downstairs together.

But Doreen, as she went out alone into the fresh autumnal air, thought to herself, "Carlo Donati is the best man in the

world, but I don't want him, for all that. I want Max—and no one but Max! Max is mine, and I am his, whatever may happen."

And then, with an awful revulsion, she remembered that Max must be wholly indifferent to her, or he would surely have answered her letter in the summer,—that letter which it had cost her so much to write, and which she knew from his own lips he had received "quite safely." The irony of his utter lack of comment struck her now even more bitterly than it had done at the time. Perhaps he had thought her "unwomanly" to write it. Perhaps she had only offended him more deeply by seeking to set things right. The strong west wind blew through and through her. The salt spray beat in her face. The tide was high, and every now and then a wave would break right over the deserted parade on which she was walking. There was nothing to be seen save the bold outline of Beachy Head, with its white cliffs and smooth green slopes, while on one side of the bricked walk rose a high bank, planted with tamarisk, and on the other stretched the great, heaving expanse of stormy sea. She started back a little as a wave dashed up almost to her feet. What if she were swept away relentlessly? If she, too, sank, as she had seen her father's lifeless body sink into that great unknown region, where below the troubled surface all would be calm and still? Why, that would never do when with her rested the means of rescuing Max from Kilmainham.

She drew from her pocket-book the little calendar of Ferrier's tour, and read over the engagements of the next few days. "Saturday, Eastbourne; Monday, Edinburgh; Tuesday, Glasgow; Wednesday, Belfast; Thursday, Dublin; Friday, Cork; Saturday morning, Waterford; Monday, Birmingham." She had heard much grumbling among her companions at this hard and ill-arranged week. They detested crossing the Irish Sea; they protested vehemently that Freen's thoughtless plan of a morning concert at Waterford on the Saturday, would expose them to the horrors of a longer sea-passage, and all for the sake of the objectionable Irish, who at that time were in great disfavour,—the "sentimental people encircled by the melancholy ocean."

"Since I cannot write to Max," thought Doreen, "I must go to see him. When I have told him all, why, then he will be safe, whatever happens, and I am surely now justified in telling him. Mr. Desmond, I am sure, would say so. He warned me that Baptiste was on the track, and that paragraph shows that he has secured one strong piece of evidence. Oh, God! to think of all the misery and trouble that might have been spared, had the agent shown the least humanity to poor Larry! Trace to its source almost every crime or sorrow in Ireland, and it seems to me that you will find a heartless and unjust eviction as its originator. And, oh, while I walk here at large, Max is in that hateful place! and of all men he is the one to feel imprisonment most keenly. He who has lived all his life in free England! how will he bear the discomforts and restrictions, the comments, too, that his case will give rise to? And just now when he is only recovering from dangerous illness. He will never stand it! O'Carroll and Donal Moore and Fitzhugh, they are made of different stuff,—they are Irish, and can and will bear gladly whatever comes to them, for the sake of Ireland. But Max is only beginning to understand things, and he is English to the core, and has not been through the long, long discipline which goes to make a patriot. Oh, how can I be patient till Thursday; how am I to get through my work?"

"My dear child," said a hearty voice behind her, "why are you playing the *rôle* of a 'Bride of Venice,' 'by the sad sea waves?' Don't you know that the sun is setting, and that the sea air will play all manner of tricks with your throat?"

She looked round, and there was Ferrier, with real anxiety in his kindly face, while Sardoni, at a little distance, appeared to be absorbed in making ducks and drakes with such pebbles as he could lay hands on. Doreen knew perfectly well that the two kindly, chivalrous men had come out on purpose to find her.

"It was very good of you to come," she said gratefully, "and before we turn back, there is just one thing I want to ask you. How long shall we be in Dublin?"

"Only the one night," said Ferrier, "and off pretty early the next morning to Cork."

"I am going to ask to follow you then to Cork by the afternoon train; there is something I must do while we are in Dublin. If hundreds of your countrymen had been thrust into prison by the Irish, and if all your popular political leaders were locked up in Millbank and Newgate, you would want a few hours' grace, if you were passing through London."

She did not look at him as she spoke, because tears had started to her eyes at the thought of the deplorable state of things which she was describing. Ferrier was touched with pity as he looked at the white, pathetic face struggling bravely to hold emotion in check. He glanced away to the west. A soft, blue shade was gradually enveloping Beachy Head, contrasting vividly with a stormy gleam of crimson in the sunset sky above it. In the silence that fell between them, they

both noticed the rolling thunder of the sea, as it surged over the rocky shore.

"By all means, take whatever extra time is necessary," said Ferrier, at length. "I am not interested in politics, as you know, and your schemes of reform seem to me utterly impracticable, and even undesirable. But, at the same time, I can understand that you Irish folk look on things from a different standpoint, and it may be that you are right and we are wrong. But now, my dear, come home and rest, or you will certainly break down before the tour is over."

"I am glad to hear you preaching on the text 'Take it easy,'" said Sardoni, with a laugh, joining them as they turned back towards the hotel. "It is the great secret of success in life, Miss O'Ryan, as I am always trying to persuade Donati. Why should you wear yourself out in a cause that won't even be capable of expressing its gratitude?"

"But to be worn out in a good cause is an ideal death," said Doreen. "What better could one wish? However, you see, I'm obediently going home to eat and rest, as my chief bids me."

Sardoni fell to talking of some of the adventures that had befallen him while travelling with Merlino's operatic company, and Doreen, as she walked home under the shelter of the tamarisk bank, knew that the two men were trying to come between her and her trouble, just as their sturdy forms came between her and the stormy, troubled sea. Nevertheless, their efforts were not altogether successful; for, as she was singing that evening at the Devonshire Park, a sort of spasm seized her throat, and her voice broke discordantly on a high note.

"It is the sea air," said Domenica, kindly. "It always affects the throat more or less."

"It was the torture of singing that merry song when I am so miserably unhappy," thought Doreen.

"It is this confounded Irish business, and the strong emotion she has been through," said Ferrier, as he went down the steps for his duet with Sardoni.

"To my mind," replied the tenor, "that lover is the cause of it all. I should like to kick him."

CHAPTER XXX.

"And now
A word, but one, one little kindly word.
Not one to spare her: out upon you, flint!"—*The Princess*.

It was with very mingled feelings that Doreen alighted at the Shelbourne about six o'clock in the afternoon on the following Thursday. It seemed to her that ages had passed by since that Saturday when she walked by the shore at Eastbourne, and the weary journeys by land and sea, the fatigue of singing the same songs each night, and, above all, the sickening anxiety about Max, had told upon her severely. The friendly housekeeper who had known her for years scarcely recognized her at first. She discreetly asked no questions, however, when she had given her cordial greeting, for a certain amount of Doreen's story was, of course, public property, and most people had heard that "the marriage shortly to take place between Miss Doreen O'Ryan and Mr. Hereford" had been given up.

"Let me show you to your room, Miss O'Ryan," she said pleasantly. "I have put you in the front of the house, for I know you are fond of the view."

"That is good of you," said Doreen, crossing to one of the windows and looking over the chestnut trees in Stephen's Green to the campanile on the further side, and the dark outline of the Dublin mountains beyond. "Why, you have given me a most palatial bedroom."

"It has not been used since poor Mr. Hereford was here," said the housekeeper. "For weeks and weeks he lay here in the summer, and no one thought he would pull through. Of course it was nothing infectious, or we couldn't have kept him. It was just rheumatism affecting the heart, and they wouldn't let him stir a finger. Then, when at last they allowed him to move, he went down to recover in the South, near Castle Karey, and scarcely had he got back here again last week when, to every one's astonishment, he was arrested early one morning in this very room, and taken off to Kilmainham."

"And since then," said Doreen, eagerly, "have you heard nothing?"

"Nothing at all," said the housekeeper. "Everyone thinks it very hard measure that he should be arrested just for a couple of speeches. Oh, the feeling was very strong indeed about it. Have you everything you wish, Miss O'Ryan?"

"Everything, thank you," said poor Doreen, dropping into the nearest chair the moment she was alone.

In this very room, then, he had lain for weeks and weeks at death's door, and she had never known it! She, whose right it might have been to nurse him, had been far away, and he had been left to the care of hired attendants. He had come to her country to study the Irish problem, to try if possible to help in this desperate crisis, and for reward he had been thrust into Kilmainham. How she lived through that night's concert, and the long, long hours during which she lay in restless wakefulness in the room where Max had passed through so much, she never knew. But at length Friday morning dawned, and with the dawn a great hope rose in her heart. She was to see Max and at last, at last, she should disburden her mind of that secret she had been so loath to have entrusted to her. Surely now he would understand her, and believe in her once more? Her spirits rose as she said good-bye to Ferrier, and to Sardoni and his wife. They were all starting for Cork by the morning express, and Doreen was to follow by the three o'clock train.

"And whatever happens, don't miss that," said Ferrier, "or the Cork people will never forgive you. As it is, we shall have to alter the programme, for the train isn't due till 8.25, and there is no saying how late it may be."

"I will not miss it," said Doreen, "You may trust me. And I shall take a carriage to myself, and perform my toilet *en route*. Don't be afraid. I shall turn up all right, you will see."

"Now what plan has she got in her head?" said Sardoni, as they drove away from the Shelbourne. "Is she going to pour forth the vials of her wrath on the head of the Chief Secretary?"

"Or does she mean to join the Ladies' Land League?" said Ferrier. "That wouldn't at all surprise me."

"Why, how dull you two men are," said Domenica, with a smile. "Do you think either of those plans would make her eyes shine, and light up her whole face with hope? Depend upon it she has some scheme for setting Mr. Hereford free."

Ferrier made an ejaculation of dismay. Sardoni gave a long whistle. "Oh, perverse sex!" he said. "How much better to be

free from such a lover than to set him free."

"I think," said Domenica, quietly, "that you are somewhat hard on Mr. Hereford. Remember that you have never heard his side of the story."

Meanwhile Doreen, in a state of feverish anxiety, packed her concert dress into a small valise, made all her preparations, took leave of the kindly housekeeper, and, as the hour approached when her order permitted her to go to Kilmainham, drove from the Shelbourne, bidding the man to stop at a flower shop in Grafton Street. In old times, she remembered that it used to please her father that they should wear flowers when they came to see him in prison. It was strictly against regulations to give them to the prisoners, but no one could object to what a visitor actually wore. The spray of white chrysanthemums and green Killarney fern pleased her; and, as she fastened it in her dark travelling-dress, it took her back to the green and white badges at the Firdale election. Her spirits rose as they drove along the quays, past the shabby old houses, which so visibly deplored the loss of the Irish Parliament, past the familiar river; then to the left, on and on, until the grim, gray boundary wall of the prison came into sight. But her heart sank somehow, and a great oppression seized her as the cab drew up beside the gaunt iron railings and outer gate. She sprang out quickly, bade the driver to wait for her, and, walking up to the main door, rang for admittance. The same two dragons, which she remembered as a little child, were still writhing together in the stone-work above the doorway. A friendly-looking warder appeared in answer to her summons, and bade her wait for a minute in the vestibule. There was something horribly depressing in the place, with its dreary flagstones and its comfortless walls, which somehow looked only the worse for a frightful blue dado, with a niggling, mean little pattern bordering it by way of ornament. On the floor lay a most uninviting heap of prisoners' clothes and boots. At desks by the wall large, business-like books lay open. Above an inner door, leading into the jail, there was a clock, at which Doreen looked several times as she waited, to make sure that its hands really moved. The waiting seemed endless. At last, however, a warder appeared, and, through fifteen doors, all of which had to be solemnly unlocked, she was escorted to the visitors' room. Here she had to wait for another five minutes, while Max was informed that she had come to see him.

It happened that day that Max was more than usually depressed. He had received a particularly kind letter from Miriam. She had written in her good-natured, cousinly way to cheer him up, and to amuse him with the remarks of the rest of the family with regard to his imprisonment. They all seemed convinced that it must have been a mistaken arrest, and confidently expected him to be soon at large again. Miriam reminded him that they were to winter at Biarritz, and the General sent a cordial invitation to him to join them there. To one in his position the sense of kinship appealed very strongly, and the thought of the free foreign life contrasted miserably enough with the gloom of his present surroundings. He sat at his table, writing an answer to Miriam's letter, chafing at the thought that it would be read by the governor of Kilmainham, and miserably reflecting that he had only been a week in jail, though each day seemed like a month. And the more he brooded over his misery, the more bitter became his thoughts of Doreen, by whose ill-timed words he must have been betrayed. A sort of fury rose within him as he vividly recalled her look and tone and touch, as she drew him on that last morning to the ottoman, and tried, with all the skill she possessed, to turn his thoughts from the subject she wished to avoid. The noisy opening of his door made him start.

"Miss O'Ryan is waiting to see you in the visitors' room," said the warder.

The pen dropped from Max Hereford's hand. "Miss O'Ryan!" he repeated, as if unable to believe that he heard rightly.

"Miss Doreen O'Ryan it will be. The public singer," said the warder.

In a moment Max felt himself torn by conflicting emotions. Wild desire to see Doreen and speak to her once more, wrath at her betrayal, amazement at her temerity in coming thus to see him, a conviction that she wanted to make some vain explanation,—in some way to excuse herself,—a quick perception that any allusion to the Lough Lee disaster might do him untold harm, falling, as it must fall, on other ears, and a thoroughly English horror of going through any scene with the girl who had once been betrothed to him, while other eyes were looking on. What could either of them say while that insolent warder stood by? And yet? And yet? How could he refuse when his heart cried out to see her? It was so exactly like his brave, impetuous, rash Doreen to come thus unheralded, risking everything in a generous, large-hearted way. He could no longer doubt that she loved him, and her love drew him strongly, almost irresistibly. But as O'Carroll had shrewdly discovered, Max, on his way to Kilmainham, had taken a decided step downwards, and now the fiends' voices which he had listened to and encouraged and fostered all the week, rose to combat that thought of Doreen's love.

"You fool!" they cried; "you weak fool! You are going, after all, to be hoodwinked again by a woman! You are going to

listen to the voice that has caused all your misfortunes, and to be coaxed by a smooth Irish tongue into bondage once more."

"Come along!" said the warder, roughly. "I can't be kept here all day. I'm not a family butler to be dancing attendance on you. Are you coming, or are you not coming?"

"I am not coming," said Max, with a haughty disdain in his tone which abashed and yet angered the man.

"Am I to say that to the lady?" asked the warder.

"Say that I am sorry Miss O'Ryan has had the trouble of coming, but that I must decline to have an interview with her."

With that he took up his pen and began to write again. The man looked at him for a few moments in dead silence, as if musing on some problem that entirely baffled him.

"What are you waiting for?" said Max, looking up sharply. "I thought you were in haste to be gone."

At that the warder turned on his heel, clanging the door noisily after him. And Max, once more alone, flung down his pen and began to walk to and fro like a caged lion, until at last, worn out by excitement and fatigue, deadly faintness stole over him, and all he could do was to grope his way to the bed, feeling as if his last hour had come.

The warder returned to the visitors' room, and as the door opened, Doreen started up eagerly. Her blank look when she saw that the man was alone appealed to him, but it also stimulated his curiosity.

"Mr. Hereford says he is sorry you troubled to come, miss," he repeated, "but that he must decline to have an interview with you."

"I think you cannot have made him understand," she said. "Tell him it is Doreen O'Ryan."

"Oh, I told him, miss. He understands fast enough. Of course, I knew your face well enough from the pictures, and I told him it was Miss Doreen O'Ryan, the public singer. He'll not see you, miss. He takes a very high tone. Some of the suspects they're pleasant enough, but he takes a haughty line that don't at all pay in prison."

The room swam before Doreen's eyes, the floor seemed to heave beneath her feet, but a consciousness that the warder was keenly scrutinizing her made her struggle to keep up appearances for the sake of the man she loved.

"Then let me out, please," she said, steadying her voice by an effort, which gave a curious dignity to her manner. "As Mr. Hereford is unable to speak to me this morning, there is nothing to wait for."

"You're a plucked one," thought the warder to himself, as he escorted her back to the vestibule, and replied respectfully enough to her farewell. But when the kindly-looking doorkeeper had called her driver, who was engaged in an animated discussion with a friend at the corner, Doreen suddenly felt her knees double up beneath her, and was forced to clutch for support at his arm.

"Sure and it will be faint that you are feeling, miss," he said, with ready sympathy. "Wait and let me get you some water."

"The fresh air will be enough," faltered Doreen, determined not to yield before she was out of Kilmainham. "If you would just help me to the cab. The prison seemed so—airless." She struggled pathetically to the last to throw dust in the eyes of all who might gossip about Max. "Tell the man to drive to Kingsbridge station. Thank you for your help."

"God save you, kindly," said the doorkeeper, in response to her farewell, and the sweet old Irish phrase fell comfortingly on her ears as the cab moved off. But when they arrived at Kingsbridge, Doreen did not stir. She knew nothing at all for the next half-hour, and when she struggled back to consciousness and found herself lying at full length on one of the waiting-room benches, she imagined for a moment that some railway accident must have happened.

"Sure thin, sir, there's no need to be sending for the doctor at all, at all, for the lady is coming to herself intirely," said a woman's voice with a rich Dublin brogue.

Doreen quickly realized where she was, and a remembrance of her promise to Ferrier darted back into her mind.

"Am I too late for the three o'clock train to Cork?" she asked, looking up at the little group surrounding her.

It was some comfort to be in the midst of her own people, and their keen interest and active sympathy touched her. It appeared that there was plenty of time to spare before the train started, and one saw to her luggage, and another took her ticket, and a third brought tea, and cakes, and fruit, and the porters quarrelled for the privilege of waiting on her.

She would gladly have concealed her identity, greatly dreading lest a paragraph alluding to her visit to Kilmainham might get into the papers, but her face was too well known and she was too much loved in Ireland to escape detection; and, after all, the kindly attentions staved off for a time the full realization of her misery, which broke upon her overwhelmingly when, later on, she found herself alone in a railway carriage, with a long, weary journey before her and with nothing to distract her thoughts.

At first she was too utterly broken down by her lover's want of trust to have room for any other thought. Max must, indeed, think the very worst of her, if he could so cruelly refuse to see her at such a time. His love must, indeed, be dead if he could inflict upon her a wound so deep, an insult so intolerable. And here she broke down hopelessly, sobbing as though her heart would break. She had hoped so much from the interview, had longed so terribly to see him once more; and they had actually been under the same roof, and he had merely sent her that stiff, formal refusal.

At last a gleam of light broke in upon her darkness. She had not realized before that in all probability the warder would have been present throughout their interview. The suspects were treated leniently enough, and she had assumed that she would see Max alone; but now she realized that this was hardly probable. Perhaps he had refused to see her on that account; and as she remembered the inquisitive eyes of the warder, and recollected how trying their meeting must in any case have been, she began to comfort herself with this solution of the matter.

The train stopped just then at Portarlington. She hastily dried her eyes, composed herself, and even tried heroically to eat; for was it not four o'clock, and how could she hope to have any voice that night if she reached the concert hall faint and famished?

Then she began bravely to consider what was to be done next. She could not write to Max, and he refused to see her. How was she to avail herself of Desmond's permission to reveal the truth when any difficulty or danger arose? To her fancy the engine seemed grimly to respond to the question by ceaselessly thumping the refrain of an old satirical ballad about one of the "hanging judges," which her father used to sing:—

> "Hark, forward, Kilmainham! Hark, forward, Kilmainham!
> We'll hang 'em, we'll hang 'em, before we arraign 'em!"

Well, it was impossible to reach her lover, and therefore she herself must speak out plainly to those in authority. Should she write to the Chief Secretary? A letter might be thrown on one side, or might be opened by other hands. Should she go to see him? She shuddered at the idea; for, not unnaturally, he was a man she detested, seeing him not as he really was,—an honest, good man, struggling conscientiously to do what seemed to him right, meaning well by Ireland, but blinded by the atmosphere of officialism surrounding him, and unable to get a true view of the heart of the Irish nation. She saw him inevitably as the tyrant who had thrown into prison hundreds and hundreds of her fellow-countrymen without any trial whatever, and who had re-consigned her father's best friend, Donal Moore, to all the horrors of penal servitude. To go to him would, she thought, be useless. To whom, then, should she turn?

A saying of her father's returned to her mind. "'When in doubt, consult the best authorities' is as true a rule of life as the old rule at whist, 'When in doubt, play trumps.'"

She would go straight to the very highest quarter: she would see the Prime Minister. He was a man she deeply reverenced for his personal goodness, and she did not cherish towards him that feeling of bitter resentment which she felt towards the Chief Secretary. She saw that the only day on which it would be possible for her to go on such an errand would be the following Sunday; and, as Doreen never let the grass grow under her feet, she promptly opened her travelling-bag, and began then and there to fill up a telegram form, laughing to herself a little even then, in spite of all her troubles. "I am a bold sort of girl to dare to send a telegram, asking for an interview with the Prime Minister! I could not do it for the sake of any one but Max. What shall I do if he refuses to grant me a hearing? I believe I would go to the Queen herself. I must send this off from Thurles, and prepay the answer to the Midland Hotel, Birmingham. What will they think of my 'matter of great importance'? Will they imagine I have discovered some conspiracy at Thurles? (they'll pronounce that as if it rhymed with *curls*, over in England). Will it be a matter of but secondary importance to them—this

releasing of one unjustly imprisoned Englishman? No, if only I can tell the whole story as it happened, I think they will see it as I do, and will forgive my audacity." The little excitement of sending off the telegram revived her; and between Thurles and Limerick Junction, she whiled away the time by dressing for the evening. It was a cheerless proceeding to don rose-coloured silken robes in a railway carriage by the fading October light; but something in the novelty and absurdity of the arrangement amused her a little, and it was not until darkness had fallen on the landscape that blank depression fell upon her once more. She leant back wearily in her corner, her train carefully pinned up, her long fur cloak wrapped closely about her, and her thoughts once more dwelling on the cruel shock she had received at Kilmainham. Each little station they stopped at looked more dreary than the last, and the Cork station the worst of all, as she stepped, shivering with cold and fatigue, from the warm railway carriage on to the dingy platform. She could have cried with joy when she caught sight of two old friends who had known her since her childhood. To be warmly greeted and made much of, not because of her voice, but because she was Patrick O'Ryan's daughter, cheered her as nothing else could have done; and she got through her songs better than might have been expected.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"So let him wait God's instant men call years.
Meantime hold hard by truth and his great soul.
Do out the duty."—R. BROWNING.

"You don't look much rested, my dear," observed Domenica Sardoni, when Doreen appeared the next morning, in time for the train to Waterford.

"Indeed," she replied, laughing, "I am like the man who said he had passed a wretched night, for he 'couldn't slape for draiming.' By the bye, Ferrier tells me that most of you have decided to sleep to-night at Milford, but I have made up my mind to go straight through to Birmingham; I want to go further still, if possible. Don't tell the rest of the world; but it was no manner of use my waiting behind you in Dublin yesterday, and now my only hope of doing the work I want to do, is to get an interview with the one Englishman who might help me."

"Who is that?" said Domenica.

"Well, tell it not in Gath, but it is the Prime Minister."

"Why, my friend, you will have to go all across England to reach him, and already you look tired out. Reflect what is before you: the journey to Waterford, the concert at two o'clock, a scramble to get off by the five o'clock steamer, a long passage to Milford, where we don't arrive till an hour and a half after midnight, and then a most wearisome journey through the night to Birmingham, and on much further afterwards,—why, you will not get there till late in the afternoon."

"And if I had to walk there barefoot, I would go," said Doreen, with that touch of sturdy resolution which reminded one from time to time that beneath all the light-hearted sweetness of her nature lay the unfaltering courage which had led her progenitors to face imprisonment, exile, and torture.

"If the crossing is not very bad, I have a good mind to come on with you to Birmingham," said Domenica, reflectively; "the St. Pierres, I know, will spend the night at New Milford, and I don't quite like your travelling all through the night alone. Besides, to tell the truth, I should much like to go to the Oratory. I must see if I can persuade my husband."

Doreen was very grateful to the kindly Maltese singer, and Sardoni's unfailing good spirits cheered her not a little, when, worn and weary after the all-night journey and the miserably bad crossing, they arrived on Sunday morning at Birmingham. She inquired promptly for her telegram, and opened it with trembling fingers. The Prime Minister would see her that afternoon. Her breath came quickly, her face flushed; she began to realize what an ordeal lay before her, and the prospect did not look any less terrible when Sardoni had seen her off at the station, and she was left alone for another tedious journey. How was she to tell that strange story of long ago, how explain it all briefly and yet lucidly, to one whose time was so precious?

As she drove up to the stately country house, she felt positively ill with nervous anxiety, and nothing but the habit of self-control she had acquired during her public life could have enabled her to walk composedly across the entrance hall into the great drawing-room to which she was ushered. Then suddenly, all her fears vanished, for the most homelike scene greeted her; beside the hearth a lady with a sweet, motherly face presided at an afternoon-tea-table, while the Prime Minister—of whom she had sometimes thought hard things—was playing with a little fair-haired grandchild, who chatted to him with the loving freedom of perfect trust.

He came forward to greet her with beautiful old-world courtesy, making her feel at once perfectly at ease, alluding to the last Handel Festival at which he had heard her sing, and passing from that to a discussion of the differences between the Italian and German schools of music, until she thought that never until now had she known what conversation really meant. And the little child waited on her, bringing her tea, and scones, and cakes, and the firelight played on the old family portraits, and on the restful, harmonious room, which was so unlike the hotels she had been living in of late, while her heart, which had been starving for Mollie and Bride all through the tour, and her mind which had longed impatiently for something a little more intellectual than the barren, profitless talk of Ferrier's company, felt wonderfully stimulated and refreshed.

"And now," said the Prime Minister, "I will ask you to come to my study that we may talk over quietly the matter you alluded to in your telegram. Most fortunately, it happens that the Chief Secretary is staying with us for two days; and if,

as I presume, your business is connected with Irish matters, I think we shall do well to call him to our counsels."

Doreen started and blushed. A dismayed look passed over her expressive face.

"Is it—" she faltered, "is it indeed necessary?"

The Prime Minister read her thoughts.

"Believe me," he said, "you will find him very ready to give a fair hearing to everything connected with your country. He is not the ogre that some of your countrymen paint him."

"I know that many of us have said bitter things of him," said Doreen. "But"—and here her eyes filled with tears—"it is not easy to feel quite friendly towards those who have cast hundreds of one's countrymen into prison. Many of the suspects are my personal friends; to one of them I was for some time betrothed; it is with regard to his case that I have something of importance to tell you."

The Prime Minister had listened with courteous and sympathetic attention to her words.

"I can well understand that your feeling towards us is somewhat bitter," he said quietly. "I think I have been told that your family suffered very grievously in the past."

"My great-grandfather was a Wicklow blacksmith," said Doreen. "I am very proud of him;—had he been on the Black List and won a Peerage by a bribed vote for the Union, I should have despised him. He was just a blacksmith; and though your soldiers gave him five hundred lashes, and that horrible torture they invented of the pitched cap, he would not reveal the names of those customers for whom he had made pikes. Later on, my grandfather, after being hunted like a wild animal among the mountains, died of cold and privation; that was in the rising of '48. My father died five years ago from the effects of penal servitude. He had been concerned in the Fenian rising. And now it seems that my turn has come, and you have thrust the man I love into prison."

Her voice trembled as she spoke that last sentence, but there was a flash of exultation in her blue eyes. Her love might help Max now, and she proclaimed it frankly and fearlessly.

The little fair-haired child, attracted by the musical voice with its varying tones, came now and leant against her knee; she turned to it at once with the look of loving comprehension and tender sweetness which characterizes a true child-lover. The Prime Minister watched them for a moment or two in silence. His powerful face would have formed a grand subject for a painter; but Doreen was watching the little child, and did not see how grave thoughts and brighter hopes for the future revealed themselves on the well-known features, like cloud and sunshine on an April landscape.

"If you will excuse me for a moment, I will speak with the Chief Secretary," he said, disappearing into the adjoining room, and returning shortly with a request that Doreen would accompany him. "Believe me, it is best that we should both hear what you have to say," he remarked kindly, as without any further demur she followed him. "It will be best for Mr. Hereford, whose case is known to the Chief Secretary."

Doreen was glad he had let her perceive that he knew Max Hereford was the man she had referred to. His chivalrous manner touched her. However much she disapproved of his present Irish policy, it was impossible to harbour against him any sort of enmity. He led her into a lamplit study, lined with books, where a gray-haired, careworn man rose at their entrance. Here, then, was the Chief Secretary, the man she had hated with all the strength of her Keltic nature; here was the man who, by his own confession, was ruling Ireland as despotically as the Czar ruled Russia; the man who, by a mere stroke of his pen, had proclaimed the Land League to be an illegal association; the man whose word was sufficient to cast into prison any one suspected of furthering the people's cause, without trial of any description.

"I am glad to meet you, Miss O'Ryan," he said, greeting her pleasantly enough. "I understand that you have something to tell us with regard to the case of Mr. Max Hereford. I learn that you visited him last Friday, at Kilmainham, but that he declined to see you. Is that a fact?"

"Yes," she replied, taking the chair which the Prime Minister drew closer to the hearth for her, "he refused to see me."

Her voice quivered a little, but her eyes were clear as they looked straight up at the Chief Secretary. She was comforted greatly to find that this ferocious tyrant, this brutal oppressor, as she had been accustomed to regard him, was evidently

the most honest and straightforward of men; one who would spare himself no pains in unravelling the case in hand.

"May I ask whether there was any special motive in your visit?" said the Prime Minister.

"I had permission to set Mr. Hereford free from an oath which had bound us both to keep silence with regard to the fate of Mr. James Foxell, Lord Byfield's agent, who disappeared many years ago."

For a moment there was dead silence in the room. Doreen could hear only the beating of her own heart, and the soft flickering of the flames on the hearth.

"Who exacted such an oath from you, and who set you free?" said the Chief Secretary, his keen eyes earnestly searching her face.

"The man who was responsible for Mr. Foxell's death," she replied.

"Then he was murdered?"

"I think it would not be considered murder, but manslaughter. May I tell you the whole story as briefly as I can?"

"I shall be greatly obliged if you would do so; but, pardon me, you must have been very young at the time, Miss O'Ryan."

"I was twelve years old," she replied. "But I can remember every tiniest detail of that day,—that horrible day." She shuddered, even now, at the remembrance. "Max Hereford was a boy of eighteen, and his mother had taken Castle Karey, that summer, for two months. We were staying close by; it was just before my father was released from Portland Prison, and the Herefords were very kind to us, taking me in their boat, and, on this particular day, bringing a pony for me, that we might cross the mountains to Lough Lee. Generally, Miriam Hereford was with us, but on this day I went alone with Max and his tutor, Mr. John Desmond. Perhaps you do not know Lough Lee,—it is a most wild and dreary lake; but, at the far end of it, there used to be a little cabin in which lived an old man named Larry Cassidy."

"I have all the particulars with regard to old Cassidy," said the Chief Secretary, referring to a note-book. "He was very harshly evicted. It was a particularly cruel case; but all that happened in the time of Mr. Foxell's successor."

"Yes," said Doreen, "we learnt about that afterwards. But what the new agent performed, Foxell threatened. It was all, you remember, about a potato patch that the old man had made himself, with the greatest pains, out of a disused stone quarry. We were close by the cabin, in the boat, and heard the agent cruelly abusing poor Larry; he was a very old, infirm man, and he cried most piteously. It makes my blood boil now to think of it. Mr. Desmond sprang on shore and began to remonstrate with Mr. Foxell; Max Hereford, too, landed, but told me to wait in the boat because the agent was in such a violent temper. I could see from where I was all that happened. Max went to speak to the old woman by the cabin door. I could not hear what he said, but he was evidently trying to console her; but all that passed between the agent and Mr. Desmond and Larry I heard distinctly,—the poor old man beseeching that the house might not be pulled down and the land he had made snatched from him, and Foxell brutally abusing and threatening him, and John Desmond angrily declaring that he would expose the case in the English papers. Their voices got louder and louder, and the agent at last, losing all control over himself, seized old Larry by the collar and seemed about to strike him, when Mr. Desmond sprang at him like a tiger, and the agent turned from Larry and fought with the tutor. It was a horrible sight. They seemed not like men, but like wild beasts: I am sure that for the time Mr. Desmond was out of his mind. Max Hereford came hurrying down from the cabin door and remonstrated with his tutor. I can't remember the exact words, but I know that he begged him to leave Foxell and to help Larry in some other way. But the two men seemed not to hear him, and every moment they drew nearer to the edge of the overhanging rock. At last I saw the agent's hand drop suddenly from the tutor's throat, and he fell backwards; his face was dark, almost purple; he splashed straight down into the lough. I sat there in the boat, almost stupefied by the horrible sight; but Max came plunging down between the arbutus trees and leaped in and snatched up the oars, saying, 'Steer to the place where he sank!' I had hardly taken my eyes from the spot, and the being forced to move and to do something seemed to bring back my senses; and then"—she turned pale at the remembrance—"as we looked down steadily at the water I saw that awful, distorted face rise once more. Max leaned over the boat and tried desperately to grip hold of the body, but the hair was short and slippery with the water; it slid through his fingers, and though we waited, the body never rose again. When Max said, 'It would have been no use; he was quite dead,' I began to think that Mr. Desmond would be sent to prison, or perhaps hung for murder, and we both agreed that he had looked for the time quite mad. There had been a most strange, wild gleam in his eyes which we had both noticed. Then we landed and talked things over in the little cabin; Mr. Desmond seemed half stupefied. I remember

that old Larry burnt the agent's stick, saying that it was the only thing left to tell tales, and then he and his wife, of their own accord, swore by the cross of Christ, crossing their forefingers in the old Irish fashion, that they would never speak a word of what had passed that day. Later on Max Hereford and I made the same vow. That evening the tutor was seized with a sharp attack of brain fever. Max nursed him through it, but he was helped by his valet, a Frenchman named Baptiste Charpentier, who professed to understand hardly any English. This man remained in Mr. Hereford's service for several years, and was dismissed at a moment's notice because he was found reading his master's private letters. We kept our oath of secrecy with absolute fidelity, but once when I was staying with the Herefords at Monkton Verney, Max and I spoke together of what had passed that day, and I was alarmed to find the French valet in the shrubbery, and fear that he may have overheard a few words."

"What had become of Mr. Desmond all this time?" asked the Chief Secretary.

"We had lost sight of him altogether, when one evening last June, while singing in St. James' Hall, a child handed me a bouquet in which I found this note." She paused for a moment while her two auditors read Desmond's brief lines.

"Perhaps," she said, colouring vividly, "you will blame me for going to such a place at such a time, but I was betrothed to Mr. Hereford, and it seemed to me simply a thing that had to be done. From Mr. Desmond I learnt that private detectives were watching every movement my *fiancé* took, and that they were also trying their very best to discover his own whereabouts. The widow of James Foxell found the money, and Baptiste, the French valet, was her tool. Mr. Desmond was leaving England that night; he had some fears that Max might get into difficulties over this affair, and find himself hampered by his oath of secrecy; in case this should happen he authorized us both to speak. I asked him why he could not have seen Max, and why I might not tell him all this at once. And then it transpired that while in America Mr. Desmond had adopted the most extreme opinions, and that he was mixed up with the recent dynamite outrages. To have any connection with him would, he thought, be fatal to Mr. Hereford's public career. So, you see, I was allowed to be free from my original oath if danger should arise, but I was to promise to say nothing whatever to my lover unless he found himself suspected of complicity in the Lough Lee affair. Just after this meeting with John Desmond my engagement was broken off, and when at Kilmainham I found that it was impossible to release Mr. Hereford from his oath and explain the matter to him, I thought I was justified in appealing to those who had imprisoned him. I had seen in the newspapers the account of the watch-key, found inside a fish caught in Lough Lee, with Mr. Foxell's initials on it, and seeing that Baptiste Charpentier had found so extraordinary a bit of evidence, and that almost immediately afterwards Max Hereford was imprisoned, I naturally thought there was some connection between the two events. I am of course aware that he was nominally arrested for speaking at two of the Land League meetings."

"Are you prepared to swear to the absolute truth of all you have told us?" said the Chief Secretary.

"Certainly," she replied; "I swear that it is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Again a silence reigned in the room. Doreen, now that her work was done, became suddenly conscious of weary limbs and an aching heart; there was something, too, which appealed very painfully to her in the realization of the immense power which rested with these two statesmen. If they could but see the justice of Ireland's cry for Home Rule! If they could but view things from the point of the true Irishman, the tiller of the ground, who, spite of centuries of oppression, spite of rack rents and famine and pestilence and sword, had refused to be driven from his native land by the conquerors who love to sweep all before them!

Was it, after all, so hopeless that they might learn to trust her people? The whole basis of their power in England lay in that trust of the workers of the nation, in utter refusal to be guided by considerations of rank or wealth. When would they learn that men like Fitzhugh and O'Carroll and Donal Moore were the true leaders of the Irish, and that they understood the people as no prejudiced, selfish landlord was capable of understanding them!

She glanced up at the two powerful faces, and there stole into her heart a comforting perception of the strong desire that lay with each of them to do what was just. These were not the sort of statesmen to seek what was expedient for the moment, but what was morally right. They would not, as had been the case with so many English ministers, use Ireland to serve the interests of their own party, and then leave her in the lurch. They would act up to their lights, would do what they believed to be right even though it were to their own hindrance.

"I leave for Dublin to-morrow night," said the Chief Secretary, "and you may rest assured that I shall give the most impartial consideration to Mr. Hereford's case. He will probably be at large again very shortly."

Doreen rose to take leave, the great relief of unburdening her heart, the rapture of knowing that Max would soon be free and that she had freed him, mingled with the painful thought of his utter misunderstanding, and threatened to prove too much for her powers of endurance. The Prime Minister noted her look of exhaustion, and as they returned to the drawing-room, he talked to her with the greatest kindness of the suffering which the deeds of others had forced her to endure for so many years. His wife was full of offers of hospitality; but Doreen, though she was touched and pleased by all the kindly attentions shown her, excused herself on the ground that she must rejoin Ferrier's concert party.

"Is there nothing more that we can do for you?" said the Prime Minister.

A sudden thought darted into Doreen's mind.

"There is one thing," she said eagerly: "Donal Moore, my father's old friend, was left as co-guardian with me of my younger brothers and sisters. I applied once at Portland Prison to see him in the ordinary way, but was refused. But you are all-powerful; you could give us permission to visit him."

"You must have a special order from the Home Secretary," said the Prime Minister; "I will myself see to it for you." And then with a few gracious, courtly words he bade her farewell. And Doreen drove from the house feeling as if she had been blessed by a patriarch.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"Ah, if their hearts were callous, and if their souls were mean,
If selfish thoughts could sway them, not such their fate had been:
They felt their country's sorrow, and dreamed that dream of light,
To change her grief to gladness, her gloom to glory bright;
They saw their people stricken in suffering sad and low,
And offered all their life-blood to raise them from their woe.

"Oh, ye for whom they suffer, for whom they thought and strove,
Let not their memories vanish from out your hearts of love!
Pray for the hapless captives midst all your joy or grief,
That Christ, once bound and tortured, may send them sweet relief,
May visit them in prison, may touch them with His hand,
And give them peace who perish to right their native land."— T. D. SULLIVAN.

To be endowed with a hopeful temperament and a vivid imagination is generally considered to be one of the greatest privileges. People seldom realize that, like a two-edged sword, such a disposition is a perilous one to deal with. After a good night's rest Doreen began to take a most roseate view of life in general, and of her own affairs in particular. When Max knew all, when he was free once more, why then surely he would write to her. She could not and would not believe that the love of years was finally to be killed by a hasty lovers' quarrel and a brief misunderstanding. The thing was ridiculous, impossible. Directly Max knew all, he would come to her.

As the week drew to a close, she looked eagerly for letters, and there was hardly a moment of the day in which she did not expect him to arrive; yet when nothing happened, she consoled herself by reflecting that the Chief Secretary had only reached Dublin on Tuesday morning, and that doubtless other cases might have to be considered first. On the Monday morning when she came down to breakfast, in their private sitting-room at the Spread Eagle in Rilchester, she found that no one but Ferrier was yet down. He was deep in his newspaper, and started a little as she greeted him.

"There is something here, my dear, which you had better read," he said, "before the rest of the party arrive."

She caught the newspaper eagerly from his hand and read the following lines:—

"Mr. Max Hereford, whose arrest as a suspect caused some little surprise, was released from Kilmainham on Friday, and proceeded at once to one of the North Wall boats bound for Liverpool. We understand that he intends to go immediately to Madeira for the sake of his health."

Doreen said not a word, but she felt as if the end of all things had come. He had gone abroad without writing to her, without trying to see her. Well, then his love must be dead. And her love for him? It could never die; it would live, but only to torture her. Surely it had been prophetic that his first gift to her should have been a crucifix. With that thought, however, a fresh idea darted into her mind. There must, after all, be some purpose in it. It was not for nothing that she was called on to bear this bitter pain and shame. There remained for her, at least, the comfort of knowing that she had set him free, and perhaps saved his future career.

"Don't go away without any breakfast," said Ferrier. "The butter is abominable, and the bacon hard as leather; but the eggs may be safely recommended, and the coffee is passable."

She sat down to please him, and made a pretence of eating; then, hearing voices outside, hurriedly rose.

"Don't tell the others just to-day," she said. "I want to get used to it. I am going now to the cathedral."

And finding great relief in rapid motion, she hurried along the quaint, old-fashioned street leading to the Close, and made her way into a quiet nook in the great church. Morning service was over, but the choir were practising Wesley's anthem, "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them," and the music soothed her as nothing else could have done. She thought of Ireland, and tried to believe that in some unknown way this pain of hers would serve the national cause, and that at last there should indeed come the time when "sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Why was she to be more favoured than others of her family? They had all died for love of their land, and now it had come to her turn; and her country's wrongs, and the failure of her own temper and patience, had made it necessary that she should endure this death in life. But then her strong faith in Max once more brought comfort to her. Surely it was impossible that he had heard the whole truth! Was it likely that he would himself have seen the Chief Secretary, a man who was worked almost

to death? Probably he had merely received an order for his release, and had never learnt how it had been procured. Perhaps some day he might learn; perhaps some day he would trust in her again. But for the present she could do no more; could only wait and throw herself vigorously into her professional life, and into trying to relieve the dire distress which was caused in Ireland by the arrest of so many bread-winners.

Passing through London on the following day, she was cheered by a brief talk with Michael, who came to meet her at King's Cross. The boy was shy of speaking about Max, and perhaps it was as well, for she could have told him nothing of the events of the past three weeks.

"I brought you this, aroon," he said, colouring a little. "It's only an Algerian thing, but I thought it might come in usefully."

They were in a hansom, driving to Waterloo station, and Doreen, opening the little box he put in her hands, found a quaint and very effective necklace, which must certainly have cost every penny he possessed. She knew in a moment that he had spent on her the money he had won in two or three tennis tournaments that summer, and that he had realized that the separation from Max had left her without a single ornament.

"You are very good to me, dear boy," she said, with tears in her eyes, as she slipped her hand into his, with a little tender, grateful caress. "And I have good news for you," she added, with forced cheerfulness. "I have a special order to go and see Donal Moore. Can't you manage to get two or three days' holiday in the third week of November? Then we will go down to Portland together."

"That would be splendid," said the boy, eagerly. "I wonder whether it is much changed since the old days when we used to see father."

Doreen sighed. It seemed to her that she had lived through a whole age of sorrow and trouble since the days when, as a little, eager, hopeful girl, she had visited the jail with her mother.

"I think I must take Mollie for a treat. Sunbeams are needed in that dreary place."

"And couldn't you take poor old Dermot?" said Michael. "He has had rather a rough time of it at school lately. The day after the arrests, when I came home in the evening, I found him dreadfully mauled, and it turned out that he had been fighting a boy ever so much bigger. Father Farrell had come in with me, and he took him to task about it; said the love of fighting was the root of all evil, and so on.

"'I don't love fighting, father,' said Dermot, 'and truly I always stand their chaff and let them call me "Doormat," but you can't expect a fellow to stand by and hear Donal Moore and O'Carroll and Fitzhugh called thieves and murderers. I guess if you'd been a schoolboy you'd have fought yourself, father.'"

Doreen laughed.

"And what did Father Farrell say to him?"

"Why," said Michael, "he just turned away and walked up the room, laughing to himself, and then when he came back he told us about when he was a boy, and was as jolly as could be, and told Dermot that he thought he was cut out to be a hero of the pen rather than a hero of the sword. Dermot was awfully pleased, and he told how for years he had meant to be a newspaper correspondent when he was old enough, and Father Farrell stayed so long talking with us that I believe Uncle Garth thought we were hatching a diabolical popish plot."

"Don't abuse Uncle Garth," said Doreen, brightly. "He is learning that, after all, whatever their differences, Roman Catholics and English churchmen say precisely the same creed every Sunday. If there were no worse bigots than Uncle Garth, we should all get on peaceably enough together."

"Oh yes, thank Heaven! he is not like General Hereford," said Michael, "who firmly believes that all Catholics lie when they find it convenient, and would torture and burn all Protestants if they had a chance. You might talk yourself to death while showing him that self-government in Italy has meant the very opposite to priestly domination. He would still insist that Home Rule meant Rome rule. That's just one of those catchpenny phrases that stick fast in the heads of pig-headed idiots."

"Is Dermot all right again?" said Doreen. "I wish I had been at home to look after him."

"Oh, he is right enough now, though his face is still all the colours of the rainbow. Brian Osmond saw to him, and Aunt Garth was awfully good. But it's beastly at home now we are so few. When is Una coming back, and the children?"

"I think they had better stay on with Mrs. Muchmore at Bournemouth till after we have been to Portland. We can take Mollie on our way down. I am just longing for home. This tour seems the longest I have ever taken. If it were not that I am really fond of Madame St. Pierre, and of Sardoni and his wife, and of dear old Ferrier, who is kindness itself, I don't think I could endure it. Stainforth, the violinist, is an insufferable man, and the pianist drinks, and the baritone has a bad temper. And they all talk against the Irish, and not one of them has taken the trouble to study Irish history,—not one!"

"Doreen looks so dreadfully tired," thought Michael, as he walked back from Paddington after seeing her safely into the train. "I am afraid she has been fretting over Max Hereford's imprisonment and the news of his illness. How I wish she had never met him! There was trouble enough in her life already without his making any more."

But Doreen would certainly have disagreed with this sentiment, and she struggled on with the buoyant courage of her race, not losing, even in the midst of her trouble, the happy sense of humour, which did much to keep her companions in good spirits during the tour. It was always Doreen who overheard the comments of the front row and regaled the others with them afterwards. People seemed happily oblivious to the fact that sound rises and that the performers were not deaf. In a pause after the pianist's brilliant staccato mazurka, Doreen, waiting on the platform behind a screen, ready for her next song, overheard a lady remark, "How singular it seems that he never alights on the wrong note!" The delicious *naïveté* of this faint praise as the reward for years of hard work and considerable talent tickled them all so much that poor old D'Albiac never heard the last of it. Then there were the frank and outspoken personal remarks, the criticisms on the dresses, sometimes a hot discussion in penetrating whispers as to whether the violinist did or did not wear a wig!

It was not until the last evening of the tour that Doreen summoned up her courage to speak to Ferrier about a matter which had long filled her thoughts. Madame St. Pierre was singing, Sardoni and his wife were talking on the stairs to some friends, and the rest were gossiping round the door leading on to the platform. These two found themselves quite alone in the artistes' room; for even Madame St. Pierre's French maid had put down her work and was waiting with her mistress's shawl down below.

"Oh, my dear, how thankful I am that we are at the end of this pilgrimage," said Ferrier, dropping wearily into a chair. "I am almost ready to register a vow that I will never again go on tour."

"Don't do that," said Doreen. "It would be very hard on the rest of the profession. I wish before the others come back you would give me your advice."

He looked into the sweet, winsome face, and noted the somewhat anxious expression of the blue eyes.

"My dear Doreen, I am as ready to advise you as if you were one of my own daughters. Don't work so hard, don't sing so often, raise your terms, and take a good holiday."

"I do not mean to sing quite so much," she said hesitatingly; "in fact, I am thinking of going to Ireland after Christmas. I want to know whether you think my joining the Ladies' Land League will very much affect my position as a singer."

"It is hard to say," he replied. "You are very popular, but people would certainly resent your taking such a step. I think it is a great mistake for an artiste to be mixed up with such matters. A singer should have no politics."

"Now come!" said Doreen, laughing. "That is all very well; but have you eschewed politics while we have been on tour?"

"I mean in public," he replied.

"And have you not sung in public every night for the last six weeks that aggressively English song which lauds all English virtues to the skies? And didn't you invariably give 'Hearts of Oak' for an *encore?*"

"Pshaw! I sang the song because it was set to a popular and taking air. But do you think I would sing it if the words would give offence? Not for all the silver in Peru! An artiste has no business to meddle with politics."

"In the words of Madame Viadot Garcia," said Doreen, '*D'abord je suis femme, et puis je suis artiste.*' I think you forget that I was Patrick O'Ryan's orphan daughter before I was a public singer."

"Well, well," he said kindly, "you must do what you think right. You never have pandered to the public, or hidden your convictions under a bushel, and I don't suppose you're likely to begin now. And, entirely to please the most wilful of Irishwomen, I will not sing 'Hearts of Oak' for an *encore* to-night, but will give them 'Molly Carew' instead."

Doreen's heart felt lighter than it had done for some time when, having parted with her friends, she set off the next morning for Bournemouth. The two children were waiting for her on the platform, and threw themselves upon her with a welcome that seemed doubly delightful after her long absence. They found Una in her bath chair in the public gardens, and the sight of the wonderful improvement in the little girl's whole aspect sent a thrill of pleasure to Doreen's heart. It seemed to her that she had failed with all else, but had succeeded fairly well with the little violinist, whose happy freedom from care and renewed health were plainly visible in the pretty and now childlike face. They spent a merry day together, and the next morning, being joined by Michael and Dermot, Doreen set out for Portland, having carefully arrayed Mollie in her very prettiest costume, "taking as much pains over it," Mrs. Muchmore observed, "as if the child were going to see Royalty."

It was impossible not to be infected by the high spirits of the two boys and by Mollie's delicious air of importance.

"It will be the first time I've ever seen a prison," she announced gleefully, "and Bride and me are always playing prisoners, you know."

"Just as we used to do," said Doreen, glancing at Michael; "many's the quarrel we have had in disputing which should have the honour of being the prisoner, and which should take the hated *rôle* of Englishman."

"Yes; don't you remember when we argued for an hour one night in bed, because you always would play the part of Wolfe Tone, and make me act the man who betrayed him? And when words failed me, I solemnly rose and bit your arm."

"Poor Mick! I was a terrible tease," said Doreen, penitently; "and it was hard on you, for I could show the mark of your teeth, and you couldn't show the effect of my biting words. I can see now the struggle in mother's face to keep grave and to look shocked when we explained that we were wrangling over Wolfe Tone. And after that, I always had to take my turn at Sir George Hill."

Having reached Weymouth, they took a carriage and drove straight to the prison, Michael eagerly recognizing the most curiously trivial objects, which are often the ones to dwell longest in a child's memory; Doreen, somewhat grave and sad as she recalled their last visit. She held Mollie's hand in hers as they dismounted at the grim, forbidding entrance, and followed their guide into the Governor's office, where the Governor himself received them pleasantly enough, explaining to her that she should see Donal Moore in his presence and in his office, instead of in the usual way, in the presence of a warder, and with iron bars between them.

She was grateful for the concession, and then it suddenly struck her what a strange thing it was that, towards the end of the nineteenth century, an Irishwoman should have to be grateful to an Englishman for permission to see for twenty minutes one of her own countrymen, on the understanding that politics must be excluded from their conversation. When in a few minutes the convict was brought into the room, her first feeling was one of hot indignation, as her eyes caught the familiar and hideous prison dress, and the closely cut, grizzled hair. But the face, though thinner and paler, was as gentle as ever, and the quiet blue eyes lighted up with pleasure, as he caught sight of the little group waiting to see him.

"What, four of you!" he exclaimed; "that is more than I had expected. Why, Mollie mavourneen, who would have thought of seeing you in prison!"

The child sprang into his arms, and clung round his neck, hugging and kissing him with all her heart, while the Governor thought he had never before realized how fast Irish tongues could fly, and in what a bewildering fashion five people could talk at one and the same moment. It was difficult to distinguish exactly what did pass, but presently Mollie's childish tones rang out clearly in a momentary pause. "Dear Donal! why do they put this thing on your arm, just as if you were a cabman? Is it your age? Oh no! I see it's something in hundreds, and you're not so very very old yet. And what are these spiked things all over the clothes?"

"Those, mavourneen, are broad arrows."

"Oh yes, now I see," said Mollie; "that's why you made me think of the picture of St. Sebastian in Dermot's book, where he is tied to the tree, and arrows are sticking all into him; but they were rather longer arrows than yours. I do wish when

you come out, you would let us have these lovely clothes for acting."

"You must run and ask the Governor," said Donal Moore, laughing. Then, drawing Doreen a little aside, he began to ask whether she had seen his wife in Dublin.

"She was here in August and told me the last news of you," he added. "I am grieved about it, but it is hardly a matter we can touch on now."

"No," said Doreen, "and there is little enough I could tell you. It is all at an end, but I think—I hope—he still cares for Ireland. Our time in Dublin was terribly short, but I did get a little talk with Mrs. Moore. She was very good to me; I was in dreadful trouble just then. But, Donal, the time is slipping by cruelly fast, and I want very much to ask you whether you think it would be unwise for me to go to Ireland after Christmas. I want to help. I can't bear to be any longer what my father would have called a botheen."

"Do you mean work at number 39?" he asked.

"Yes; I don't care how dull it is as long as it is practical work of some sort."

"It is what I should have expected of Patrick O'Ryan's daughter," he said. "If you ask my advice, I should certainly say —'Go, and God be with you!'"

"And how about the children? Shall I take them over there with Mrs. Muchmore, or would you think it better for them to be left with her in London?"

"I should let them stay on at home if Mrs. Garth makes no objection. You will have little free time out there, and would worry about them less if they were all together at Bernard Street with Brian Osmond at hand in case anything should go wrong."

She sighed, hating the prospect of the parting, yet forced to agree that there was much to be said for his point of view.

"You had better stay with my wife," he said; "she would be only too delighted to have you. Did you stay there when you were in Dublin?"

"No; our time was so short. We were at the Shelbourne, and the next morning I tried to see Max in Kilmainham, but couldn't."

"Mr. Hereford in Kilmainham?" said Donal Moore, in astonishment.

"He is out again now, but they arrested him the day after Mr. Fitzhugh and Dennis O'Carroll and so many others were arrested;" then, catching herself up, she turned to the Governor, with an apology. "I beg your pardon, I am afraid we are trenching on dangerous ground; it is a little hard to know where the affairs of personal friends end and politics begin."

"Mr. Moore finds it a great privation to be cut off from all newspapers," said the Governor; "but rules must be observed. By the bye, may I ask the meaning of the word 'botheen'?"

Doreen laughed. "I don't think that is a political term," she said. "It is just an Irish term for one who prays rather than works. But about reading, Donal," she continued, turning to him again. "Are you cut off from all books as well as from all newspapers?"

"From all, save the books in the prison library," he said, "and they leave much to be desired. People don't realize how much might be done through a really well-stocked prison library; good, wholesome novels, and lives of great men would do more to repress crime than all the direct religious teaching you can supply."

They fell to talking of family matters, and of certain arrangements about the children's education, and then, all too soon, the twenty minutes ended.

"It surely cannot be for long," said Doreen, as she bade him farewell with tears in her eyes.

"They will let you out for Christmas, Donal, won't they?" said Mollie, in her sweet treble, as she kissed him again and again.

"Well Mollie," he said, with a sigh, "we are short of most things in prison save hope, but we always have plenty of that. I once knew a convict who lived in daily hope of release for years. And now I shall have the comfort of knowing that Dermot is always ready to act as my champion, and to be knocked black and blue rather than hear me called a thief and a murderer."

"I wish I could go to prison instead of you," said Dermot, his dreamy eyes lighting up with a vision of sacrifice.

And that was the last word that passed between them. Donal Moore went back to his dreary cell, to endure as best he might the horrible craving for freedom, which seized him as he contrasted its blank solitariness with the life that should by right have been his. And the O'Ryans drove back to Weymouth sadly enough, Michael waxing eloquent over the daily increasing number of arrests.

"The Prime Minister ought to be hung!" he protested vehemently.

But Doreen roused up at this, and called him somewhat sharply to order.

"How can you talk so foolishly before the younger ones?" she said. "You know quite well that the Prime Minister hates the whole policy of Coercion, and only consents to it from a stern sense of duty. He is trying to do what he thinks best for Ireland; one day he will learn his mistake, and will nobly and fearlessly own that the time has come when a different policy must be tried."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

> "Oh, before it be too late, before more blood shall stain the pages of our present history, before we exasperate and arouse bitter animosities, let us try and do justice to our sister land. Abolish once and for all the land laws, which in their iniquitous operation have ruined her peasantry. Let a commission of the best and wisest among Irishmen, with some of our highest English judges added, sit solemnly to hear all complaints, and then let us honestly legislate, not for the punishment of the discontented, but to remove the causes of the discontent."—CHARLES BRADLAUGH, *A Plea for Ireland*, 20 October, 1867.

The autumn proved a terribly sad one, for Donal Moore's prophecy, made just before his arrest in the previous winter, was literally fulfilled. Ireland, as he had said, was given over to the tender mercies of the Chief Secretary, and to those maddened by his repression. Open agitation had been forbidden, and in consequence secret societies formed of wild and desperate men began to spring up, and many a ghastly murder was reported, casting a gloom indescribable over the hearts of those who truly loved Ireland.

The people were as sheep without a shepherd; all the true leaders who, spite of the vile accusations of their opponents, had done their utmost to repress agrarian crime, were in prison. The Land League, which had sought by legitimate methods to destroy the infamous land system which was at the root of all Irish distress, had been suppressed by the Chief Secretary; constitutional action had become impossible; and the more turbulent and hot-headed section naturally seized their opportunity.

Doreen, in all her troubled life, had never perhaps suffered more acutely than now. Black darkness seemed to hem her in on every side, and it was not easy to endure the taunts and the ignorant discussions with which she was assailed on all sides. Ferrier was the only man who would give even a fair hearing to any sort of defence of her countrymen.

"They go talking in their idiotic way about the infamous Land Leaguers," she said one day when at one of Boniface's concerts the talk in the artistes' room had waxed unusually hot, "and I don't believe one of them has so much as learnt the objects of the Land League,—that what it strives for is the reduction of rack rents, that all it wishes is the abolition of the present system of landlordism, so that as in old times there should be no intermediate ownership between the State and the man who cultivates the land."

"That, in fact, you object to the harsh treatment of peasants, but approve of the harsh treatment of landlords!" said Ferrier.

"Not at all. I don't wish a hair of their heads to be hurt. We don't propose to rob them, but that they should be amply compensated."

"And in the meantime your countrymen have started the 'No rent' system."

"That has only been the case within the last three months," said Doreen. "It was the retaliation for having all our leaders thrust into jail. You have imprisoned the only men who could keep any sort of order, and now behold the consequences! You say the Land League leaders are thieves and murderers, but read their instructions to their organizers and officers only last year, and see if anything could be more moderate. See what stress they lay on quiet, systematic action, on restraint of all feelings of revenge, on making just demands in a legal, intelligent way, free from violence. See how they condemn all outrages, whether upon man or beast. What would you have more noble than this sentence: 'To effect our object demands no sacrifice from any man in our ranks but that of temper and passion,' Oh, you English pride yourselves on your love of justice, and will spend millions in defending some ill-treated tribe thousands of miles away, but to us Irish, your nearest neighbours, you have been systematically unjust for seven hundred years."

"May be," said Ferrier. "But that doesn't justify your countrymen in plotting and contriving murders. Not only the Chief Secretary, but the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary, have to be constantly under police protection, lest they should be shot by one of your friends. Do you approve of that sort of patriotism?"

"Approve!" she said, her eyes ablaze with indignation. "*Approve!* You go too far—too far! It is the knowledge that all this is going on that is breaking my heart. This Violence is the hateful offspring of your Tyranny and Injustice. Don't lay the blame on Ireland, which has been trampled under your feet for centuries!"

He was touched by the keen pain expressed both in look and tone.

"I beg your pardon, my dear. Of course I might have known how you felt in the matter. Come, let us change the subject, or you will hardly be in trim for singing anything so cheerful as 'Twickenham Ferry.'"

She turned away with a passionate sigh, and took the songs out of her music-case. She began to long for the time to come when she could go to her own country and throw herself into active work.

"They that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth," she said as they went together down the staircase.

And Ferrier watched somewhat sadly the effort it evidently cost her to sing with due spirit and humour the sprightly little ballad.

It happened on a bright frosty morning after Christmas that Doreen, who had been singing in a performance of "The Messiah" in the North of England, was returning with Mrs. Muchmore to Ashborough, where she had that evening another engagement. In order to effect the cross-country journey, they had to change trains and wait for an hour at Mardentown—a proceeding which sorely tried Doreen's patience. She was both unhappy and restless that day, and the newspaper she had read during the first part of the journey had contained nothing to comfort her. The news from Ireland was far from reassuring, and a long report of a speech by the Chief Secretary, who had come over to England for a few days, had irritated and angered her almost beyond bearing. It was at this very place, Mardentown, that he had spoken, and as she paced up and down the platform, trying to get warm and to take that amount of exercise which is so necessary to all artistes, yet so difficult to fit into their busy lives, his name constantly confronted her on the posters at the bookstall. It kept breaking in upon her reverie, which, as usual, had turned in the direction of Max Hereford; it seemed as though something forced her continually back from thoughts of her lover to the recollection of that stern, strong man who held in his hands the destiny of her people. The platform had been tolerably clear when she first began to pace to and fro, but by and bye she noticed that it was becoming inconveniently crowded. She paused at the bookstall, bought a copy of Howells' "Lady of the Aroostook," and asked what was attracting so many people to the station.

"The Chief Secretary is leaving by the 12.30, miss," said the librarian; "there was a great demonstration here last night."

She turned away without any remark, but had hardly walked a hundred yards, when, with a shock of surprise, she recognized in the crowd an Irishman who had been living at New York when they had first made their home there, years ago. He was a man who belonged to the extreme set into whose hands John Desmond had fallen,—a man utterly unscrupulous, and capable of using any means, however hateful, which would carry out the end he had in view. She had only seen him twice before in her life, but her father's intense dislike of him had strongly impressed his face upon her mind, though it was in no way remarkable. Moreover, as she often laughingly said, her great-grandfather, the Wicklow blacksmith, had somehow bequeathed her one royal gift,—the power of remembering those she had met.

A horrible fear took possession of her mind. Was it for nothing that this notorious man mingled with the crowd that awaited the Chief Secretary? Was it not a known fact that plots to assassinate him were rife at that time? There again! a second face that she had seen before flashed upon her. This time she could not put a name to it, but she knew when and where she had seen it. It was at a political meeting which she had attended in Dublin, on the evening of her arrival in Ireland with Max and his mother. What could she do? What ought she to do? Of course, there were policemen here, and, no doubt, detectives shadowing the Chief Secretary wherever he went, but a life might be lost in spite of the most careful precautions. Had not the Czar perished, though surrounded by those who would have protected him? She hurriedly looked at her watch. There was not a moment to be lost. In twenty minutes' time the express would leave, and she thought it very probable that the Chief Secretary would be her very opposite, and instead of rushing up to the station barely in time, would arrive a good ten minutes too soon.

"Hagar," she said breathlessly, looking in at the waiting-room where Mrs. Muchmore sat knitting, "I shall be back before long. I have an errand in the town. Wait for me here."

She was gone before the astonished Mrs. Muchmore could frame a reply, and springing into a cab, she bade the man drive as fast as possible to the house of Mr. Everest, the member for Mardentown, at which she had learnt from the newspaper that the Chief Secretary was staying as a guest.

The cabman, impressed by her tone, drove at a great pace, and scarcely waiting for the cab to draw up, Doreen sprang out and ran up the steps to the open door, where a servant, with a portmanteau, and a particularly stolid-looking old butler stood staring at this strange arrival.

"Has the Chief Secretary left?" she inquired, in great excitement.

"He is just leaving, ma'am, and is unable to see any one."

"I must see him," she said emphatically.

"He is at this moment starting, ma'am, to catch the express," remonstrated the butler.

But Doreen thrust her card into his hand.

"Say that Miss Doreen O'Ryan must see him for a moment," she reiterated, her clear, mellow voice sounding plainly through the entrance hall.

At that moment, to her relief, the Chief Secretary himself appeared, accompanied by two gentlemen. The musical voice and the familiar name had struck upon his ear. He shook hands with her pleasantly.

"Another suspect to be released, Miss O'Ryan?" he said, with a smile. "I must ask you to make the story short, or we shall lose our train."

He led her into the room he had just quitted.

"I have come to entreat you not to go by that train at all," she said eagerly. "In the crowd, waiting to see you off, I have just recognized two of my countrymen, who, I greatly fear, are dogging your steps. One of them is a notorious advocate of dynamite and a man who justifies political assassinations; whether his face is known to the police here, I do not know, but I have known him by sight since I was a child, and I could not mistake him."

The Chief Secretary's stern and harassed face softened.

"It is very good of you to come thus and warn me," he said; "but I am something of a fatalist, and when my time comes I am ready to go. It may very probably be as you think that these men are lying in wait for me. I have had two or three somewhat narrow escapes; but I must go to London for all that, for I have work to do there."

"Why not drive to the other station?" said his host; "it would surely be wiser, and the other line will get you up almost as soon."

The Chief Secretary, who had a horror of any personal fuss, seemed unwilling to consent to this change of plans; but Doreen, quickly reading his expression and anticipating his refusal, broke in eagerly.

"If you will not avoid the risk for your own sake, then, at least avoid it for the sake of Ireland!" she cried.

"What?" he exclaimed, "you approve, then, of my work? You have changed your views?"

"No, no," she cried vehemently; "I don't approve indeed, but I would not see my country disgraced by an atrocious murder, or have one I respect killed by a fanatic."

There was silence for a moment or two. Doreen noticed how very much the last few months had aged the Chief Secretary. His hair was almost white, his deeply furrowed face struck her as being far more sad and careworn than when she had seen him in the Prime Minister's library. Strong, stern, unyielding as granite, she was yet certain that this man had a very tender heart; he had coerced her countrymen, had treated them in a most high-handed way, but it had been because he believed himself to be doing right, just as a hundred years ago loving parents would most severely beat their children, though it pained them grievously to do it.

"For your wife's sake," said Doreen, with a vibration in her voice that strangely moved the listeners, "do not run this risk."

The Chief Secretary took her hand in his.

"It shall be as you wish," he said, a rare and beautiful smile lighting up his careworn face, "And believe me, I shall always remember with gratitude and pleasure that there was one Irishwoman who took kindly thought for me."

Ten minutes later Doreen re-entered the waiting-room, where Hagar Muchmore still sat in solitary state with her knitting.

"For the land's sake!" exclaimed the good woman, startled out of her self-possession. "Where have you been? Why, you look ready to drop."

"I am cold," said Doreen, taking the chair which Mrs. Muchmore drew up to the fire for her, and trying to keep her teeth from chattering.

"Why, your hands are all of a tremble," said Hagar, "and your face as white as a sheet. One would think you had been face to face with death. I'll go and fetch you a cup of coffee; the cold has just got into you, that's what it is."

She trotted off briskly to the refreshment room, and Doreen crouched over the fire, feeling as though she needed all the warmth in the world. "Hagar is right," she said. "I have been brought face to face with the true death, not our good friend, the Death-angel, but the death of hatred and revenge and murder. Oh, thank God, that this time, at least, its ghastly hand is stayed!"

At this moment the express steamed into the station; there was much bustle and confusion on the crowded platform. Doreen went to the window and looked out over the blind. She could see the surprised and disappointed look on the people's faces as the minutes passed by and the Chief Secretary did not appear. She also saw the two conspirators. One of them stood near the door from the booking-office, through which, presumably, the Chief Secretary would pass; the other seemed to be moving slowly along the entire length of the train, looking into every carriage. But they watched and waited in vain; the bell rang, the whistle sounded, and at last the express moved off. Doreen returned to her place by the fire. A sense of joyous triumph began to take possession of her; the crime which would have plunged her country into yet another and more galling era of repression, which would have alienated the sympathies of those who were beginning to say that there had been too much coercion, had been checked. The Chief Secretary was, for the time at any rate, saved.

"I am sorry to have kept you so long waiting," said Hagar, returning with the coffee, "but the place was that crowded there was no getting through. The silly folk had all come to stare at some one who never came, after all. Why, you're quite a different colour now."

"You look exactly like old Mother Hubbard, Hagar. I believe you are almost disappointed to come back and find me hale and hearty," said Doreen, with her irresistible laugh. "But I assure you I want the coffee badly enough."

"Oh yes," said Hagar; "it's nothing but a flush from the fire; I can see that. And I am really glad, Miss Doreen, that in a few days you'll be having a quiet time in Ireland, and a holiday from singing; for I do think you are overworking yourself. Rushing from one side of England to the other, and singing in oratorios two nights running, is more than you ought to do."

Doreen let the words pass without contradiction, but she knew well enough that it was grief, and not work, that was beginning to tell upon her.

When, the next day, she reached home late in the afternoon, she found, however, that at last her long weary waiting for news of Max was at an end. Mollie came flying downstairs to meet her, with a cry of joy.

"Oh, Doreen," she said, "I'm so glad you have come; for Mrs. Magnay is here, and she has asked us to a party, and she wants us to help in the acting; Bride to be the Dormouse, and Dermot the Hatter, and me to be Alice. You will say 'yes,' won't you?"

A glow of happiness and relief filled Doreen's heart. For not one of Max Hereford's friends or relations had vouchsafed a word to her since the summer; and though she had more than once encountered Miriam since that miserable day in the Brighton train, only the most cold and formal recognition had passed between them.

But Espérance behaved precisely as if nothing had happened. Her warm, French greeting, her eager discussion of the children's party which was absorbing her thoughts, and afterwards her long amusing account of their six months in Auvergne, really interested Doreen; and later on, when the children had run off in search of sundry theatrical properties which might, they thought, come in usefully for "Alice in Wonderland," Espérance skilfully turned the talk on to the subject she knew Doreen longed to approach.

"We tried hard to persuade Max to come to us when he left Madeira, and to see what a real French country-house was like. But he was too lazy to take the journey. He is with the Herefords now at Biarritz."

"Is he any the worse for his imprisonment?" said Doreen.

"He said very little about himself in his letter," said Espérance; "only that he was convalescing, that he intended to stay on at Biarritz till April, and that the Firdale people still retain him as the Liberal candidate after a good deal of talk and fuss about his mistaken arrest."

"I had heard nothing since he was released," said Doreen, "except that he was going straight to Madeira."

"He was in Madeira for some weeks, then in Spain for a time; now he seems to have settled in at Biarritz with the Herefords, who will, at any rate, take good care of him. Claude has an idea that his illness must have been coming on for a long time; he says he has never looked the same since the day of Mrs. Hereford's funeral. I can't help hoping that this long rest and change will set him up again, and that we shall find he is his old self when he returns. Doreen, is it really true that you have joined the Ladies' Land League?"

"Yes," said Doreen, glad that her companion turned to an entirely new subject without waiting for a response. "It is quite true. Who told you?"

"Lady Worthington had seen a paragraph somewhere about it. Of course you know she is of the other persuasion, and was very much shocked—couldn't understand it at all."

"I daresay she thinks we are all like the fifty flighty young ladies from America depicted in 'Punch,'" said Doreen, smiling. "As a matter of fact, the chief work is just the business-like distribution of relief to those in distress, and the supplying huts to evicted people. As I do not want my country-folk to be forced from Ireland, or turned into paupers in the workhouse, or left to die of cold and hunger on the road, which is their only other alternative if they are evicted, I naturally join the League and do the little I can do for them."

"But," said Espérance, doubtfully, "people over here are so fond of you, and this will be such a very unpopular step. Is it not almost a pity, just when your reputation is made, to risk offending every one?"

"Are we then only to give what will cost us nothing?" said Doreen, with a light in her eyes that startled Espérance. "I have not rushed into this without thought. It may very probably injure my position, and popularity is, of course, dear to the heart of every artiste; but it must stand second to duty. Let justice be done though the heavens fall."

Espérance looked troubled.

"Of course," she said, "as yet I have heard only the landlords' side of the story, and Lady Worthington has kept me well plied with tales of outrage and crime."

"Come over to Ireland with me next Wednesday, and see things from the other side," she replied with a smile. "Lady Worthington is charming as a friend; but she believes in the feudal system, and understands the needs of the people about as well as the inhabitant of some other planet might do."

"Do you really go to Ireland next week?"

"Yes," said Doreen. "And I have a special favour to beg of you. See something of Mollie and Bride while I am away. They will be well taken care of here by Aunt Garth and Mrs. Muchmore, but they will be rather dull. Leaving them behind is my greatest trial. But their other guardian thought it a pity to take them away at this time of year, and I doubt if Dublin would suit them."

Espérance promised to see as much of them as possible, and as she drove home, began to revolve kindly schemes for bringing the O'Ryans into closer friendship with her own children.

"But, after all," she reflected, "it is Doreen herself who looks as if she needed mothering. I should dearly like to know what it was that caused those two to break off their engagement. I wonder whether there is no chance of setting things right again."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"We look into the heart of flowers
And wonder whence their bloom can rise;
The secret hope of human hours
Is hidden deeper from our eyes.
In helpless tracts of wind and rain
The work goes on without a sound;
And while you weep your weak 'In vain,'
The flower is growing underground." —M. B. SMEDLEY.

The time which had been so dark for Doreen had been daily brightening for little Una Kingston. It was delightful to watch the glow of health returning to her face, and she looked younger and rounder and more childlike than she had ever looked since her father's death. It had been arranged that as in the spring she would be free from the agent who had nearly killed her with work, Brian Osmond should order her to go abroad from February till the end of April, and that she should then be put into the hands of the trustworthy Freen to begin work again by degrees, with the option of refusing whatever her doctor objected to. Madame De Berg was not sorry to avail herself of Doreen's kindly offices; and though the two had as little in common as before, they were on better terms with each other. Doreen, for Una's sake, endeavoured to keep the peace; and Madame de Berg was somewhat mollified by the kindness to her little ward, which proved so convenient to herself. Moreover, she was gratified to learn that her young rival was to be in Ireland till the season began, and that she should step into her vacant place at Boniface's concerts.

It happened that Doreen's last engagement in England was a concert at Guildford early in January. The day following was Mrs. Hereford's birthday, and she had long intended to drive over from Guildford to Monkton Verney, and to put a wreath on the grave, not liking to think that the day should pass without any recognition. The thought of losing so much of her last day with the children did not, however, please her, and to their great delight, she took Una, Mollie, and Bride with her, enjoying the little sisters' immense appreciation of a night at a real hotel, and glad to have them with her when she drove to Monkton Verney.

It was one of those mild winter days, when, for the first time, spring seems not far off, and a sense of growth and hope rises in the heart. The sight of the old familiar places made Doreen sad; but the children's happiness soothed her, and the kindly greetings of one or two of the cottagers who recognized her as she passed, gave her genuine pleasure. The house was let to strangers, but the children did not care about that. They had eaten a picnic lunch in the carriage, and Doreen knew that old Goody would give them tea if they walked across the park to her cottage while the horse was resting.

Having visited the churchyard, and seen the ruins of the Priory, they proceeded to the old woman's cottage, and received from her a hearty welcome. For, though the rich may change, or move altogether from the neighbourhood, the poor are generally to be found, and they are always ready to give of their best. Goody dusted the chairs for them, admired the children, showed them a faded old photograph of Max, as a small boy, mounted on a Shetland pony, and did the honours of her house in the most charming way imaginable. Nor did she once say a word that could pain Doreen, though her keen old eyes read much of the truth in the girl's sad face. She bustled about, and prepared tea for them, and kept them all amused with her quaint old stories.

"And now, Goody, it is my turn," said Doreen. "I must sing you your favourite song. Which shall it be?"

"Well, miss, since you're so obliging, I should like the 'Last Rose' only to the other words you always used to put to it."

Doreen smiled, and sitting there beside the hearth, she sang them, "Oh, Bay of Dublin," after which they naturally fell to talking of her visit to Ireland, until she started up in some dismay, to see how late it was growing.

Goody, too, seemed distressed as she opened the door, and looked across the park.

"I'm thinkin' you had better be goin' round by the road," she said. "It's over-late for you to be goin' yonder."

"Why, Goody, 'the moon is shining as bright as day,' as the children sing," said Doreen, with a laugh, "and the road is more than a mile further. Oh? we shall do very well. Come—

" 'Una of the golden hair,
White-necked Una 'og machree.'—

Wrap this shawl well round you, and don't open your mouth till we reach the carriage. It will never do for you to take cold just before you leave England."

Goody looked uncomfortable and perturbed; but she made no more remonstrances, and bade them good-night, standing for some minutes at the door, to watch them as they made their way towards the Priory.

It was not until they were nearly half-way there that Doreen suddenly remembered why Goody had disliked the idea of their crossing the park so late. She recollected that it was always on moonlight nights that the ghost appeared, and she would hardly have been a true Kelt if her heart had not beaten a little faster at the thought. Mercifully, the children were quite unsuspicious, for she had taken good care that they should hear nothing of the story. Mollie and Bride were laughing and talking together. She joined in the talk, but kept her eyes ever in the direction of the grim old ruin.

"Tell Una one of the Irish legends; they would please her," she said.

And Mollie began obediently to tell the tale of how the good Countess Kathleen gave up houses and land and all her wealth, to save the poor from selling their souls to the Evil One.

Doreen had schooled herself into thinking that, after all, the Monkton Verney ghost was probably a vain imagination of the country folk, when suddenly her heart seemed to stand still; for, looking toward the ruin, she clearly saw the very figure Goody had described to her long ago,—old Lord Royle, with his Elizabethan ruff, his peaked beard, his cloak, just like the picture that hung in the Hall. Her extreme fear lest Una should be alarmed made her walk resolutely on until a group of trees hid the figure from sight, but, as she walked, a feeling grew upon her that she must go and see for herself what this spirit wanted, and for what reason it still continued to haunt the Priory. Was not this, perhaps, her last chance of doing anything for Max? The thought nerved her for an effort which, to one of her temperament, was no slight struggle.

"I will catch you up, children," she said. "Keep straight on to the gate, and get into the carriage."

Una nodded assent, and Mollie, who was deep in her story, did not break off for a moment. Doreen, as she walked towards the ruin, heard the clear little voice saying, "But Kathleen had now no more to give, and there were still eight days before food for the people could come in ships from the West. So, at last, to save the poor from selling their souls, she sold her own soul for a great price, and the money lasted the Irish till the corn came. But the Lord would not let the Evil One keep the soul of Kathleen who had so loved the people."

The voice died away in the distance, and Doreen, emerging from behind the group of trees, once more distinctly saw the ghost. Her breath came fast, but she thought of Max, and walked steadily on. And now she stood actually within the ruin, and she could see that the soft evening breeze lightly stirred the folds of the cloak; her knees trembled beneath her, but she walked bravely right up to the kneeling figure; she even put out her hand to touch it, and could hardly believe it when she found that there was absolutely nothing there,—nothing but a shadow upon the wall. Looking round in her relief and surprise to see what object could cast such a shadow, she found that it was an old gargoyle, that a broken fragment of stonework formed the Elizabethan ruff, and that the cloak was nothing whatever but the ivy hanging upon the wall. She picked two or three leaves as a memorial of her visit, praying as she had so often prayed before, that the wrongs of the past might be set right as far as was possible, and that Max might be the man to do the work.

"Old Goody will be glad to hear that her prophecy has come true, and that I was the one to lay the ghost," she thought to herself, with a smile, as she turned to leave the building, and then a remembrance of that past time, when her lover had stood beside her in the bright spring morning, when all the world had seemed full of bliss, brought the tears to her eyes; and as she crossed the park, she cried quietly but very bitterly as she thought of the hopeless gulf that now stretched between them.

The children told legends most of the way back to Guildford, and neither Mollie nor little Bride guessed her trouble; but Una knew all about it in spite of the dim light, and she clung to her friend with that pathetic, loverlike devotion which amused and yet deeply touched Doreen.

"She is thinking of Max Hereford," thought the child to herself. "There is very little I can do for her, but I will be to her what Siebel was to Marghérita"; and all through the drive a phrase from Siebel's song rang in her ears,—

> "Io ti saro fedel' amico onor."

The next day the separation took place. Una, in charge of a homely and sensible German nurse, and with her violin

master in attendance, was despatched to Rapallo until May; and Doreen, feeling like anything but a "strong-minded woman," took leave of the children and started for Ireland by the night mail.

But her spirits rose when, after a night of woe on the Irish Sea, she stepped on shore at Kingstown just as the day was breaking. Many other things had failed her, but her dream of working for Ireland was to come true; and, indeed, before many hours had passed, she found herself established at a desk in the office of the Land League in Upper Sackville Street, laboriously entering upon a sheet of white ruled foolscap certain entries under the following heads:—

"County. Parish. Landlord. Disburser of Grants. Observations."

The observations came as a sort of *bonne bouche* at the end, and were sometimes interesting. They consisted chiefly of the amount of relief given to the tenants, the name of the person who could best supply information, details of how to reach out-of-the-way places by rail, boat, and car, and now and then a remark that such and such a tenant had been considered unworthy of relief, and that the case should be closely inquired into.

After about a week of office work, she was allowed, to her great delight, to travel into a remote part of Donegal, where they succeeded in supplying huts to some of the miserable people who had been evicted. She had never before witnessed anything like the deplorable condition of these poor fellow-countrymen of hers, their indescribable rags, their half-starved look. As far as she could make out, they lived principally in the hard times upon seaweed, Indian meal being accounted a luxury for festivals. Surely help was urgently demanded for people in such extremity! Their patient endurance astonished her. Visiting one of the miserable cabins, from which the tenants were expecting shortly to be evicted, she saw that the bedclothes for a family of six children consisted only of a couple of old sacks.

"How do they keep warm these bitter, cold nights?" she asked, pityingly.

"Och! thin, lady, ye see there's a dale o' warmth in children," said the mother, with a patient smile on her thin face.

There might be a "dale o' warmth," but there was not much strength in the children, as Doreen speedily discovered. She had sung a bright, cheery song to them, to the huge delight of all.

"Now you sing to me," she said. "Let me hear you sing 'God save Ireland.'"

And they tried obediently, but the poor little half-starved children could not manage even one song, and Doreen went away with tears in her eyes, reflecting that even Jenny Lind on a diet of sea-weed might chance to lose her voice.

Still, bitterly as she felt the cruel sufferings of the people under the present system of landlordism, she could not always agree with all that was said at the various indignation meetings got up by the Ladies' Land League, nor could they ever induce her to speak.

"I have not come to talk," she always replied, when urged to take part in denouncing the Government. "I have come to see and to help the people."

And her practical help proved so prompt and satisfactory and careful that they were obliged to take her at her word and believe that she had no gift for public speaking.

One evening, when she was talking by the fireside to Donal Moore's wife, while his little son sat on her knee making impressions on his plump arm with that same seal which she had played with at the time of her father's arrest, the door opened and one of the secretaries of the League entered.

"Miss O'Ryan," she said when the greetings were over, "I have come to ask if you will go down to the south with me this evening. I have just received news that some most harsh evictions are to take place to-morrow morning on Mr. Haman's estate, and the only chance of preventing them is to go off at once by the 7.45. I think you can do good service. Will you come with me?"

Doreen gave a ready consent, and it was arranged that she should meet the secretary at Kingsbridge, in time for the train. Although she could not speak in public, she was a very practical and useful assistant, being well used to travelling, understanding the ways of the country, and possessing that cheerful buoyancy of nature that tells so much in a campaign.

"You look as pleased as though you had received high promotion," said Mrs. Moore, when they were once more left alone.

"It is exactly what I like best," said Doreen, "and coming at the end of several days of desk work, it is all the more delightful. One pays for it afterwards, though, in the dreadful memories stamped on one's brain. There are scenes in Donegal that I can never forget as long as I live,—the hopeless misery of the people, the way in which, for years and years, it has been made simply impossible for them to struggle on to better things. I don't wonder that there has been disorder and crime; the only marvel is that so many have been found to endure bravely. They couldn't have done it but for the unconquerable hope that one day this horrible system of landlordism shall be abolished. They couldn't have struggled on with such desperate patience had it not been for their strong faith that there is a God who will, somehow, bring good out of all these centuries of evil."

As she spoke, she had been softly caressing the little child's shining curls. He drew her hand down, and pressed it to his lips, with a pretty, gracious little gesture.

"Dear hand!" he said, in a tone which made them both smile.

"That child is just like a lover to you," said Mrs. Moore.

"Bridget dot a lover what walks on Sundays," said the little boy. "Have 'oo dot a lover?"

She shook her head.

"I buy 'oo one on 'oo next birfday," he said generously.

She laughed, and carried him off with her while she got ready for the train, and Mrs. Moore heard her singing to him, as she packed her bag:—

"Far he wandered, far he wandered,
But his spirit found no rest;
For his thoughts were ever turning
To the green Isle in the West.

"All his travels, all his travels,
Over land and over sea,
Made his heart more soft and tender
To Ireland and to me."

CHAPTER XXXV.

"We must not fail, we must not fail,
However fraud or force assail;
By honour, pride, and policy,
By Heaven itself!—we must be free.

"We took the starving peasant's mite
To aid in winning back his right,
We took the priceless trust of youth;
Their freedom must redeem our truth.

"We promised loud, and boasted high,
'To break our country's chains or die';
And, should we quail, that country's name
Will be the synonym of shame.

"But—calm, my soul!—we promised true
Her destined work our land shall do;
Thought, courage, patience will prevail!
We shall not fail—we shall not fail!"— THOMAS DAVIS.

Curled up in the corner of a railway carriage, with her fur cloak closely wrapped about her, Doreen fell asleep that night, and dreamt comforting dreams of Max. It was somewhat dreary to wake in a badly lighted station, to stumble out sleepily in the small hours, and to have to superintend the conveyance of the huts, which, all ready for erection, were being brought to these forlorn people in the south. There was little hope that the evictions could be prevented, but they hoped, by making a very early start in the morning, to get to the place before the sub-sheriff, and warn the people. Unluckily, at the last moment, there was some little delay in getting a car, and, to their great annoyance, when, in the faint morning light, they set out on their bleak drive of thirteen miles, they found that the sub-sheriff had got the start of them, accompanied by his bailiffs, and attended by a force of sixty police.

The country, with its low stone walls and dreary stretches of bog, looked desolate indeed, and the piercing wind made Doreen shiver from head to foot. The thought of whole families being turned out of their homes in such bitter weather raised a storm of indignation in her heart. If only they could manage to resist; but it was little likely that the people would be prepared, and, through the unfortunate delay in starting, they seemed to have lost their golden opportunity.

"If ye could but go as the crow flies, ma'am," said their jolly-looking car-man, "'twould be foine and aisy to bate the sub-shiriff; but ye can't drive an outside car through a river."

"Is there then a short cut in that direction?" asked the elder lady, looking down at the river which flowed lazily along to the right of the road.

"Sure, thin, and it is but a mile through yonder fields till ye come to Maurice Mooney's farm, but by the road 'tis five miles round intirely."

"Maybe there is a ford," said Doreen, eagerly. "Stop, and let us ask that man who is coming along."

The man, a red-haired, hungry-looking fellow, whose gaunt shoulders were plainly visible through the great holes in his ragged shirt and coat, replied that there certainly was a ford where a man might cross the river well enough.

"Could you carry a lady across?" said the secretary.

The man looked dubiously at his rags. He replied that he could do it easily enough if the lady desired it.

"Let me go, pray, let me go," said Doreen, springing down; and her companion reflecting that she was lighter, and likely also to walk more briskly, gave permission, and bade the car-man to drive on. As for Doreen, she scrambled over the stone wall, ran down the grassy bank and, fervently hoping that the red-haired knight-errant was sure-footed, began to consider how she was to mount his back.

He stooped gallantly, and shaking with laughter she scrambled up as best she could; then with a horrible lurch, her bearer rose and stepped cautiously down into the river.

"You are like St. Christopher," she said. "He spent a great part of his life, you know, in carrying travellers over a river. I want to reach Maurice Mooney's farm to warn him that the sub-sheriff is coming."

"God and Mary bless you, for the kind heart that gave you the thought," said her bearer, splashing knee-deep through the icy water. "It's meself that will show you the shortest way across the fields. They'll be evicting Dan Mooney, too, I'm thinking; that's his brother that shares the farm."

As he spoke he stepped on to *terra firma*, to Doreen's great relief. She thanked him heartily and rewarded him for his services; he seemed half reluctant to accept the money, and in the end, Doreen plainly saw that it was a case of "My poverty, but not my will, consents."

She was glad enough to have his guidance over the intervening fields, and as they hurried along, she learned from him that in all four families had been visited by the process-server, and were liable to be evicted. The Mooneys lived in separate houses adjoining each other, and their farm consisted of sixty acres. They had lived on it for generations, and had fallen into great poverty of late owing to the bad harvests. The fairly comfortable stone house which Doreen could now plainly see had been built entirely by themselves, and she learned that to add to their troubles the old bed-ridden grandmother had been more than usually ailing, and that Maurice Mooney's wife had an infant of barely three weeks.

"Ye'll bate the eviction party yet, lady," said the redhaired knight, with a broad smile of satisfaction on his thin face, "and if you'll tell the news to the Mooneys, I'll run on to Tim Magee's and the Murphys'."

With somewhat breathless thanks, for they had been going at full speed over the rough ground, Doreen parted with her trusty helper and knocked at the door of the little farm.

"God save all here!" she said, as a child appeared to bid her enter. The pretty old Irish greeting appealed at once to the occupants of the room.

"God save you kindly!" they replied courteously.

It was piteous to see the consternation in all faces when she told them that in a few minutes the sub-sheriff and his bailiffs and sixty police would be upon them. There was an instantaneous rush to bolt and bar the door, and to barricade the window; and Doreen, who had orders to encourage them to resist, but to restrain all useless and irritating attacks on the police, left this work to their hands, and crossing to the comfortless-looking bed in the corner, bent down to speak to the aged woman whose painful agitation was sad to see.

"It'll be the death of me, lady," she said, in a high, quavering old voice, "and if I could but have seen the praist, God knows I'd be willing enough to go."

"Let us send one of the children to fetch the priest," said Doreen; and Maurice Mooney readily consented to the plan, and despatched his eldest son, a lad of twelve, to ask the priest to come at once and administer the last Sacraments. Then they waited in hushed suspense, listening for the dreaded sounds of the evicting party. There was nothing else to be done. The place was bare and comfortless, the furniture so scanty that it was easy to guess how all that could be spared had gone for food; the only cheering thing was the fire round which sat six pretty little children, their faces full of wonder and interest, for they did not in the least understand why the lady had visited them or why the shutters were closed at such an hour in the morning. In the dim light Doreen could see the outline of Maurice Mooney's face. It bore an expression of bitter resentment, of strong indignation. What had he done that such hopeless ruin should have overtaken him? Was it his fault that his fathers before him had been ground down by rack rents? Was it his fault that the harvests had failed? And who was this landlord who demanded rent when the land could not possibly do more than support those who tilled it? He was a man who could afford to keep his hunters in excellent stables, but who protested that he could not afford to allow the Mooneys to remain upon the farm, though economic rent had practically disappeared, and it was difficult for the two brothers to keep themselves and their families in the bare necessaries of life.

Doreen, hopeful to the last, thought that no landlord could be so brutal as to turn out upon such a day the poor sickly-looking wife, the new-born infant, and the old bed-ridden mother, to whom exposure to the bitter cold must mean cruel suffering if not death. With fast-beating heart she listened to the sound of the approaching cars and to the hum of voices and the tramp of many feet. Then the sub-sheriff gave a thundering knock at the door, demanding possession.

Within the house dead silence reigned. Maurice Mooney's face darkened; he made no response whatever. There was a

second summons, and Doreen, seeing that the ex-baby, a little fellow of two, was on the point of bursting into a terrified roar, took him in her arms, and began to play with him to divert his attention. A consultation seemed going on outside. Then a crash at the window startled them all and made the children turn pale with terror. The glass was shivered to bits, and a second crash broke down the shutters. Maurice Mooney stepped forward; the stormy wind rushed round the room, making the poor old grandmother cough and shiver. Doreen took off her cloak and wrapt it about the invalid; then she picked up the child again and listened for the response that should be made to the poor farmer's piteous appeal to his landlord to give him yet a little longer.

"Oh, you'll not get the better of me with that story of your dying mother," said a comfortable, rich-toned voice; "she's been dying any time in the last three years."

Doreen moved towards the window and glanced at the crowd of men's faces; the police in the background looked as though they hated the work they were called upon to do, and she fancied that the sub-sheriff's face looked troubled. She instantly appealed to him.

"May they not at least wait until the priest has come? They have already sent for him to administer the last Sacraments," she said. "Come and see for yourself how ill the poor woman is."

The sub-sheriff came forward and looked into the room; he was visibly touched by the distress which he witnessed. He went back and spoke a few words to the landlord, but there was no yielding in that quarter.

"What!" he said, "are six dozen good Protestants to be kept waiting out here in the cold until it pleases the priest to come and perform his superstitious mummeries? Let them get to work quickly, and move on to the next place."

Doreen's face was a study. To hear all that was most sacred to the Irish people thus spoken of outraged her sense of justice and of reverence as nothing else could have done. The landlord saw her indignant glance, and was stung by it. Turning aside, he spoke to his servant, who promptly moved away to the road where the cars were in waiting, and drove off at a rapid pace.

And now the work of eviction began. One of the bailiffs made his way through the window; the door was unbolted and flung open, and the other men, hastening in, began to carry out the poor, shabby furniture. Doreen, still with the child in her arms, sat to the last beside the dying woman, trying, as far as might be, to divert her attention from the stripping of the home that was so dear to her.

"God bless your sweet face," said the poor old soul, as the tears coursed down her wrinkled cheeks. "I'll niver cease to pray for you. But ochone! ochone! to think that they'll pull down the good house my Thady built!"

"Don't fret," said Doreen, as tenderly as though she had been speaking to a child. "He is waiting for you now in a far better home."

"Eh," said the grandmother, her face lighting up through her tears. "And I'll soon be with him in heaven, where there's niver a landlord at all, at all, but jist the one Lord and Father."

The tears rushed to Doreen's eyes. She hastily rose and began to arrange her cloak and the blanket and a tattered coverlet in the way which would best protect the poor old woman. She could see that the rain was now falling heavily, and her heart sank at the forlorn plight of these poor people.

One of the policemen came and spoke to her respectfully enough.

"I'm sorry for it, lady, but our orders are to move the old woman at once. We'll do it as gently as we can."

"I know you hate the work," said Doreen. "Where can she be taken to, I wonder?"

At this moment, to her great relief, her companion, the secretary, appeared upon the scene.

"Mrs. Mooney can be carried to John Foley's cabin down the road," she said. "I have made all the arrangements, and her daughter-in-law and the baby can go there too. The rest of the children must shelter as well as they can until we can provide for them. I will see to the removal of those who are going to the Foleys."

She drew Doreen aside and gave her instructions in an undertone. The girl gave a cheerful assent; it was a relief in the

midst of this horrible scene to be told of work that could be promptly done. The dying woman was carried out of the house, and the secretary led away the poor delicate-looking mother with her tiny infant, Maurice Mooney following to help in the work which the secretary had already set on foot in a little lane or boreen not far off. Here on a bit of waste ground one of the Land League huts was already in course of erection.

Doreen had orders to wait with the children and the Dan Mooneys, who were also being turned out, until the police should have finished their work.

The most pitiful part of the scene was yet to come. The children, through all the confusion, had still sat huddled round the fire, and doleful were the sobs and lamentations when the men, gently enough, drew them away and bade them turn out into the rain and cold. Their astonished blue eyes seemed hardly able to credit such a state of things, and Doreen, thinking of her little sisters at home, felt the blood boil in her veins at the thought of the suffering that lay in store for these poor little victims of an unrighteous system. Luckily she knew the way to children's hearts, and as they were brought out of the house she stilled their wailing voices with that wonderful panacea, "Come, let us make believe!"

The sub-sheriff, though of course he theoretically disapproved of the Ladies' Land League, could have found it in his heart to bless these two women who had made his distasteful work a little less cruel.

"We will pretend it's a shipwreck," he heard the mellow, cheerful voice say as Doreen led the six shivering little mortals under the shelter of the nearest hedge. Then he saw her drag across a table, under which she ensconced the ex-baby while she went in search of food for the little ones, returning presently with some sandwiches from her bag and a great hunch of bread which a good-natured car-man had given her.

Meanwhile the landlord had ordered the work of unroofing to begin, and the air resounded with the clang of the crowbars as the double house, which had sheltered Maurice and Dan Mooney and their families, was rendered unfit for habitation. When all was made desolate, the evicting party moved on to another farm about a mile off, and Doreen, leaving Mrs. Dan in charge of the shivering little mortals under the hedge, made her way to the by-lane where the hut was being erected. All the helpers who could be mustered were busy at the work, and Doreen, who had more than once superintended this sort of thing, stayed to direct matters, setting free her companion, who was glad to go on to see what help was needed by the other families whose homes were to be destroyed.

The wintry wind still blew pitilessly, and from time to time there were heavy showers of rain, but Doreen was too busy in giving orders and encouraging her band of workers to heed the weather. For hours she stood directing the willing hands of the kindly neighbours who had come to see the evictions and had been pressed into active service by the secretary, and a glad perception that the work was almost completed and that she should soon have the children in shelter, filled her with happiness.

Suddenly amid the deafening noise of busy hammers she heard a shrill boy's voice, and looking round, saw Maurice Mooney's gossoon, who had been sent for the priest.

"Stop!" he cried, "there's a jauntin'-car comin' up the boreen with the police. They'll be sendin' ye to jail."

Doreen knew that this was likely enough. She turned to her helpers.

"Run off into the woods," she cried, "every man of you; for all who have helped stand in danger."

"Bedad, and we'll not be lavin' you," protested Maurice Mooney. "It's yourself that has bin the savin' of us."

"If you want to please me, hurry back to your children. There is no need for us all to suffer for this, and I can be best spared. Go, go before it is too late!"

Her eager words and persuasive manner were not to be resisted. The men rapidly dispersed; only the boy concealed himself among the bushes close by, curious to see what passed.

Doreen had the satisfaction of looking round the hut and seeing that, although not absolutely finished, it needed a very few touches to make it weather-tight. She could hear the wheels of the car in the little lane, but to the last she kept to her work, taking real pleasure in finishing the hammering down of a board upon which Dan Mooney had been engaged. She looked up as the wheels of the car stopped, and saw, through the doorway, that two constables were dismounting. Putting down the hammer, she rose to meet them, standing in the doorway, and quietly awaiting their approach in a manner that

made them feel uncomfortable.

"What is this?" she inquired as one of the men handed her a paper.

"It is a warrant for your arrest, madam, as a 'suspect.' It was issued after your visit to Donegal, where it is believed you were guilty of erecting, or causing to be erected, Land League huts similar to this one."

"Very well. What do you propose to do with me?" she said quietly.

"I must trouble you, madam, to come to the house of the nearest magistrate," said the man, leading the way to the car.

Doreen promptly followed him, and, as they drove off, inquired the magistrate's name. The reply told her pretty plainly what she had to expect, and by the time they had reached the great man's house, with its imposing façade and showy entrance hall, she had had leisure to look her position fairly in the face.

The magistrate glanced at her curiously; he had heard of her doings from Mr. Haman's messenger. She looked to him now exactly as he had often seen her look while waiting on a concert platform before beginning to sing. That indefinable air of dignity and goodness made his work particularly unpleasant to him.

"I am told, Miss O'Ryan," he said, "that you have been fording rivers, out-running the sub-sheriff, encouraging those who were to be evicted to barricade their doors and windows, and generally espousing the cause of the disaffected. Is this true?"

"I have espoused the cause of my own people," she replied quietly, "and have tried to help the poor."

"Do you belong to the Ladies' Land League?"

"Yes; I do."

"And are you responsible for the erection of this hut for Mr. Haman's evicted tenants?"

"Yes; I am responsible."

"Are you not aware that the erection of these huts is a punishable offence? that it is 'intimidation'?"

A little smile rippled over Doreen's face.

"I entirely fail to see who it can intimidate," she said. "I put it up to shelter the two large families who, for the best part of to-day, have been forced to shiver in the cold and the rain."

"However amiable your intentions, you must, I think, have been aware that you were breaking the law."

"Yes," said Doreen, her eyes flashing; "I was aware that you had raked up some old statute, made in Plantagenet times, against tramps and prostitutes, and that you dared to apply it to us. Happily, there are still older documents on which one can fall back, and I would rather try to obey God's command to deal my bread to the hungry, and to bring the poor that are cast out to my house."

"I have not the slightest wish to imprison you," said the magistrate, shifting a little uneasily in his chair. "If you will undertake to keep the peace, and will provide the necessary sureties, you need not go to jail; the matter rests entirely in your own hands; it is not I who cruelly imprison you."

"What do you mean exactly by keeping the peace?" asked Doreen, her blue eyes looking full into his.

"Of course I mean promising not to build these huts," he said, with annoyance in his voice.

"Then I have no option but to refuse," said Doreen, quietly; "for I came to Ireland on purpose to help the distressed people."

"Very well, Miss O'Ryan," said the magistrate. "You give me no option but to imprison you. I will make it a three months' sentence."

Doreen knew that some of her fellow-workers had been sentenced to terms of three months, some to six months. The

length of time just then made little difference to her. She had got out of the region of temporalities, and a great joy was filling her heart,—her turn had come to tread in the steps of her progenitors and to suffer for her country.

Some little discussion ensued about the time of trains at the nearest station and the possibility of reaching the county prison that evening. Then, at a word from one of the policemen, she bowed courteously to the magistrate, took her place on the car, and was driven swiftly down the avenue. As for the magistrate, he stood at his door, watching them, musing over the scene in which he had just taken part, and sorely puzzled that a girl who was so emphatically on what he deemed "the wrong side" should, by the mere expression of her face, have startled him into a sudden perception that human nature is divine.

It was not until the car had disappeared from view and the heavy rain had once more begun to descend that it occurred to him that the girl's graceful, willowy figure had been very slightly clad for such a drive.

"She sat on the car like one to the manner born," he reflected, "but it's little she can know of the Irish climate! Here, you boy!" he exclaimed, catching sight of a small figure scurrying past him like a frightened hare, "where do you belong to?"

"I'm Maurice Mooney's gossoon, yer honour," said the boy.

"Did that lady leave her wraps by mistake in the hut?" asked the magistrate.

"Sure thin, yer honour, she did be givin' her cloak to my grandmother, and it's her rug I'm thinkin' that'll be wrapt about the childern that's bin settin' under the ould table all this blissed day."

The magistrate made an exclamation which was not quite intelligible, but by this time the car was out of sight, and only a very distant sound of horse hoofs was to be heard. The whole landscape seemed blotted out by the sheets of rain, and with a muttered malediction on the bad climate and the headstrong people, the magistrate returned to his comfortable fireside. Meanwhile Maurice Mooney's gossoon hurried off to his family and gave a graphic account of all that had passed.

Doreen would have been touched if she could have seen the indignation, the sorrow, and the gratitude which his recital called forth. But the boy somehow knew in his heart that Doreen was not the one who needed pity.

"Bedad, and it's sorra a bit that ye should be grievin' your hearts," he maintained stoutly; "for I could see the face of her win she got up on the car agin, and sure 'twas like the face of an angel in heaven."

"Och, thin, an' it's an angel they'll be makin' of her in prison," said Mrs. Dan, her tears flowing fast. "God bless her sweet sowl, an' may the landlord sup sorrow for this!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"Haply no more music and mirth and love,
And glorious things of old and younger art,
Shall of thy days make one perpetual feast;
But, when these bright companions all depart,
Lay thou thy head upon the ample breast
Of Hope, and thou shalt hear the angels sing above."— FRANCES ANNE KEMBLE.

"Something must be said to Max," said the General, irritably. "I will endure this state of things no longer. You must make him understand, my dear, that we cannot allow Miriam to be the talk of the place."

"My dear," said Lady Rachel, soothingly, "I think you are unreasonable. The two have been like brother and sister together all their lives, and if Biarritz will gossip about them, I don't see that we can help it."

"Do you realize," said the General, "that twice over I have been congratulated about the engagement? And that talk of brother and sister is all very well, but Miriam does not treat him as a brother. Surely, with your tact, and your fondness for Max, you can contrive to bring him to the point. He is wretched now, and will be wretched until he is married and settled. His whole life has been spoilt by that unlucky affair with Miss O'Ryan, and Miriam is the only woman he seems to care to speak to. She will make him, as you know, a most excellent wife; but unless some one helps on matters, I don't see what is to happen."

"There is nothing I desire more for Miriam than such a marriage," said Lady Rachel. "I will do my best with Max; but it is a very delicate matter, and I don't at all like interfering."

"Very naturally," said the General, in a suave voice; "but then, my dear, if we only did what we liked doing, the world would come to an end."

Lady Rachel sighed; her husband generally left her the disagreeable duties to perform. She did not murmur at this, but it sometimes tried her when at the same time he made moral reflections.

Her chance of a talk with Max occurred that very evening; for Miriam was taking part in some private theatricals got up by the English in aid of a local charity, and Max, at the last moment, decided that the prospect of the crowded room and the noise and heat outweighed his desire to see Miriam play the part of the heroine in "Uncle's Will." He stayed at home, and Lady Rachel pleaded a slight cold and stayed with him. They had a comfortable private sitting-room in the hotel, and, when coffee had been served, Lady Rachel began her campaign.

"I am sorry not to see dear Miriam act," she said; "but, after all, we shall have other opportunities, and it is just as well, perhaps, that you should not be there; it might have been a little unpleasant for you both. Biarritz is, I fear, a very gossipy little place; but, after all, it's the same everywhere. These English colonies, with so many idle people, must gossip. It's the only thing to be done."

Max, who had been leaning back listlessly in an armchair, with a bored expression on his face, pulled himself together, with a feeling that something unpleasant was coming.

"What have they been saying about me now?" he asked.

"Well, I really hardly know whether to tell you or not," said Lady Rachel. "But I think some one must speak, and the General is so much annoyed about it, that perhaps it would come better from me. I have been like a mother to you this winter, Max, and you must not mind plain speaking."

Poor Max winced at this.

"You have been very kind," he said politely. "What is it that has annoyed my uncle? Have people been talking about my fortnight in Kilmainham?"

"Oh no, nothing of that sort," said Lady Rachel, hastily. "All that has quite blown over, and every one knows that you have ceased to take any sort of interest in politics. No; the fact is, that people will assume that you are engaged to dear Miriam. Now my husband, of course, desires to see her settled in life, and, of course, anything of this sort tells very much against a girl's chances. There is Lord Stoughton, for instance, who certainly admires her very much, but he will

not come forward if he thinks that she is engaged, or as good as engaged, to you."

"Lord Stoughton!" exclaimed Max. "Surely, aunt, you will never permit her to marry such a blackguard as that? Why, I would rather see her dead, than tied to that man for life."

"Indeed, it is not at all what I wish for her," said Lady Rachel, with tears in her eyes. "But what can I do? Her father insists that she must marry well. I am sure the way things are managed in England is less satisfactory than the pure business settlements carried out in France. What agony and sorrow it would save me if my husband could simply arrange a marriage for Miriam with you, in a matter-of-fact way. Why, here among the French it would be the most natural thing in the world."

"Well," said Max, with a short laugh in which there lurked a good deal of bitterness, "'When you are at Rome do as Rome does,' is a good old proverb. But I don't for a moment think that Miriam would consent."

"Ah, you are very much mistaken," said Lady Rachel, shaking her head sadly. "Think from what a fate you would be saving her."

Some interruption occurred just then, and nothing more was said; but when Miriam returned, flushed and excited by her success, and looking particularly lovely in a Spanish mantilla and a pretty evening cloak, a sort of horror sprang up in her cousin's heart at the bare idea of such a woman being married to Lord Stoughton. She was evidently quite unconscious that any trouble was in store for her; no rumour had as yet reached her that people were beginning to gossip about her possible engagement, for her manner was frankness itself as they parted that night.

"Did you order the horses for to-morrow?" she asked.

"Yes, for half-past twelve; is that right?"

"I wish you would make it twelve," she said; "I want so much to ride to Cambo; they say it's the prettiest place in the neighbourhood, but it is rather a long round. We could have *déjeûner* up here half an hour earlier."

"Very well," said Max, "I will see to it," and he went off to his room feeling just a little less like a man who has lost all interest in life than he had done since quitting Ireland.

His convalescence had been slow and unutterably tedious. The order for his release had been supposed to be given on account of his state of health; he made no inquiries, but simply left for Madeira as quickly as possible, fancying that the authorities had found it impossible to establish a chain of evidence with regard to Foxell's death, and that Doreen's betrayal had simply caused his arrest, but had been powerless to do any more mischief. Had she come to Kilmainham in a fit of penitence, he wondered, to confess to him that she had broken her oath? At times he almost wished he had seen her and heard the whole story; but the months passed by, and he became more and more absorbed in himself, and, enfeebled by the lazy, luxurious life, he thought of her less and less, willingly excluding from his mind all that interfered with his peace. The Herefords had been very good to him, and he had certainly found in his cousin's companionship something as nearly approaching pleasure as he was capable at that time of feeling. The shock of hearing that there was any notion of marrying her to a man who would assuredly make her miserable, had stirred into life his better nature, and it seemed to him that, after all, perhaps the arrangement which his uncle and aunt had long desired might be the best solution of the difficulty. His life was ruined; he had no heart left at all, but he could at any rate save Miriam from much misery.

When they met at *déjeûner* the next morning, he saw at once that she was in trouble; she was extremely silent, and he even fancied that she had been crying. The General, too, had a ruffled look, as though he had been arguing hotly, and Lady Rachel did not appear at all: she was in bed with a bad headache.

The cousins started together on their ride with scarcely a word; but the sunshine and the delicious air were exhilarating, and they were both young enough to be refreshed by the lovely sense of spring in winter which comes to one in the south. Away in the distance was the long, snowy chain of sharply serrated Pyrenees,—La Rhune, the nearest, looking lofty and majestic in its snowy mantle. In the foreground the mossy banks were covered with violets and primroses, and the quaint little town of Isturitz, with its fern-covered walls, delighted them.

"What makes uncle so worried this morning?" asked Max, as they rode leisurely through the lovely woods of birch and chestnut.

"Oh, the usual miserable story," said Miriam, with a sound of tears in her voice. "He wants me to marry. Wants me to be specially civil to that hateful Lord Stoughton. I have been forced at last to promise that I will accept some suitable offer before the end of the season. You see, Max, you and I are getting terribly old. We are twenty-nine. Think of that! We shall be thirty in the summer; and papa considers no woman any good after she is thirty. Really sometimes when I hear him talk like that, I feel inclined to go and bury myself in a convent like those Bernardines we saw at Anglet. Or I think I would be a *Soeur de Marie*, because they are allowed to talk, and they keep the rabbits and the flowers, and are on the whole tolerably lively. At any rate, one would be spared that feeling of degradation, and would not be classed among the useless before one had reached middle age."

"It is only men of a certain stamp who would agree with Uncle Hereford's verdict," said Max, drily.

"Maybe," said Miriam, with a sigh. "But I have told you my fate. I don't want to marry at all; but if it must be, why then I must put up with it, and perhaps Lord Stoughton would do as well as most people."

They were riding now up-hill. The road overhanging the river Nive was lovely in the extreme. Max felt strangely stirred by his cousin's speech.

"Miriam," he said eagerly, "you must not, you shall not, marry that man without knowing the truth about him,—he is not fit to touch the hem of your garment; life with him would be hell on earth."

She turned pale. "Very well, Max," she said; "but you must remember I have promised to be off my father's hands somehow by the time we leave London in July."

"I have not much to offer you," said Max. "You know my story, and that I have little faith in love, and protestations, and vows of eternal devotion. But I would try to make you happy, Miriam, if you would marry me."

Miriam hesitated. She looked into his cold, passionless eyes, and knew that this was not the same Max at all who had once loved Doreen.

An amused and yet a rather pathetic look came into her face.

"I am very fond of you, Max," she said frankly. "But I don't know whether we should get on together, except as we are now."

"I do not pretend that there would be much romance about our engagement," said Max; "but it might save you from a worse fate; we are very good friends, and know each other's ways. I should think we had as good a chance of happiness as most married people."

"I tell you what," said Miriam, with a gleam of amusement in her dark eyes; "let us try for a time how we get on as an engaged couple. We will only tell my father and mother, and it shall not be announced to the world in general till the middle of June, let us say. Then, if we have not seriously fallen out, we can think about settlements and *trousseaux*, and so forth."

"Very well," said Max, quietly; "if such a plan suits you, and is approved by my uncle and aunt, I have no objection. I would rather see you in your coffin than married to Lord Stoughton. There seems to me no reason at all that we should not get on very happily together."

"And you must keep your radical views decently in the background," said Miriam, laughingly; "but indeed I think you have entirely changed your nature; for I have hardly seen you touch a newspaper since you came here, and you have not once bored me with your tiresome theories of reform."

"Who would have thought of seeing roses in full bloom at this time of year!" said Max, glancing at the lovely little churchyard of Cambo, which they were just approaching. "Let us get down here and rest the horses."

Miriam willingly assented, and wandered off to look at the church; when he rejoined her, she was standing, with her face turned to the long range of snowy mountains, and he was struck by the softened look in her eyes.

"Max," she said, looking up at him with a smile that was half sad, "you are the best friend I have in the world. I am more grateful to you for helping me in this trouble than you can guess. I will indeed try to be good to you, dear."

Again all that was noble and chivalrous in his nature revolted at the thought of Miriam being sold into life-long bondage to such a man as Lord Stoughton. Something in her genuine gratitude touched his heart and made him stoop down and kiss her reverently.

"Don't you remember," said Miriam, with one of her bright, mischievous glances, "how old Colonel Dunbar used to say that kissing a cousin was like lamb with mint sauce, and kissing a sister was like lamb without the mint sauce?"

Max smiled, and the two rode home together in very good spirits to gladden Lady Rachel's heart by the news of the arrangement that had been made, and fairly to satisfy even the General, who mentally reserved to himself the right to tell his own personal friends the true state of things whenever it appeared to him convenient to do so.

That evening, about half way through *table d'hôte*, as Max was listening courteously to the remarkably dull conversation of a deaf old admiral who sat next him, he was suddenly startled by hearing from the opposite side of the table a question in a girl's high, clear voice.

"Father, did you see the news about Miss O'Ryan, Doreen O'Ryan, you know, the public singer whose voice you always admire so much?"

"No; what about her, my dear?" said the gray-haired *pater familias*, putting down his knife and fork unwarily for an instant, whereupon the waiter instantly whisked away his unfinished *entrée*.

"She is in prison; just think!"

"Eh, what?" said the father, in astonishment; then, suddenly perceiving that he had been defrauded of his food, he paused to grumble in an aside to his wife that really the waiters were no better than so many vultures watching to pounce on their prey.

Max, meanwhile, waited with a numb feeling as though some one had laid hold of his heart.

"She was arrested in Ireland," continued the girl, "for having helped to erect one of the huts for the evicted tenants. It says that she will be in prison three months."

"Serves her right for being mixed up with that abominable, wicked Land League," said the old gentleman, severely. "A set of thieves and murderers, that's what they are; and I can't think that any nice girl would be mixed up with such a crew."

Max felt as if he were choking. The deaf old admiral went mumbling on with his interminable stories of the sea; the long tables, with their goodly array of fruit and flowers, looked ghastly to him in the glare of the gaslight as he contrasted them in his mind with the dimly lighted cell, in which Doreen was at this very moment immured. Doreen in prison! Doreen, of all girls in the world, to be hemmed in by rules and regulations; to be shut out from life and sunshine, and condemned to solitude! The thought was intolerable, and the harsh words of her English censor opposite roused within him a feeling of strong indignation.

"This room is intolerable," he said hastily to Miriam, who was sitting at his right hand; "I can't bear it any longer; the heat is suffocating me."

He pushed back his chair and made for the door, breathing more freely when he found himself alone in the reading-room. Eagerly turning over the foreign papers, he found the English journal he sought, and with a pang of indescribable pain, read the following brief lines, under the large type heading:—

"ARREST OF MISS DOREEN O'RYAN.

"Miss O'Ryan, the well-known singer, was arrested yesterday afternoon, and sentenced by the magistrate to three months' imprisonment. She is a member of the Ladies' Land League, and a daughter of the late Mr. Patrick O'Ryan, formerly a member of the Irish Bar, but debarred on account of the part he took in the rising of 1848, and later on, undergoing five years' penal servitude as a Fenian. The news of the arrest caused great excitement and indignation, owing to the singer's popularity. It appears that Miss O'Ryan, after her day's work on Monday at the office in Upper Sackville Street, was deputed to travel down by the night train to the South, with aid for some of the tenants on Mr. Haman's estate. It is said that in order to get in front of the sub-sheriff and warn the people, she was carried across a river, so that when the evicting party arrived they found the houses barricaded. Resistance was useless, however, and, in spite of Miss O'Ryan's entreaties, the evictions took place, and the houses were levelled with the ground. An old woman was carried out in a dying state, and immediately received the last Sacraments; the whole scene being

extremely painful, and greatly aggravated by the rain and the cold. Miss O'Ryan had just succeeded in getting one of the Land League huts erected to shelter the two large families which had been rendered homeless, when she was arrested. The news spread rapidly, and a small crowd awaited the eminent vocalist here, as the train entered the station. She appeared pale and exhausted, but smilingly acknowledged the vociferous cheers with which she was greeted on her way to the cab. As the vehicle drove off to the female prison in the suburbs, the people sang with great enthusiasm, 'God save Ireland,' until they were dispersed by the police."

Max let the paper drop, and buried his face in his hands, fighting against the horrible pain that proved clearly enough how false had been his notion that he had no longer any heart left. It was not so much of Doreen, as she had been during their last interview in Bernard Street, that he thought; it was the little Doreen of long ago that refused to be banished from his mind. Once again he heard the sweet voice chanting "God save Ireland," as they climbed Kilrourk. Once again he saw the funny little figure "heavily ironed," on the back of the sofa, and boldly exclaiming "God save Ireland!" in spite of the threatening aspect of the dragoon with the sixpenny sword.

Doreen was in prison for three months, while he, in this paradise of rest and loveliness, was leading a life of luxurious ease, troubling himself not at all about anything in the world but his own satisfaction. He felt a sort of loathing of himself, and yet it seemed to him that he was chained hand and foot, irrevocably bound to this aimless existence, and that to free himself and plunge back once more into the working world was an effort altogether beyond him. As for Doreen, how could he help her? They had agreed to part, and she had been false to him, horribly false—why should he grieve for her? However admirable her devotion to Ireland, she had betrayed him, and it was no thanks to her, he imagined, that he was not, at this moment, in Kilmainham. He had, of course, no notion of the truth that it was to Doreen's intervention that he owed his freedom and the preservation of his name from public talk, as one who had, for years, known the truth about the Lough Lee tragedy.

But, mercifully for him, the news had shaken him out of his false dream of lazy peace and indifference. It had wakened him to cruel pain, and a battle had begun within him, between good and evil, which was destined to prove the crisis of his whole life.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"Come to me, dear, ere I die of my sorrow;
Rise on my gloom, like the sun of to-morrow;
Strong, swift, and fond as the words that I speak, Love,
With a song on your lips and a rose on your cheek, Love!
Come, for my heart in your absence is weary!
Come, for my spirit is sickened and dreary!
Come to the arms which alone should caress you,
Come to the heart that is throbbing to press you."— JOSEPH BRENNAN.

That same account of the arrest had made its way into the Bernard Street household in a somewhat curious fashion. Aunt Garth and the two elder boys were not expected home till eight that evening, and Mollie having been put to bed rather earlier than usual, that Mrs. Muchmore might go to a service, lay crooning a little Irish lullaby to her doll, when suddenly the ringing voice of a newspaper boy made the quiet street resound, and caused the child to start up that she might hear what was the thrilling intelligence that came after the words—"special edition!"

"It sounds like our name," thought Mollie, with a thrill of pride; for she had a child's notion that to "be in the newspapers" was a great distinction. She sprang up and ran to the window that she might hear better; surely it was —"address of Miss O'Ryan." Had Doreen, then, taken to public speaking? She listened more intently as the boy approached, and now quite clearly the horrible truth broke upon her; the word was "arrest," and Mollie, young as she was, had heard of too many arrests not to understand precisely what that word involved. With a cry of dismay that might have touched the heart of the most inveterate hater of the Home-Rule agitation, she rushed downstairs, not pausing for an instant to reflect that the oilcloth in the hall was freezing to her little bare feet, that the doormat was prickly, or that the cold wind seemed to blow through and through her as she flung open the front door just as the newsboy was passing. His mouth was rounding itself for a stentorian bellow when Mollie's clear voice rang out imperiously. "Paper!" she called.

"Which'll yer 'ev, miss?" said the boy, staring at the funny little apparition, with its dishevelled locks and wind-blown nightdress."

"Both," said Mollie, promptly, with a laudable desire to be impartial and to hear what was said by each side. Then, as the boy demanded twopence, Mollie, having absently felt for a pocket which didn't exist in her nightgown, was forced to fly for help to Uncle Garth, and to his immense astonishment came running into his study with a breathless request.

"Please, uncle, lend me twopence for a boy at the door, 'cause he's in a hurry, and there's no pocket in my nightgown. I mean my purse is upstairs in my frock pocket."

"My dear," said Uncle Garth, his mild, dreamy eyes opening wider than usual, "what are you doing down here at this time of night? and you mustn't give money to beggars at the door with only your night-shirt—I should say your nightgown —on."

"'Tisn't a beggar," said Mollie; "he's a newspaper boy, and he's calling out that Doreen's arrested."

Here she sank down in a little heap on the floor and wailed.

"What!" cried Uncle Garth, stooping to pick up the newspapers.

But Mollie, though "impecunious," was honest.

"There's twopence to pay first," she sobbed, holding on valiantly to the "Pall Mall Gazette."

Uncle Garth hurried out to the front door and paid the boy; then, with an air of deep concern, he returned to his study and very gently picked up the little crying child.

"My dear," he said, mopping her eyes assiduously with his red silk handkerchief, "pray don't cry so; these boys as often as not call out lies just to sell their papers. Let me look and see."

Mollie relinquished both journals and smiled through her tears.

"Oh, I do hope he was lying!" she said fervently.

But her heart sank as she watched Uncle Garth's face while he read. The boy had evidently been telling the truth.

Uncle Garth made inarticulate exclamations of annoyance and regret. Mollie caught the words: "She's infatuated! There's no help for it. Treading in her father's steps, and after all, it's natural enough!"

The child buried her face in Uncle Garth's coat and cried bitterly.

"There, there," he said, kissing her; "don't cry, my pet; they will not keep her long in prison, you may be sure of that."

"How long?" sobbed Mollie. Then as she heard the length of the sentence: "Three months! three whole months! Why, that'll be after Easter. What did they send her to prison for?"

"For putting up a hut for some people who were turned out of their own home," said Uncle Garth.

"Then," said Mollie, "if it was for doing a kind, good thing like that, of course God will send one of His angels to her. He always does, you know, to the people who do right and are put in prison."

Uncle Garth did not contest the point, or attempt to prove to the little child that building Land League huts was "intimidation." Instead, he drew closer to the fire and held the little bare feet to warm, and began to tell her of the Egyptian doll which had been found after being buried for hundreds of years in a child's coffin, and of corn that had been found in a mummy's hand and had been planted here in England ages after, and had sprung up and brought forth fruit.

When, later on, Aunt Garth and the boys returned grave and sorrowful,—for they, too, had heard the news,—they found Uncle Garth still chatting away, with the child on his knee, though Mollie had blissfully fallen asleep to the sound of his soothing voice. Michael, glad to escape from discussion of the bad news, took her in his arms and carried her gently upstairs, abjectly miserable when he thought of his helplessness to serve Doreen, yet proud, too, to think that she should be among those who were suffering for love of Ireland.

Mollie's love, which was always of a practical nature, prompted her the next day to spend the whole of her playtime over a carefully written and curiously spelt letter, which ran as follows:—

> "DARLING DOREEN: Bride and me mean to be very ekstrar good to please you till you come back. We keep praying that God will send an angel to open the prison doors like St. Peter's angel did, and Daniel's that shut the beasts' mouths. Dermot calls the majistrit a beast and so did we till Hagar said she must soap our mouths if we kept saying beast because it was a bad word for girls and that you never said it. So now we only think the majistrit was a—you know what, because as we are to be ekstrar good it will not do for us to get our mouths soaped, and besides we hate the taste of the soap. So if you wake up one night and see a angel you won't be fritened will you, but you'll say 'Oh that's just the angel Mollie and Bride asked for.' Hagar says Paul was set free from prison by an earthquack, she means St. Paul not the Paul that sells roses, you know. So perhaps it may be an earthquack to set you free, but we shall spesh'lly ask for an angel because Bride and me think earthquacks must be rather dredful. Auntie reads us Mr. O'Sullivan's 'Story of Ireland,' she says it remines her of 'Tails of a Granfather' only that was Scotch Histry and this is Irish histry. She thinks Donal O'Sullivan a grand caracter, we are reading the part ware they crossed Ireland and they had to eat their horses and use the skins for boats, ugh! Hagar says I must write very carefly because the prison orthoruties will read the letter, I hope theyll be able to all right, ive wrote it as well as I could and these are for kisses x x x x
>
> "From your loving sister,
>
> "Mollie O'Ryan.
>
> "P.S. The kisses of course are for you not for the orthoruties."

Mollie and Bride had many secret confabulations about this time, Bride generally playing the part of sympathetic listener, and Mollie's fertile brain and ready tongue doing the work.

"I've been thinking," said Mollie, as one spring day they sat together on the top of the toy-box in the nursery window, "I've been thinking, Bride, that while we're waiting for the angel to set Doreen free, we might just as well be asking, too, that Max may come back and that everything may come right again. There's no harm in asking, you see. And Doreen has never looked quite the same since the day Max gave up coming here. I remember it was the day we went to see Signor Donati's baby, and picked the flowers in his garden. Doreen has looked kinder sad ever since then."

"I love Max," said Bride; "I wish he would come back."

"Well, we'll ask God to send him," said Mollie. "And I tell you what, Bride, we'll buy him a Easter card; there's a lovely one in Southampton Row, with four angels on it, and something underneath about 'Seek things that are above.' It's awfully dear—it was marked sixpence. But I have got a sixpence, and if you would spend your penny on the stamp, we could get it to him."

"But, then, we shan't have nothing to get one for Doreen," said Bride. "What a bover it is we've not got more pennies!"

Mollie was silent; a look of profound meditation stole into her blue eyes. "Don't speak to me," she said, pressing both hands over her head and staring hard at the black brick house opposite, as though for inspiration. "I can kinder see a thought, but it won't let me catch hold of it. Wait, wait! Now I've got it. You see, Bride, as only one of them can have the card, and as Doreen loves Max, she'd much rather he had it."

"We could send them each a thrip'ny one," said Bride, astutely.

"No; but don't you see that she'd *rather* go without, if it meant something beautifuller for him? Doreen does so love people, and she always wants to be giving. And you know, Bride, the thrip'ny ones are not a bit nice; they're just crosses of flowers instead of four lovely angels."

"The angels was very pretty," said Bride. "I think they was doing the ladies' chain in the quadrille."

"Oh no, Bride, no; angels don't dance; they can fly, you know, which must be something like skating in the air, I should think, or swimming very fast in water that doesn't wet you. The worst of it is, Hagar will never let us walk to Southampton Row alone; we shall have to ask her to stay outside the shop, because we've a nice secret,—a very spesh'ly nice secret."

The "spesh'ly nice secret" arrived at Biarritz on Easter Eve; for the children had prudently posted it to Monkton Verney early in Holy Week, and the housekeeper, touched by the childish "Please forward direkly," had given it a place in the packet which was being sent to her master. Max, who detested letters, groaned inwardly as he opened the bulky package from Monkton Verney, nor did the news he received tend to raise his spirits. There was a long letter from the Firdale Liberal Committee, informing him of the sudden death of the member, Mr. John Steele, and asking him to telegraph an immediate reply if he were willing to stand once more for Firdale.

To go through all the drudgery of an election campaign, with very probable defeat staring him in the face, was a dismal prospect, and then he realized how the Herefords would discourage the idea, how utterly unsympathetic Miriam would be, and how horribly he would feel the loss of his mother's presence and active interest. He could not and would not endure it all. He would remain abroad; he would take his ease; he would shut out from his mind all the work for which he no longer felt any zest. Musing thus, he turned over his remaining letters, smiling a little at the childish writing on the largest of the envelopes, and touched more than he would have cared to own by the elaborate angel card and the laboured inscription on the back, "With love from Mollie and Bride."

"Those dear little souls! do they still care for me?" he thought to himself, realizing that the card must have exhausted their exchequer. And then, Bride's "dancing angels" somehow carried his thoughts back to a silent room in the Shelbourne, and to a lesson he had learnt there, but had of late forgotten.

"I must go out and get them some Easter eggs," he thought to himself, and sauntered into the town, taking some pleasure in selecting for his two little friends the most fascinating presents that Biarritz would produce. Then, having posted them, he wandered on towards the sea, and found his way out to the Virgin rock, a desolate promontory reached by a little shaky wooden pier, and surmounted by a roughly hewn image of the Virgin Mary. He had suffered much during those long weeks which had elapsed since the day he heard of Doreen's arrest. Ever since then he had been fighting a desperate inward battle, sometimes gaining, sometimes losing; and, as he sought a sheltered nook among the brown rocks, and sat watching the great Atlantic rollers as they surged by, he knew that the time had come for the final struggle. He must decide at once, whether he would take the unwelcome plunge into the stormy arena of political life, or remain at Biarritz in self-indulgent leisure and tranquillity. Watching the sea, he naturally enough fell to thinking of Doreen. She was not often out of his thoughts at this time, and now, as he reflected how the same vast Atlantic washed the shores of the very place where she was imprisoned, her influence over him was strong. In the dashing of the waves on the rocks below, he seemed to hear her well-known voice singing the refrain of Ellen O'Leary's song:—

> "To each—to all—I'm ever true,
> To God—to Ireland—and to you."

Had he not promised ages before to speak for Ireland? And was he in cowardly fear to abandon the work to which he had pledged himself, because it was likely to win him the world's disapproval? Because, forsooth, Ireland was out of favour and unfashionable?

Again he listened to the surging of the waves, and again Doreen's voice seemed to ring through his heart:—

> "And, oh, my darling, I am true,
> To God—to Ireland—and to you!"

He sprang to his feet, fearing even a moment's delay, and promptly made his way back to the town, where he despatched a telegram consenting to stand again for Firdale, and announcing his immediate return to England.

"I will take you at your word," he said to Miriam, when he was telling her of the summons he had received; "all these Radical doings shall not bore you; I will keep them decently in the background, and not enlist your services in the electioneering campaign."

"Very well," said Miriam, good-naturedly, "and if you really want to succeed, why, I wish you well. After all, there are some conveniences in your being in Parliament, even if you are on the wrong side. You will be able to get all our friends orders for the ladies' gallery. And tea on the terrace is rather fun."

Max spent his Easter on the railroad, and arriving in England, went straight down to address a meeting of the Firdale electors. He spoke with studied moderation, but did not escape a certain amount of "heckling" with regard to his brief stay in Kilmainham. Still, his old popularity stood him in good stead, and the knowledge that the contest would be a severe one proved stimulating when he was actually at work. Firdale was also a little prejudiced in his favour by the touch of pathos in his solitariness. There was no cheerful house party this time; for Monkton Verney was in the hands of strangers. There was no sweet-faced Mrs. Hereford driving about the Firdale streets; she had long since been called away. There was no bright Irish singer to draw big audiences and to cheer and inspirit the electors; she, report said, had jilted the young squire, probably for the sake of some worthless compatriot.

All this told in his favour; and when the poll was declared, it proved that the Liberals had a majority of fifty-six, upon which there was of course great jubilation; and Max, in a dream-like way, did all that was expected of him, shook hands with the defeated candidate, stepped on to the balcony, said the few manly and modest words that he ought to have said, and was loudly cheered by the crowd. But all the time he felt a miserable aching void which utterly marred his triumph. Everywhere he saw the loving blue eyes that had looked into his so tenderly on the day of his defeat; through all the cheers of the crowd he heard Doreen's response to his question whether next time he should have her help, "Why of course; you will always have it when you want it."

That afternoon he walked out quite alone to Monkton Verney, longing to get away from Firdale, longing for peace and quiet. Taking a short cut across the park, he chanced to come across old Goody, who had already heard of his triumph and was full of congratulations. "And oh, sir," she added, "I'm main glad the ghost's laid. Have they told you?"

"Why, that's good hearing," he said, with a laugh. "The house will let far more easily if that idle tale is knocked on the head."

"Well, sir, it was Miss O'Ryan; she wrote and told me just what it was, and we've all seen it now; but she was the one that was bold enough to walk right up to it, and till she touched the bare wall with her own hand she thought it was his lordship."

"When was Miss O'Ryan here?" asked Max, with a curious twinge of pain at his heart. And Goody, nothing loath, gave him a graphic description of the visit early in January, and took great delight in showing him the gargoyle which had so long been terrifying the people by its life-like shadow. Max, when he had taken leave of the old crone, wandered on to the churchyard, thinking over the story he had just heard.

"My brave Doreen!" he said to himself, "that was exactly like you; your heart throbbed and your knees trembled, but you walked straight up to the ghost and laid hold of it."

The wind sighed drearily through the churchyard trees and seemed again to repeat those haunting words,—"You will always have it when you want it." He went and stood for a moment, with bared head, beside his mother's grave. There was the wreath of which Goody had spoken, the offering of lovely white flowers which Doreen had specially brought over from Guildford on his mother's birthday. He himself had forgotten the day altogether. It is only women who remember those little delicate touches which sometimes, by their very fineness, do more to brighten and console than far more solid bits of work. She had somehow found time for thought in the midst of her busy life, and he in his wealth of leisure had forgotten.

"Beg pardon, sir," said the old sexton, hobbling up as Max turned away from the grave. "Shall I tidy up the turfs a bit, and throw away that there dead wreath?"

"No," said Max, glancing at the brown and shrivelled remains; "leave all just as it is."

"I'm glad to hear o' your success, sir," said the old man, "and I hope I see you better."

"Thank you, Brown. Yes; I am quite well. Good day." And in no mood to bear another word, Max left the churchyard, and walked drearily back to Firdale, without daring to glance at his old home or at Rooksbury.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

"But its bitter taunt repeating,
Cried the harsh Voice: 'Where are they—
All the friends of former hours,
Who forget your name to-day?
All the links of love are shattered,
Which you thought so strong before;
And your very heart is lonely,
And alone since loved no more.'

" 'Nay'; and then the gentle answer
Rose more loud, and full, and clear;
'For the sake of all my brethren
I thank God that I am here;
Poor had been my life's best efforts,
Now I waste no thought or breath—
For the prayer of those who suffer
Has the strength of Love and Death.'" —A. A. PROCTER, *The Tyrant and the Captive*.

It was quite late in the evening when Doreen arrived at the prison. She looked up at the high, blank walls and at the grim, gray, battlemented entrance, and shuddered a little. In this prison, long ago, her father had once spent four or five months at the time of the Smith O'Brien rising. She remembered vividly his description, in after years, of the way in which the bed he had been allowed to hire had rotted away from the damp of his cell. It was here that he had first developed that delicacy of chest which had ultimately caused his death, and which had, she feared, been inherited, more or less, by all his children. Within those walls, moreover, she remembered to have heard that in the famine years hundreds of prisoners had died in one week.

No doubt a very different state of things now prevailed, but the associations of the place still seemed to haunt it. It had lately been converted into a female prison, and Doreen inquired eagerly whether any other political prisoners were there. The matron who received her replied in the negative; and Doreen sighed a little, knowing that this meant that she was condemned to absolute solitude.

"Never mind," she thought to herself. "If all I can do here is to suffer, I must try to suffer well."

This thought helped her to endure all the petty discomforts of her first initiation into the rules and regulations of the place, and before long she found herself alone for the night, a very taciturn female warder having brought her a cup of tepid tea and some food.

"They'll not keep you to the prison fare," observed her attendant, giving her a long, searching look. "Food will be specially ordered in for you to-morrow. The gas will be turned off in twenty minutes."

"Thank you," said Doreen. "Good night."

To this remark the warder made no response; it was an attention to which she was not accustomed; but just as she was leaving the cell, she remarked, a trifle less gruffly, "I think, too, you'll have the right to order in bedding"; and without leaving the prisoner an instant to respond to this cheering suggestion, she clanged the door behind her.

Doreen shivered. She had often heard Donal Moore say how that sound more than any other affects a prisoner; but she tried to smile, and, as she drank the tepid tea and ate the food that had been brought for her, she valiantly forced herself to make a parody on "Oh, the clang of the wooden shoon." It was not a very successful attempt. She became wofully conscious that every bone in her body was aching, that her heart felt like lead, and that whether she liked it or not, here, in this tiny room, with its bare, white walls, she must remain for three calendar months. It was bitterly cold, too, and she longed as she had never longed before for a fire; it was quite in vain that she crouched beside the hot pipes with which the cell was provided. For when you have driven many miles on an outside car in pouring rain, on a cold winter's day, and have then, in your wet clothes, had to sit for some time in a draughty railway carriage, you will certainly find if, into the bargain, you have been thinly clad, over-tired, and underfed, that it takes more than a hot pipe to warm you. When the gas was suddenly turned off, and she groped her way across the cell to the most unyielding mattress it had ever been her

fate to lie on, a sudden, dreadful craving for Mollie and Bride and the familiar room in Bernard Street, with the little lamp beneath Max Hereford's cross, came over her, and she burst into an agony of tears.

At that very moment the warder was remarking to one of her companions, "It's the very first of them strong-minded females I've set eyes on."

"And I heard the police as brought her say she was a rare plucked one," remarked another warder. "He said she stood up as bold as could be before the magistrate, and quoted the Bible against him."

"Lawks!" said the other. "Is there anything in Scripture to suit with the Land League?"

Doreen woke at least a dozen times during the night, and always to the same horrible realization that she was a prisoner. The moon was full, and its light brought out into sharp relief the scanty furniture of the cell and the heavily barred window. She wondered much what Max would say to the news. He would hear about it at Biarritz, and General Hereford would rejoice to think that his nephew had no longer any connection with her. Would Max feel just a little sorry for her? Would he defend her when other people said harsh things? Would he once more be stirred into trying to serve Ireland, or would he only feel thankful that he was out of the strife in the sunny south? Would he be glad to think that they no longer belonged to each other? But at that intolerable thought she once more broke down and sobbed her heart out. "It isn't true! He is mine—I am his—whatever happens! His though I can do nothing for him—nothing! Oh, Max! Max! Max! Come back to me! Come back!"

But her brave spirit soon rose above the storm of emotion. "I am a fool," she said, drying her eyes; "God has not allowed me to be sent here without some good purpose,—perhaps, after all, I can serve Ireland better in prison than at large. And I shall have more time to pray than ever in my life before. It's a lie that I can do nothing for Max; I can help him even if he hates me. Oh, my God! let me help him! I ask for nothing more but just to help him!"

And so the three months began, and the first month seemed like a year; for it was long before Doreen could grow accustomed to the deadly monotony that contrasted so sharply with her ordinary life. For two hours in each day she was allowed to walk in the exercise yard; for the remaining twenty-two hours she was shut up in the dismal little cell, and though no work was expected of her and she had nothing to complain of, the mere imprisonment was terrible to one of her disposition. The Chief Secretary had sent special orders that she was to be allowed to see visitors, to have books, and to be treated with every consideration. Doreen knew that he would fain have released her, but that his unflinching determination to support the action of the magistrates at all costs forced him against his own inclination to refuse to interfere. She felt genuinely sorry for him; yet it perplexed her much to think that in the face of the utter failure of his policy of repression, he should still cherish the idea that Ireland could be coerced into order and patience, while the horrible evils were still unredressed.

The second month, however, passed much more quickly. She had recovered from the severe cold which had followed on the fatigue and exposure she had undergone on the day of her arrest. She had also become accustomed to the restrictions and annoyances of detention, had learned to endure the thought of having her letters read, and had lost that shrinking dislike to being cooped up with some particularly repulsive-looking criminals when she attended service in the chapel.

"I wish I could do something for them," she said one day, when two of her father's old friends, members of the religious order of the Christian Brothers, were visiting her. "Often when I look at them in the chapel I think of your cases of specimens at the school, showing manufactures from their earliest to their latest stage; most of the prisoners seem to me in the primary stage, and there is nothing here, absolutely nothing, to help them on to the next. It's not the least use for the chaplains to preach at them. And they don't try indirect means, like music. They say throughout Ireland no music is as yet permitted in prisons. In England it is permitted, and has been found very useful."

"Why don't you ask the Chief Secretary about it? You say you know him. An appeal could do no harm," said the elder of her visitors.

"I have a very good mind to ask him if I may not sing to the other prisoners on Easter Day," said Doreen. "I was as hoarse as a raven all last month, but my voice is coming back again now."

The Chief Secretary gave a ready consent, and the prison authorities, who, however much they detested the Land League, could not help being touched by Doreen's cheerful and uncomplaining patience, gladly hailed the daring innovation.

A more extraordinary audience she had never sung to; but there was something almost dreadful in the way in which she at once felt that she had riveted their attention, that the music was irresistibly drawing them up out of their miserable memories and their evil thoughts. It seemed to her that she could almost see them passing to that "next stage" of which she had spoken to the Christian Brothers.

She sang them first, "Oh, that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments," from Sullivan's "Prodigal Son," and as the last tender repetitions of "Turn ye, turn ye—why will ye die?" rang through the place, she could see that tears were raining down the faces of some of those very women whose look of hardened wickedness had at first appalled her. Then she gave them "I know that my Redeemer liveth," and "Come unto Him," from the "Messiah," ending with a well-known hymn to which neither of the chaplains objected. The experiment had been such an evident success that the priest and the clergyman and the matron began to cherish hopes of persuading the government to supply musical instruments for the chapels, though they were well aware that much red tape would have to be manipulated before such an outlay would be agreed to.

During that Easter week, Doreen received another of Mollie's curiously spelt, but very comforting letters. It contained a graphic description of the arrival of the presents from Biarritz.

"We are keeping some of the chocklits for you," wrote the child. "As Michael thinks the orthoruties wouldn't let you have them praps now. But I send you the paper Max sent with them, and hope you'll like it as well as a card, there wasn't enough money to get cards for both of you, and we sent him a nice one insted. Bride says, 'tell Doreen when she comes home I shall never let her go away again, but will cling round her neck, and my clings are very firm.'"

The paper inclosed was a mere line hastily scrawled in pencil: "With love from Max. The angels have reached me safely—a thousand thanks." On the whole, Doreen thought she liked it as well as an Easter card.

Slowly, very slowly, the April days passed on. Doreen supposed it was the relaxing climate and the mild spring weather that made her feel so tired and languid. Sometimes it was all she could do to keep up her allotted time in the exercise yard, but she struggled on, being loath to return to her dreary little cell before it was absolutely necessary. When at last the hour of her release approached, excitement gave her for the time a fictitious strength. Her face was radiant as she quitted the prison and joined Donal Moore's wife, who had come to the south on purpose to meet her. Her fellow-workers would fain have kept her in Ireland, but there were engagements in London which she was bound to keep; and, moreover, her whole heart was crying out for the children, and she could only be persuaded to spend the night in the Moores' house, crossing by the morning boat, and arriving in London that evening at a quarter to six. Michael and Dermot awaited her on the platform, and their eager delight at getting her back once more, their vociferous greetings, their intense excitement, made her forget all her fatigue.

"It is worth while going to prison only for the sake of coming home again," she said, laughing. "And look! look! there are my darlings on the balcony. I only hope they won't shake the thing down; it looks more than a hundred years old."

She sprang out of the cab and hastened into the house, where Mollie and Bride came flying downstairs to cling round her neck with the eager, child-like love which her heart had been aching for all those weary months. And then came Aunt Garth's tender and rather tremulous embrace, and Uncle Garth's kindly welcome, with no allusion at all to her "wrong-headed adoption of Nationalist views," but a genuine gleam of relief and pleasure in his quiet eyes, as he realized that the sunshine had returned to his house. Last of all, there was Hagar Muchmore's warm reception in the snug little nursery.

"Guess a cup o' tea and a bit o' hot buttered toast will hearten you up after your journey," she said, having unceremoniously kissed her mistress. "Give me your hat and jacket, and just you sit down and rest. Why, for the land's sake! what have they been doing to you in prison?"

"They certainly didn't starve me," said Doreen, laughing. "I was very well treated; there was a great deal more sent in than I could eat. I used to wish I could send the remains to Portland to Mr. Moore. Why are you staring so at me? It's months since I saw a looking-glass. Is there any change in my face?"

She laughingly crossed the room to an old mirror that hung above the mantelpiece.

"Ah, my cheeks have fallen in rather, and my eyes look bigger. Never mind. Home will soon cure me."

They were still laughing and talking round the tea-table, when the servant came to announce that Mr. Farrant was in the

drawing-room. Mollie and Bride murmured a little that a visitor should so soon have interrupted their peace; but Doreen, with an eager hope that she might learn something about Max from his friend, ran swiftly downstairs, glad to meet once more a man for whom she had a profound respect.

"I have not come to detain you for long," said the member for Greyshot, taking her hand in his. "I only wanted to welcome you back again, and to bring you the good news, if, indeed, some one has not already forestalled me."

"What news?" she asked eagerly, for though rumours of coming change had reached her in Dublin, nothing had been definitely known.

"The Chief Secretary has resigned," said Donovan Farrant. "It seems that, at last, the English government and the Irish people are learning to trust each other, are willing to credit each other with honest intentions, and to work harmoniously for the good of Ireland. The prisoners are to be released. There is to be no renewal of the Coercion Act."

Doreen's face grew radiant.

"Thank God!" she said reverently. "The night of mistrust is over at last."

"Now I shall not stay a moment longer," said Donovan Farrant; "for I know your little people are hungering for you after this long absence."

"Is Mrs. Farrant well?" asked Doreen. "I have scarcely seen her for a really comfortable talk since the Firdale election."

"She is very well, thank you. By the bye, you have heard, I suppose, of the late election at Firdale? Mr. Steele died while you were in prison, and Max Hereford is just elected. He took his seat only yesterday. This will be a very auspicious time for the beginning of his public life."

This news seemed to fill Doreen's cup of happiness to the brim. Her prayers had been answered. Max had left the unsatisfactory life of purposeless wandering abroad, and had come back to work at the very time when he could best serve her country. All through that week she lived in a sort of dream of hope and joy; and when Donal Moore, released from jail, came on the following Saturday to see how his wards were prospering, there was such merriment and glad content, such eager talk and overflowing mirth, as the walls of the respectable Bernard Street drawing-room had never before witnessed. There had been light-hearted gaiety, it is true, fifteen months before, on the eve of Donal Moore's arrest; but things had then been very dark for Ireland, and they knew that trouble was in store. Now the hearts of all the Irish patriots were raised in glad expectation; for at last it seemed that their redemption was drawing nigh.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"Oh, when the strife of tongues is loud
And the heart of hope beats low,
When the prophets prophesy of ill,
And the mourners come and go,
In this sure thought let us abide,
And keep and stay our heart.
That Calvary and Easter Day,
Earth's heaviest day and happiest day,
Were but one day apart." —SUSAN COOLIDGE.

"Signor Donati and his wife have come to see you," announced Michael about ten o'clock on the following morning, as Doreen, surrounded by the children, was making her usual Sunday breakfast in the nursery.

"I suppose they have just called on their way to church," she said; "it's very kind of them to look me up so soon. What a curious thing it is that the Italians are so much more ready to sympathize with Ireland's cause than English people."

Carlo and Francesca Donati gave her a delightful welcome, and it was a minute or two before she became aware that they responded rather gravely to her bright flow of conversation and her happy auguries of better days that were to dawn for her country.

"You must think it strange for us to come to you so early; but it was Ferrier's doing," said Donati. "He was on his way himself to see you, but he shrank from being the bearer of bad news. He persuaded us to come instead, fearing, I think, that his English view of the matter would jar upon you."

"What news?" asked Doreen, instantly taking alarm, and yet only vaguely fearing, only curiously wondering what it could be that made the Italian's eyes so sad, so pitiful.

"A call has come for all your courage, for all your faith in God," he said rapidly. "Just when your hopes for Ireland were brightest, just when England seemed beginning to understand the justice of your country's cause, there has been a ghastly tragedy, a murder by some vile miscreants, which will for a time alienate the sympathies of the English."

She gripped his hand.

"Tell me quickly," she cried, in a voice that vibrated with an agony that no words could describe. "Who has been murdered?"

For answer he put into her hands a note containing the hastily written, almost broken-hearted words in which Donal Moore had conveyed to Ferrier the news of that horrible tragedy which so strangely united, in one common sorrow, one indignant protest, the English and the Irish nations.

Doreen read the names of the victims. Every vestige of colour left her face; she neither spoke nor moved. Francesca, terrified by her whole aspect,—for, indeed, she seemed like one dead,—came and put her arm round her, and kissed her, not trying to check her own tears.

The shock, in spite of the way in which her friends had tried to break it to her, had been overpowering; and for one of Doreen's physique and character, to be suddenly dashed down from the highest pinnacle of hope to the deepest gulf of despair, was a dangerous thing.

"Have you heard no further details?" she asked at length, in a voice that had sunk to a hoarse whisper.

"Nothing more as yet," said Donati. "Only just the fact, and the time, and the place."

She shuddered. "It must have been at the very time when we were so happy here with Donal just released from Portland, and the children dancing and singing, and the future for Ireland all looking so bright, so hopeful. Oh, why does God let such awful things happen? Why, when deliverance seems near, are our hopes always frustrated by some ghastly crime, some fatal misunderstanding, some ignorant blunder? We dreamed that our redemption was at hand, and now evil has triumphed. Why does God let it be so?"

"I don't know why it seems for a time to triumph," said Donati, in a low voice, which strangely moved her, drawing her

as it were, by the speaker's strong conviction, out of her gulf of despair. "It is enough to know that it seemed to triumph, yet was for ever crushed on Calvary,—enough to know that you and I here, at this moment, can share in the pain and in the victory. Why should you doubt that even through this vile and shameful deed, God may work out the redemption of your country? All redemption comes through suffering; all life is won by pain. That is God's will for this world. If there had been any better way of training us, do you think He would not have chosen it? '*E La Sua Volontade è nostra pace.*'"

Doreen, out of her dumb agony, looked up at him gratefully. She unlocked her hands, and slipped her cold fingers into Francesca's comforting clasp. These two, who had come to her aid, were no mere talkers; they had lived through their agony, and in consequence, they trod the world somewhat differently to the generality of people. It seemed that their ears were more ready to catch the throb of others' hearts; that while to reach most people the clumsy vehicle of words must be used, these two understood and sympathized with those they met by some much finer process.

Without their help, Doreen could hardly have borne the next few weeks; for although some of those who had suffered most from the terrible tragedy nobly refused to hold the Irish nation responsible for a crime which was abhorred by all save a few miscreants, the English nation called out vehemently for vengeance, and coercion became once more the order of the day. Donal Moore, who, at first, in the horror of receiving the news of the tragedy, had wished himself back in Portland Prison, where, at least, he would have been ignorant of the terrible calamity that had befallen his country, now with characteristic energy and noble-hearted self-sacrifice threw himself into the difficult task of fighting the odious calumnies which began to be heaped indiscriminately on all patriotic Irishmen. But the shock had, for a time, paralyzed all the confident hopes of mutual trust between the two countries; and Max Hereford was swept away with the multitude, and found himself listening to his uncle's denunciations of the Land League without even attempting to prove that the whole scheme of the Land League had been open and constitutional agitation, and that the murders were clearly the work of one of the secret societies. News of his attitude reached Doreen through the Magnays, and added terribly to her pain; but she did not know through how grievous a crisis he was passing, or how the conflict that had begun within him on the day of her arrest had been bravely fought. Max was in truth, both in his public and his private life, in a terribly difficult position. The time was rapidly approaching when he must definitely declare his attitude with regard to the Coercion Bill; and the time was also approaching when General Hereford would expect the public announcement of his engagement to Miriam. As far as he knew, Miriam was well contented to let the nominal betrothal become a genuine one, and yet all the time he was conscious that Doreen still exercised over him a strange influence; sometimes he thought he hated her, at other times he feared he still loved her, but he was never indifferent to her, could never even hear her name without stirrings of heart for which he tried to despise himself.

At last, goaded almost beyond bearing by this inward struggle, he resolved to go and hear her sing. And one evening, early in June, he left the house soon after eight o'clock, and made his way to St. James' Hall, where Doreen was announced to sing at Mr. Boniface's concert. With indescribable feelings he awaited her first appearance, and when at length the conductor led forward the slim, girlish figure robed in white poplin, his heart beat like a sledge-hammer. Her air of simplicity and goodness was entirely unaltered; but he thought there was additional dignity in her attitude as she stood regarding the audience, while the pianist played the introduction to her song. The face, too, was changed and had a fragile, delicate look about it that reminded him somehow of little Mollie, and the eyes looked larger and sadder even when, at her warm reception, she had smiled. She sang her most popular song, "O Bay of Dublin," and the exquisite voice lured him back, for the time, into a haven of rest, filling his mind with memories that were all tender and gracious, all sharply in contrast with his present miserable conflict. Then came other singers, and presently Donati himself, the star of the evening; but Max scarcely heard him or heeded him. He was once more desperately fighting that battle in his own heart which must settle the course of his whole life. And when Doreen again appeared, the very change in her aspect angered him. She should not, urged the tempter's voice within him, have allowed trouble to become so legibly stamped on her face; surely, too, he caught the gleam of two or three white threads in her dark hair? She should not, above all, have chosen to sing Linley's "Kate O'Shane." He did not notice that in the programme it was stated that she sang it by special request, nor did he pause to reflect that a soprano is almost bound to sing love songs. He listened with darkening brow and angry heart to the sweet refrain,—

> "O Dennis dear, come back to me!
> I count the hours away from thee.
> Return, and never part again
> From thine own darling Kate O'Shane."

A sort of fury of anger and hatred rose in his heart, an utterly unreasoning wrath consumed him, and it chanced at that instant that Doreen, as she bowed to the audience, caught sight of him. Had a knife been plunged into her breast, it could

not have wounded her so terribly as that glance; her face, as she passed down the steps from the platform, was absolutely colourless, and Donati, perceiving that something was wrong, followed her out on to the stairs, and helped her to the artistes' room.

"Max Hereford is in the stalls!" she exclaimed. "He looked—oh, I can't tell you how he looked!"

There was no need to describe the change in Max, for Donati saw by the dismay and horror in her own face what it must be.

"You cannot tell through what struggle he may not be passing," he said, with that perfect sympathy and comprehension which characterized him. "Go back and sing something that shall help him to conquer."

But the thought of returning again to face Max in his present mood, the horror of singing to one who seemed to have given place to the devil, was like death to her. She shuddered as the storm of applause reached her more clearly upon the opening of the swing door.

"For his sake," said Donati, "be strong. Help him while you can."

"Will Miss O'Ryan give an *encore*?" said the Norwegian attendant, in the mechanical tone of one going doggedly about his duty in spite of personal suffering.

"My book of Irish songs, Hagar," said Doreen, quickly. "Yes, I am coming. There is one song," she added in a low voice to Donati, "and only one, that I think by its memories might reach him—if only I can sing it."

"You certainly can sing it for his sake," said Donati, with that firm confidence that everything right was possible, which gave his life such wonderful force.

Doreen's heart was throbbing painfully, but she did not pause or hesitate. She passed through the little waiting-room, smiled at Sardoni as he bantered her on having kept the audience clapping for such an unmerciful time, and handed the open book to Marioni.

"There are four verses," she said to him, as they mounted the steps; "I think I shall be hissed, but whatever happens go on playing."

There was a thunder of applause as the people caught sight of her; then all became deathly still.

"My God!" she cried in her heart, "let Max understand the message—for no one else here will understand."

Marioni began to play the introduction; it was a well-known air, but Doreen had never sung the words at an English concert, and she knew well enough that at this time, when Ireland and all things Irish were abhorrent to the majority, her choice of the song would expose her to the bitterest censure. Yet, cost what it would, she must sing it,—must sing it, too, to perfection, must call up vividly that shameful scene when frantic men had demanded a sacrifice, and had forgotten that He who said "Vengeance is mine" abhors revenge in a nation as in an individual. In subdued style, but so clearly that not one word was lost, she sang the first descriptive lines, breaking forth triumphantly into the refrain:—

"High upon the gallows tree
Swung the noble-hearted three,
By the vengeful tyrant stricken in their bloom;
But they met him face to face,
With the courage of their race,
And they went with souls undaunted to their doom.
'God save Ireland!' said the heroes;
'God save Ireland!' said they all;
'Whether on the scaffold high
Or the battle-field we die,
Oh, what matter, when for Erin dear we fall!' " [1]

The audience seemed startled and puzzled. From the front row she caught a whispered reply to a question, "The Manchester murderers." The unjust word, the utterly untrue statement, brought a glow to her face; she declaimed the second verse with a power which constrained the people against their will to listen to her.

"Girt around with cruel foes,

Still their spirit proudly rose,
For they thought of hearts that loved them, far and near;
Of the millions true and brave
O'er the ocean's swelling wave,
And the friends in holy Ireland ever dear."

This time, at the close of the refrain, there rose a sound which she had never before heard in an English concert-room; but she thought of Allen and Larkin and O'Brien, and how their last night in this world had been disturbed by the vile songs and taunts of a mob howling like wolves for their blood,—and she spared the audience nothing, but went steadily on.

"Climbed they up the rugged stair,
Rung their voices out in prayer,
Then with England's fatal cord around them cast,
Close beneath the gallows tree,
Kissed like brothers lovingly,
True to home and faith and freedom to the last."

The people were now really angry; the refrain was almost drowned in the storm that rose. Marioni looked round at the singer nervously, hoping that she would spare them that fourth verse, but Doreen stood like one wrapt in contemplation, almost, it seemed to him, that she herself had become one of those victims about to be offered, and her extraordinary calm, in the midst of an uproar that would have shaken the nerves of the most courageous, began to influence all her hearers; the hisses died away, and once more the exquisite voice rang through the great hall. Max, throughout the song, had never taken his eyes off her; he had known at once that she was singing for him, and for him alone. Once more he was climbing the mountain beside her in the early morning, and she was eagerly telling him of the Manchester martyrs. "And Allen," he could hear the childish voice saying, "was only seventeen,—a whole year younger than you. He had done nothing but open the doors to let the prisoners out. He was so brave that he wouldn't defend himself, but just fired his pistol in the air, and the English almost tore him to pieces."

The storm of disapproval startled and horrified Max; that Doreen should be exposed to this made his heart hot within him. Had he acted on impulse, he would have forced his way to her there and then. And yet she looked very little in need of such support as he might give. That wonderful light which had startled the magistrate and had made Maurice Mooney's gossoon protest that she was not to be pitied, for she looked like an angel, now struck all who looked at her. Her whole face seemed transfigured as she sang,—

"Never till the latest day
Shall the memory pass away
Of the gallant lives thus given for our land;
But on the cause must go,
Amidst joy, or weal, or woe,
Till we've made our isle a nation free and grand.
'God save Ireland!' say we proudly;
'God save Ireland!' say we all;
'Whether on the scaffold high
Or the battle-field we die,
Oh, what matter, when for Erin dear we fall!' "

At the close no one hissed, no one applauded; there was a little buzz of talk through the hall, and Doreen passed swiftly off the platform, to be greeted by astonished questions from her companions. Donati helped her by instantly going on for his next song; and soon the audience, which had been thrilled and horrified by the graphic description of a shameful scene for which, as a nation, they had as yet felt no regret, were listening to the very different refrain of Gounod's "Nazareth,"—

"Lo, the Lord of heaven hath to mortals given
Life for evermore."

Doreen drank in every phrase of the song with relief and delight; but afterwards, while Madame Gauthier, the pianist, was playing, the low-toned discussion upon Irish rights waxed hot, and Stainforth, who had never quite forgiven her plain speaking in the autumn at Hastings, said many scathing things.

"Never mind," said Donati, when the welcome call for the violin player had come. "Out of brave suffering springs deliverance. Did you ever hear how the oppressed peasants in Japan won their rights? There was a brave peasant,

named Sogoro, in the seventeenth century; and he, seeing how the land agents tyrannized over the people, and how all petitions were disregarded, volunteered to place an appeal actually in the hands of the Tycoon himself as he passed in state along the road. For thus disturbing royalty, he was handed over to his own feudal lord,—the very man against whom he had petitioned. And this tyrant caused Sogoro and his wife to be crucified, and all their children to be beheaded. But the work was done. The Tycoon had received the petition; the wrongs of the peasantry were revealed, and the government redressed them."

Meanwhile Max impatiently awaited Doreen's final appearance. She was to sing Gounod's "Barcarola" with Donati, and he longed hungrily for one more sight of her. He knew her far too well to imagine that she had been indifferent to her reception. He was perfectly well aware that to face again the audience that had insulted her would be no easy matter for one of her temperament. When, by and bye, he watched Donati leading her on to the platform, with his chivalrous air, and talking to her as though intent on keeping in check all memory of what had gone before, he felt a pang of envy, and a sudden, swift perception that the Italian was worthy to stand beside her in this difficult moment, and that he himself was wholly unworthy. Fortunately the audience had the good sense to appreciate the lovely duet, and to realize that there was something particularly sympathetic in the blending of the two beautiful voices. For days after Max was haunted by the phrase,—

> "Safe o'er the waters gliding,
> Come, love, and sail with me."

And always he could hear Doreen's prayer for Ireland, and could see the spiritual beauty of her face as she confronted that hostile audience. More than once it gave "the battle to his hands," and through the days that followed, he painfully struggled up once more, until he had made good his standing-place.

CHAPTER XL.

"We owe allegiance to the State; but deeper, truer, more,
To the sympathies that God hath set within our spirit's core;
Our country claims our fealty; we grant it so, but then,
Before man made us citizens, great Nature made us men.

"He's true to God who's true to man; wherever wrong is done,
To the humblest and the weakest, 'neath the all-beholding sun,
That wrong is also done to us; and they are slaves most base,
Whose love of right is for themselves, and not for all their race." —LOWELL.

Doreen awoke on the following morning to find herself alarmingly hoarse; to fulfil her engagements was out of the question. Indeed, Brian Osmond condemned her to three days of absolute silence. "One might almost as well be in prison again," she wrote on her slate. "It's by far the worst punishment you could devise for a talkative Irishwoman!"

Her doctor was more anxious about her than she realized, and devised every means he could think of to divert her mind and build up once more her failing strength. It was owing to a word from him that Mrs. Farrant called and persuaded her to go for a daily drive with her; and one morning, early in the following week, there came a little note which greatly delighted Doreen. It ran as follows:—

"DEAR MISS O'RYAN,—My husband has managed to get an order for the Speaker's ladies' gallery for to-night. Will you come with me? It would be a great pleasure to have you. "Yours very sincerely,
"GLADYS FARRANT."

There could, of course, be only one reply to such a proposal; for Doreen liked nothing better than to hear a debate. She was eager to go, and Mrs. Garth was glad to see her cheered by anything, and knew that Brian Osmond would approve. Though allowed now to talk once more, her voice was still uncertain and troublesome, and the great authority on throats, to whom she had repaired, had forbidden her to sing for another ten days. The time hung heavily on her hands, and it was a great relief to be with such a delightful companion as Mrs. Farrant, and to be taken into an entirely different world,—the world, moreover, in which Max Hereford had just taken his place. Their order gave them one front seat and one back, and Gladys Farrant, who had more opportunities of visiting the House, insisted that she should have the best place.

A remarkably dull speech was in progress, and the members were gradually reassembling after the dinner-hour. Looking down through the lattice-work, Doreen recognized many familiar faces. There, just below, was the Prime Minister, who had talked so kindly to her when in her distress she had gone to him on that autumn Sunday. Over on the Irish benches she could see Fitzhugh's calm, inscrutable face, and O'Carroll, looking very wan and weary, evidently still suffering from the effects of his imprisonment, and Dennis McMurtrie, with his air of gentle dignity, and a host of others well known to her,—some of them past masters in the mysteries of obstruction and interruption. On the Liberal benches, below the gangway, she could discern Donovan Farrant's fine profile, but she looked in vain for Max Hereford. The House had gone into committee on the Coercion Bill, and Fitzhugh was moving an amendment, when Doreen became suddenly aware that Max had just entered the door. She saw him bow to the Chair and quietly walk to the vacant place beside the member for Greyshot; and, watching him long and closely, she was satisfied that he was in a very different mood to-night; that since she had last seen him he had lived to good purpose. For Max had one of those faces which are curiously dependent on expression, and she had known and loved him for so many years that she understood what was passing in his mind almost as a mother can understand the heart of her child.

The strenuous resistance made by the Irish members to the Coercion Bill met with scant sympathy from the House, but among the very few English voices raised for Ireland was Donovan Farrant's. His brief, forceful speech made him many enemies, and was vehemently attacked by the next speaker; but Doreen blessed him in her heart, and a hope rose within her that Max, too, would follow in his steps. She thought it just possible that he would vote for the amendment, but she had not expected him to speak. Her breath came hard and fast when she saw him rise, for she knew that it was his maiden speech. Was it possible that he would espouse a cause so unpopular?—that he would, for love of Ireland, separate himself not only from his own party, but from almost all his countrymen?

With hands fast locked together, with rapt attention and exquisite content, she listened to the musical, finely modulated voice, speaking in favour of Fitzhugh's amendment, heeding neither Tory interruptions, nor the vehement contradictions of his own party; but, with a masterly self-control, avoiding flights of rhetoric, and throwing the whole force of his being into an appeal for justice and generosity to Ireland. The speech was quite a short one; but it had made its mark. And Max,

now that he had crossed the Rubicon, felt a different man. True, his private life was difficult and involved, and as yet he could see no right way out of the maze in which he had so long wandered; but his public life lay clearly before him. He had chosen a rough road, and his spirit rose to face the difficulties of the way.

For some minutes Doreen enjoyed the most perfect happiness she had known for months. She recognized once more that quality which had long ago drawn her to Max,—his great power of dwelling on the things that make for unity and concord, his capacity for seeing good in those of another race. Instead of gloating over evil, and carefully searching for points of disagreement, he seemed to throw out into strong relief all that was noble and worthy of praise. She realized, once more, how great her ambition was for him,—how strong was her hope that he would indeed prove himself the strenuous, great-hearted worker of her early dreams. But suddenly a whispered conversation, just behind her, came to paralyze all her springs of joy.

"How angry General Hereford will be," said the voice. "Oh, did you not know about it? The member for Firdale is his nephew, and is engaged to Miriam. The General told your father so the other day. It is to be announced almost directly. They were engaged at Biarritz. Miriam will have to convert him from his Radical views, or the marriage will be a failure."

For a minute or two Doreen sat motionless, feeling as though some one had struck her on the head and had numbed all her faculties. In a confused way she looked down on the busy pencils of the reporters, just visible in the press gallery below, and on the members; but it was in vain that she tried to see Max. He had vanished. She was almost inclined to think that his whole speech had been but a dream, and that she had wakened just in time to hear that dreadful whisper behind her. Yet they had spoken of his Radical views, had said that the marriage would be a failure,—his marriage with Miriam! At that intolerable thought she felt that she could endure her present surroundings no longer; that gilded cage, with its low ceiling and dark wooden walls, and dazzling, spotted carpet, and stifling atmosphere, was insufferable. She rose to go, and breathed more freely when they were outside. Gladys Farrant had also heard the whispered conversation; but she dared not allude to it. She spoke instead of the great heat of the place.

"We will come home," she said. "I will just leave a message for my husband, as he spoke of fetching us. It is already very late, and I fear it is not much good waiting to hear the result of the division. That bore, too, who is speaking now, will probably talk for the next half hour."

"I am so sorry to take you away," said Doreen, wrapping her red cloak about her, as they reached the head of the staircase. Then suddenly she caught at the balustrade, for, coming up the steps, she perceived Max Hereford.

He greeted Mrs. Farrant cheerfully, saying that he was on his way to look after some friends of Lady Rachel's in the ladies' gallery; then suddenly he perceived Doreen, and flushed painfully. She quickly regained her composure at sight of his embarrassment, however, and with eager desire to help him over this painful meeting, held out her hand, and smiled.

"Thank you in Ireland's name for your speech," she said.

"I fear it will do no good; this bill is certain to pass," said Max, recovering himself, and insisting on going down with them and putting them into a hansom.

"If it were not for the misery and evil wrought by these incessant Coercion Acts, one would be inclined to laugh at the euphonious names they give them," said Doreen, still talking with an eager animation which Mrs. Farrant understood, and could not but admire. "When they dub them the 'Protection of Property Act,' and the 'Prevention of Crime Act,' it always makes me think of the story of the tourist in Ireland, who was surprised to find incessant entries in his bill under the head of 'Refreshment for the horse'; on asking what it meant, the driver replied: 'Sure thin, yer honour, that's just the whip-cord.'"

There was a general laugh at this, and Mrs. Farrant kept the conversation going briskly afterwards, to the relief of her two companions. When, at length, the strain was over, and Doreen could lie back with closed eyes in the hansom, all the misery of recollection rushed back upon her with renewed force. Yet her vigorous young life would not, even now, wholly yield; and she wrestled with that strong craving for the mere peace of death which comes to most people in any very acute pain. The horse-hoofs seemed to beat out upon the road the refrain of a song which she had sung in many a hospital ward:—

"Not so, not so, no load of woe

Need bring despairing frown;
For while we bear it we can bear,
Past that we lay it down."

"At least my professional life is left to me," she said to herself bravely. "All is not lost!"

Two days after this, a somewhat animated discussion took place between General Hereford and his daughter. Miriam had come in late for lunch, looking much annoyed.

"I do wish, papa," she said querulously, "that you would not announce my engagement to people. I find that the Tresidders know all about it."

"Well, yes; I certainly did tell Sir John," said the General. "But what does it matter, my dear? It is to be generally announced in a few days."

"It matters very much indeed," said Miriam. "Mabel Tresidder was in the ladies' gallery with her mother on the night Max spoke, and it seemed that they mentioned the engagement; and just afterwards, to their horror, they found that Doreen O'Ryan was sitting exactly in front of them, and must have heard every word. I wouldn't have had that happen for the world."

"Is that all?" said the General, composedly. "Then, my dear, you really need not disturb yourself. Depend upon it, a public character like Miss O'Ryan is well able to take care of herself. I never did like the girl; the way in which she allowed those two boys to be brought up in popery, and the audacious way in which she used to declare that the teachings of the Church of Rome suited the Irish nation, just showed what an unfit person she was for your cousin."

Miriam smiled.

"She had no choice about the education of Michael and Dermot; it was arranged, at the time of her parents' marriage, that the boys should be brought up in their father's belief, and the girls in their mother's. As to the other matter, we certainly have failed to gain the Irish, as a nation, to our views; and they are just as devout Catholics as the people in the Tyrol you used to admire so much."

"My dear Miriam," pleaded Lady Rachel, "pray do not introduce these controversial topics. Nothing shows such bad taste. And, by the bye, my dear, did you ask Max about the diamonds? He may have sent them to the bank, you know; and I really should like you to wear the Hereford diamonds next week at the State ball. I am sure he wouldn't mind. I shall speak to him myself."

"Oh, Max won't mind," said Miriam, easily. "If you like, mamma, we might just drive round there and catch him before he goes to the House."

The great drawing-room in Grosvenor Square, which had been so pretty in Mrs. Hereford's lifetime, seemed now somewhat bare and desolate. Max came in to receive them, looking, they thought, tired and worried. But he responded with cheerful alacrity to his aunt's prettily worded request for the Hereford diamonds, and went off at once in search of them.

"They are probably in the safe," he reflected, going down to the library. "Ah, yes; now I remember," he thought, with a swift pang. "Doreen had them, and she sent them back that day last July when I was just starting for Manchester."

He took out his keys, unlocked the skilfully concealed iron door, and lifted out the old despatch box in which he now remembered putting the unopened packet. There it lay, in the place where he had so hastily thrust it. He cut the string, and unfolded the paper; out rolled a packet of his own letters. He pushed them aside, and removed two or three cases which he knew contained the bracelets and the betrothal ring which he had given to Doreen. Below these was the large, brown morocco case containing the Hereford diamonds, and on the top of the case lay a letter directed to him in the familiar handwriting. He gave a stifled cry of surprise and consternation. Then, with a fast-throbbing heart, he tore open the envelope, and eagerly read that letter which it had cost her so much to write.

"What a fool—what a brute I must have been to doubt the woman who could write that!" he thought to himself. "And, oh God! all this time she has been thinking that I have read her words! She thought it when we met that day in the train, and again last Monday in the House. Doreen! Doreen! No fiend could have made you suffer more horribly!"

He sprang to his feet and paced to and fro in terrible agitation; great beads of perspiration stood on his brow. The more he thought, the more desperate he became; for, with all its restraint and dignity, the letter made no attempt to disguise the truth that Doreen loved him and must always love him, and his heart passionately echoed her words—"We still belong to each other."

What was to be done? What could be done? Oh, for one word of advice from his mother, or from some one he could trust, to show him what honour now required of him. The one intolerable thought was that, before he had seen his way clearly through the perplexities, into which a mere act of carelessness had plunged him, he should be called on to talk to Lady Rachel and Miriam.

Thrusting Doreen's letter into his pocket, and sweeping back into the despatch box all, save the case containing the diamonds, he sharply rang the bell, and ordered the man to call a hansom.

The old family servant looked anxiously at his master's pale, agitated face when he returned to announce that the cab was at the door; but he made no comment, and with a perfectly unmoved countenance received the morocco case which was put into his hand.

"Take this to Miss Hereford in the drawing-room," said Max, "and apologize to Lady Rachel for me. Say that I was unexpectedly called away."

He drove down to the House, and had the good fortune to come across Donovan Farrant, the one man to whom he felt that he could appeal in his perplexity.

"I want a few words with you," he said, when at length he had realized that he must make his opportunity, and that it would not fall as it were at his very feet. "Will you just take a turn on the terrace with me?"

The terrace was deserted, for although it was June, the air from the river was cold and the day uninviting. There was a certain grim look about the darkly flowing river and the broad, deserted walk and the frowning walls of the great building, which seemed to Max in harmony with his own feelings.

"You and Mrs. Farrant," he began quickly, "know all the facts about my betrothal with Miss O'Ryan and its sudden ending. I want you now to tell me what you would think right if you were in my case." He then told his companion as briefly as possible the exact state of affairs.

"I would certainly tell Miss Hereford the truth. She has a right to know it," said Donovan Farrant. "Strangely enough the report of your engagement to her has already leaked out. It was mentioned in the ladies' gallery on the night you spoke, and my wife and Miss O'Ryan overheard all that was said."

Max made an ejaculation of despair. It seemed to him that at every turn he was confronted by fresh evidence of the suffering he had caused Doreen. "Say no more!" he said hastily; "here is Everest bearing down upon us."

And truly enough, the member for Mardentown paused to accost them, having also apparently the full intention of getting an answer to a question.

"You both of you know Miss O'Ryan," he said. "I wish you would tell me if there's any truth in this report of her illness that I've just heard."

"I understand," said Donovan Farrant, feeling sorry for Max, "that they have been anxious about her ever since the shock she received in hearing of the Irish tragedy. Do you know her at all?"

"Well, I can hardly say I know her," said the member for Mardentown; "but last winter, when the Chief Secretary—as he then was—had been speaking to my constituents, she actually came to the house, just as he was leaving, to warn him that, lying in wait for him at the station, were two men she recognized as his avowed enemies, and she implored him to avoid the risk and to go to London by the other line. He was at last persuaded to consent to the change of plans, and I believe there is good reason to know that it is not the only time he had a very narrow escape. They say he was much pained by the news of her arrest, but his rigid rule not to interfere with the decision of the magistrates kept him from releasing her. She must be a brave woman, and I shan't forget how she pleaded with him that day to take the precautions which he detested. His policy must have been hateful to her, but she was too noble-minded to wish a hair of his head to be touched. I believe, too, he had once given her an interview, and had, in consequence of something she told him, released

one of the suspects. He said something to that effect to me at Mardentown, when we were speaking of her, but he gave no details."

Max, with a sickening sense that here was another revelation that reproached and tortured him almost beyond bearing, muttered an excuse and left his two companions. Should he try to find out fuller details of all that Doreen had done for him? Should he speak to the retired Chief Secretary? That was for the time, at any rate, impossible, since the overworked and overwearied statesman had just gone abroad for a holiday. He was slowly making his way up the stairs when he was accosted by one of the messengers, who handed him a card, on which was written the name "Mrs. Claude Magnay." And instantly leaping to the conclusion that his cousin's wife was bringing him news of Doreen's illness, he hastened to St. Stephen's Hall, and for the first time, standing between the two policemen, heard his name shouted out to the waiting crowd in stentorian tones. Then, to his surprise, up the long double line of people awaiting members, there walked, not only Espérance Magnay, but Miriam.

"I have been entrapped into chaperoning Miriam," said Espérance, gaily, as he took them a little aside. "You need not be afraid. I am not coming to waste your time; but they happened to find me on the steps at Wilton Crescent, and Miriam whirled me off in the carriage whether I would or not."

"Look, Max!" said Miriam, eagerly. "Here is a note which arrived for you just after you had left home. Mamma and I were crossing the hall, when up came a porter from St. Thomas' Hospital with this letter for you. It is from one of the patients, who urgently wishes to see you. The man said he is not likely to live long."

"Who can it be?" said Max. "I don't know any one at St. Thomas'."

"Don't you recognize the writing?" said Miriam, in a tone of astonished impatience. "Why, it is from your old tutor, Mr. Desmond, unless my eyes have much deceived me."

With a stifled ejaculation of surprise, Max tore open the envelope and read the following lines:—

"DEAR MAX:—I telegraphed this morning to ask Miss O'Ryan to come and see me, but her brother sent a reply that she was too ill, and that they had not even given her my message. Will you come? There is much that I want to say to you. I have had a bad accident, and the time left is short.

"Yours very truly,

"J. D."

"You are right," said Max, handing her the note, and observing that as she read the words her colour changed. "I must go to him at once. Thank you for bringing me this. I would not for the world have received it too late."

"I must come with you," said Miriam, resolutely.

He gave her a startled glance; but something in her face kept him from remonstrating. He remembered that in the old days his tutor had loved Miriam. Was that love, even now, returned?

CHAPTER XLI.

"Love was playing hide and seek,
And we deemed that he was gone;
Tears were on my withered cheek
For the setting of our sun;
Dark it was around, above,
But he came again, my love!

"And our melancholy frost
Woke to radiance in his rays,
Who wore the look of one we lost
In the far-away dim days;
No prayer, he sighed, the dead may move,
Yet he came again, my love!"—THE HON. RODEN NOEL.

Espérance, with her usual tact, declared that she must go home by the Metropolitan, and laughingly protested that when once they were out of the sacred precincts of the House, Miriam would no more require her services as chaperon. And so it happened that, quite alone, the two cousins drove to St. Thomas', and were ushered through long corridors, and up a broad staircase to the Albert ward. On the landing they were received by one of the sisters, who explained to them that as Desmond was particularly anxious to receive a private visit, she had had him moved into the small ward where they could interview him without interruption. Max asked a few questions as to the nature of his friend's accident, and they learnt that some days before he had been severely burnt; that bad symptoms had now set in; and that recovery was very improbable. They were advised not to allow him to talk very long. And then, without further delay, the sister took them into the presence of the dying man, whose face lighted up with astonishment and pleasure at the sight of Miriam.

"It is good of you to come," he said, his eager, dark eyes devouring her face. "But you will see now how truly I told you that we were hopelessly separated. You did not take my advice, though?"

He glanced from one to the other.

"No," said Miriam, steadily; "there are people who still imagine that Max and I shall one day be married, but it is not true. We have never cared for each other. I have never really loved any man but you; and Max has, I believe, been all the time faithful to Doreen."

Max sat beside the bed, absolutely silent, stabbed to the heart by those last words. Had he not, rather, been absolutely faithless? Had not she herself reproached him with having believed of her what no other man would have believed?

"Doreen was a brave child," said Desmond, "and she has proved herself a brave woman. She risked much for love of you last summer. I hardly thought what I was asking of her. I knew that Foxell's widow and that scamp of a Frenchman had spies at work, and that you stood in danger of disgrace and exposure. I dreaded lest you should be hampered by that oath which you took in your boyhood, and which I well knew you would never break; but I dared not see you or communicate with you. Doreen will explain to you more fully than I can all that passed between us. For I sent for her one night, and, knowing that it was for your sake, she never heeded the strange time or the disreputable place, but risked all and came."

"It was you she went to see?" cried Max, in terrible agitation. "Yes, yes, I see it all now—miserable fool that I was to doubt her!"

He buried his face in his hands, and groaned so bitterly that, to Miriam, the truth was instantly revealed. This, undoubtedly, must have been the cause of the abrupt ending of his betrothal with Doreen.

"Max," she said quietly, "don't be so miserable about it. There is time for you to set matters right."

But Max, with a wild look in his eyes, turned fiercely upon Desmond.

"Why, in heaven's name, did you not risk sending for me, rather than expose the woman I loved to such an ordeal? What do I care for any exposure in comparison with the suffering—the torture—you have brought to her? And your plan was all a miserable failure. It did no good—no good whatever!"

"There you are mistaken," said Desmond. "Had not Doreen received my permission to reveal the truth about Foxell's

death to the authorities if ever you found yourself in difficulties, you would, very probably, have been at this moment in Kilmainham."

"And do you think," said Max, desperately, "that I would not rather be in Kilmainham than in this hell of pain and remorse? But I am wrong—you meant well by us—you tried to help; it was my own hateful distrust that wrought all the harm."

"I do not understand," said Miriam, her beautiful face curiously softened and altered by all that she had passed through in the last hour. "What could you reveal about Mr. Foxell's death?"

And then, very briefly, the dying man told her all that had passed on that day long ago at Lough Lee, and how it had seemed impossible to own the truth at the time; how his very love for her had led him to keep silence. He told, too, how, after his recovery, the wrongs of Ireland had incessantly preyed upon his mind; how it had seemed to him that the slowly moved English would never yield to mere constitutional agitation, and that by violent means only could the cause be furthered. He told them of Doreen's horror when she had learned that he was a dynamiter; how she had implored him to give up a mode of working which she thought fatal to her country's cause, and how he had made her realize that to be in any way connected with him would be fatal to her lover's political career.

"Had she been able to come to-day, I should not have sent for you, even now," he added, turning to Max. "But no one here is aware that the police are seeking for me, and they do not know the exact cause of my accident. It will never transpire, and I am not going to burden you with another secret. That much will die with me presently. But lest there should ever be any further trouble with regard to the other affair, I have written here a confession of my share in the Lough Lee disaster. The sister and the nurse thought they were witnessing my will when they signed it; but here it is; I give it to your keeping, and you can do what you deem right with it. I shall soon be beyond their reach. As you say, I have miserably failed, and I have made shipwreck of my own life. It may be that, after all, Doreen was right, and that Ireland will be saved, not by violence, but by the constitutional agitation which your incessant Coercion Acts make well-nigh impossible."

They lingered with him, talking quietly on less moving topics for some little while, and then, at the nurse's suggestion, left with a promise to return early the next day. Miriam, as she walked along the wide corridors to the main entrance, felt like one in a dream.

"Only to think," she cried, when once more they were in the brougham, "that all these terrible troubles were surrounding me, and that I knew nothing; but just lived an easy, selfish life! I hardly wonder that the horror of it all has half maddened John Desmond; and, Max, I am glad, yes, glad, that he is dying. It is because I love him that I am glad."

"We must see your father," said Max. "Those were true words that you spoke just now, but we can hardly expect my uncle to understand them."

"I will see to that," said Miriam, "and you need not be afraid that I shall consent to marry Lord Stoughton. When I think of that great hospital, full of suffering and pain, it seems to me that there are other ways in which I may be off my father's hands by the end of the season. I may be unfit perhaps for any very difficult work, but there must be hundreds of ways in which a woman can help, if she is so minded. But it is hateful of me to go talking of my own life and my private plans, when all this long time Doreen has been suffering so dreadfully."

"I want to show you this," said Max, in a low voice. "It will open your eyes to see what she really is, as it opened mine. I found it just now in the safe with the diamonds, where, for eleven months, it has lain unread."

Miriam read Doreen's letter without comment. Then she glanced up at him, her eyes bright with tears.

"Just tell Balcombe to drive to Russell Square, will you?" she said; then, as he obeyed, she gave him back the letter, and added, "I will put you down at the corner, and then drive home."

"Thank you," he said, grateful for her silent sympathy. "I want to inquire how Doreen is."

And through his mind there floated the words which had haunted him all the afternoon, "When you believe in me once more, then come back and let us talk things over quietly." He dared not expect to see her, but he would ask if she were better, and later on he might write and ask her forgiveness.

Taking leave of Miriam, he walked down Bernard Street, his heart sinking terribly when he saw that a doctor's carriage was waiting at Mr. Garth's door. But before he had reached the house, he saw, approaching him, a well-known figure,—pretty little Una Kingston, with her wistful face, and her wavy, golden hair. A pleasant-looking German woman walked beside her and seemed to be comforting her. He caught a few of the kindly German words of consolation, which increased his anxiety.

"Una," he said, pausing in front of her, "do you not remember me?"

The child glanced up at him through her tears, and a wave of passionate indignation swept over her face.

"Go away!" she cried. "I will not speak to you. It is your fault—all your fault!"

"*Mein liebes Kind!*" said the German nurse, remonstratingly; then, in broken English, she explained to Max that her little mistress was in great trouble; that the doctors were very anxious about Miss O'Ryan.

Una, meantime, had recovered herself, and, ashamed of her outburst of temper, caught Max Hereford's hand in hers, and drew him on so that they could talk without being overheard by her nurse.

"I was wrong to be angry," she faltered. "But they think Doreen will not get well, and her voice is gone—quite, quite gone! How can she even wish to go on living?"

She felt her companion stagger as he walked, and, glancing up at him, was frightened to see the ghastly pallor of his face. Her womanly instincts and her childish audacity prompted her instantly to speak out the thought that darted into her mind.

"You still love her; I know you still love her. And then all will be right. She will want to live for you. Oh, go to her now, and don't let her have one minute more of suffering."

Without speaking a word, he pressed her hand, and turned back. On the doorstep he encountered Brian Osmond, who was just leaving the house. He drew himself together, and assuming, for protection, a somewhat frigid manner, inquired how Doreen was. Brian Osmond, for a moment, misunderstood him. The conventional words and tone jarred upon the young doctor, and he responded brusquely, knowing perfectly well that in the hands of this faultlessly mannered, well-appointed, fine-looking man lay the fate of his patient.

"I fear she is not likely to recover," he said; then, as Max, still preserving a ghastly composure, inquired the cause of her illness, he added, curtly, "She is dying of what the world calls a broken heart, and what we doctors call shock to the system."

Then, instantly, he knew that he had been deceived; the conventional tone was merely the armour in which a man of the world learns to encase himself, and it was not proof against the terrible statement he had hurled against it. He had seen many people in moments of exquisite pain, but he had never before witnessed such mental agony as he saw reflected now in the face of Max Hereford. Instinctively he grasped his hand.

"I think," he said, "that much still remains in your power, if you will allow me to speak thus plainly."

Max scarcely heard him, but the grip of the hand reached him, and carried his mind back to Una's hand-clasp and to her eager words: "Oh, go to her now; don't let her have one minute more of suffering."

"Do you think," he asked, "that she would see me? Would it hurt her to talk?"

"No," said Brian Osmond; "it would do her good. You must be prepared to find, though, that she can only speak in a whisper, but it will not do her any harm. What makes us anxious is her utter failure of strength,—she has lost all wish to live. I fancy for the last year nothing but her hopes for Ireland kept her going, and now that reform seems more than ever distant she has suddenly broken down. There is little Mollie watching us from the window. I will beckon to her and she will take you upstairs. Good-bye."

He stepped into his carriage and drove off just as the front door opened, and blue-eyed Mollie, with her radiant face, sprang up to greet Max.

"Oh, Max! Max! is it really you?" she cried gleefully, drawing him into the hall and clinging about his neck. "Doreen will get well now you've come back, I know she will! And do you know ever since she went to prison Bride and me

have had a great secret,—we asked God every morning to send you back to us, and now here you are! Isn't it good of Him to answer just two little children like us that hardly know Him a bit? Max, have I grown too heavy for you to carry upstairs? Why do you sigh so dreadfully?"

He bent his head and kissed her.

"Is she here in the drawing-room?" he said. "You knock at the door."

"Well," said discreet Mollie, "I'll just knock and take you in and then I'll run away; for you know Doreen always did like to have you all alone."

Doreen was lying on the sofa; she did not attempt to get up when Mollie made her astonishing announcement, but into her white face there stole a tinge of colour that seemed only to add to its sadly delicate look.

"I am so glad to see you," she said, summoning up all her courage and talking continuously, because she knew what a shock her toneless whisper would at first give him, and how difficult he would find it to respond. "But I see you have been having hard work in the House, for you look tired out. Mollie, mavourneen, run and ask Hagar for a cup of tea, not just a little small five o'clock one, but a large one,—my bread-and-milk cup,—that's more the size for an overworked M.P."

The little girl ran away, and Max seemed struggling to speak, but could not. Doreen saw how terribly he was agitated and she went on talking.

"You'll find it very hard indeed to keep up a conversation with me," she said, smiling. "People first whisper, and then shout as though I were deaf as well as voiceless. It would be very amusing if one were not so dreadfully tired. But I have not half told you what a delight it was to me to hear you speak for Ireland the other night."

"Doreen!" he said, breaking in passionately, "they tell me that on that very night you heard a rumour that Miriam and I were to be married, and indeed it was her father's great wish. But there never was any true love between us, and all notion of any yielding to the General's wish is over. Miriam understands that I love you; just now at John Desmond's death-bed I think we both of us had much revealed. Long ago I knew that I must have misjudged you, but your letter only reached me to-day; and when in Dublin, after my illness, I was actually starting to come to you, feeling certain that it was only some misunderstanding that had parted us, I was arrested. And then the devil entered into me, and I thought that just by careless talk you had betrayed me and broken your oath, never dreaming that Baptiste had learnt something of the truth, and that my own hasty dismissal—my own vile temper—was at the root of the trouble. When you came to Kilmainham pride kept me from seeing you, though it half killed me to refuse; and so things went on from bad to worse till I lost all heart. Then the news of your arrest came and that drew me back, thank God; and the other night when once more I was wavering your 'God save Ireland' saved me. You made me feel that, like Pilate, I had made two or three efforts to help, and then was about to wash my hands of Irish affairs and give in to the howling wolves who cried out for national revenge. But you saved me from doing that. Had it not been for you, I could never have spoken the other night."

Her star-like eyes rested searchingly, but tenderly, upon him as he spoke.

"Come nearer, Max," she said. "I feel afraid when there is all that space between us. It makes me think of that horrible day last summer when you thought I had been false to you." Her cheeks burned at the mere remembrance.

Choking back a sob in his throat, Max knelt beside her.

"Darling, can you ever forgive me?" he faltered.

"You have kept me eleven months waiting for my answer to that same question," said Doreen, smiling through her tears. "And now I am tired of talking. Let us 'kiss and be friends,' as the children say, when they have quarrelled."

There followed a happy, timeless interval, which, by its sweetness, made up for all the suffering of the past. It was broken at length by Mollie's discreet knock at the door.

"Please open it," said the clear little voice. "My hands are full"; and as Max obeyed, in walked the little girl, as usual talking as fast as her tongue could fly. "I'm sorry it's been so long; I thought the kettle never would boil. Hagar says there's two things you never can hurry up, however much you wish it, and one's boiling kettles, and the other's love. She

says both's bound to come right if only we wait long enough."

They laughed; but when once more alone, Doreen's face grew sad.

"Hagar is a shrewd woman," she said. "But the coming right is not always in this world. Think of Miriam and of Mr. Desmond. He is dying, and all his life has been marred by that one day at Lough Lee. At first, when he told me that he belonged to the dynamite faction, I almost hated him; but since I have had time to think more, and since I have been so very unhappy, I have learned to judge people less harshly. You know, in America, he fell under the influence of one of the most cruelly treated of the Fenians; the man you English kept with his hands chained behind his back, day and night, for a month. I am not exonerating him. There must be discipline in prisons, but that was sheer brutal cruelty, not punishment. There are not many Donal Moores in the world, who come out of penal servitude more noble, more Christ-like, more eager to work for the good of others. There was little enough to complain of in the way you and I were treated during our short imprisonment, yet think how maddening the mere loss of liberty was—how endless the days seemed!"

"I know that the days at Biarritz seemed endless to me," said Max, "when I could learn nothing about you, save wretched little gossiping paragraphs in the papers. I remember one of them said that you were suffering from a severe cold, and that, like St. Martin, you had given your cloak to a beggar. Was that true?"

"It was not to a beggar, but to the poor woman who was evicted while she was dying. I wonder what became of the cloak afterwards! It was the one I had at the Firdale election."

"Did the woman really die?" asked Max.

"Yes; but the priest came just in time—I was so glad of that," said Doreen. "I wondered so in prison what had happened, and only heard afterwards. That was the hardest part,—to be forced to do nothing just when I had witnessed that heart-breaking scene. Oh! if the English electors could only realize the state of things, they would never rest till the hideous wrong was righted. But in some ways, Max, I do think English people are puzzling; they go frantic over the reluctance of Jumbo to get into the van that was to take him to America, and yet their one idea of a remedy for Ireland is to clear the country, to force the Irish to emigrate. I wonder how many of them have seen an emigrant ship, and the bitter grief of those who are torn from their land? I wonder if they understand how terrible it is to live in exile, as we were forced to do?"

Then Max began to weave plans for the future, and to talk of an Irish home, and of the work which together they might share.

"I don't know, after all, whether I ought to let you marry a broken-down vocalist," whispered Doreen, her eyes filling with tears. "You have witched me back to life, Max, for in truth, yesterday, when I plainly saw that the doctors did not expect my voice to return, I prayed that God would let me die. Oh, you'll never know what it was to wake in the morning and to find it gone—absolutely gone like this!"

"And it is my fault," said Max, with a groan.

"No, no!" she said; "I will not let you say that. Many things had led up to it. They say that bad cold which I caught on the day of my arrest started the mischief, and then the frightful shock of hearing the news from Ireland on that dreadful Sunday. If Carlo Donati and his wife had not been here with me, I think I should have died. They were so good! I can never tell you how they helped me. But my voice went for a time that morning, and all through May it was troublesome and uncertain. They think my speaking voice will return in time, you know."

"And they surely cannot tell that you will not be able to sing," said Max; "there must, at least, be room for hope."

"We will hope, darling, but we won't expect," she said; "and I shall like to think that my last song was 'God save Ireland!' and that for once in my life I had the bliss of singing that lovely 'Barcarola' with Carlo Donati. Oh, Max, he and his wife will be so glad to hear that our troubles are at an end! And the Farrants, too, they have been so kind to me!"

"But it is, after all, to little Una that I owe you," said Max. "Who would have dreamt that that shy little girl would have had the courage to speak out so boldly? I should never have dared to ask to see you had it not been for her words. How you have made that child love you, Doreen!"

"Don't put it like that," she said, smiling, as she pressed her face to his. "Say, rather, 'How thankful you ought to be,

Doreen, to have such a wealth of love laid at your feet!' ">

CHAPTER XLII.

"One great fact rises distinctly, star-like, out of all the confusion and passion and heart-burning and heart-uplifting of that memorable day—the fact that a great English minister, the foremost and most famous statesman of his age, has recognized, speaking to an attentive Senate, to an attentive nation, to an attentive world, the right of the Irish people to self-government. That great historic fact is at once the triumph and the justification of an oppressed but an unconquered nationality....With [this] recognition...of the justice of Ireland's appeal, and the righteousness of her cause, the whole aspect of the longest political struggle in history changes. A vast proportion of the English people are henceforward in sympathy with the Irish people. All those who are most closely identified with the cause of progress, the love of liberty, and the interests of civilization are eager to allow to Ireland the right to manage Irish affairs according to Irish ideas. This is a great triumph for Ireland and England alike. England, no less than Ireland, should be eternally grateful to the great statesman who has undone so much evil, who has healed so great a hurt, who has atoned for so much injustice, who has united two hostile nationalities, and has, while freeing Ireland from her unhappy servitude, strengthened the empire which it is his duty to serve."—JUSTIN HUNTLEY MCCARTHY, 1886.

Max had often occasion, in after days, to think of those passionate prayers of his childhood for the return of his mother's canary, which, in a fit of temper, he had let out of its cage. All that the most skilful physicians in London could do to restore Doreen's voice proved useless. The speaking voice returned, it is true, weaker than it had been, and wholly without that ringing tone which had made it such a delight to listen to; but the singing voice, that had entranced thousands, was irrevocably gone, and for the rest of her life Doreen was forced to

"Stand as mute
As one with full, strong music in his heart,
Whose ringers stray upon a shattered lute."

What the loss was to her, none save the members of her own profession and her husband could in the least understand. Perhaps Donal Moore, being made wise through much personal suffering, was able in a measure to guess how sorely such a gift would be missed, and how to the singer the whole world would seem strange and blank.

"'Tis not every patriot who can so clearly see how his own loss is his country's gain," he said to her one day. "You have lost your voice, Doreen, but you have won for Ireland, as no one else could have won, your husband's lifelong devotion."

The words were spoken when he was paying them a visit in their quiet, unostentatious home in County Wicklow. Whenever Max was not kept in London by his parliamentary duties, they lived among those gorse-covered mountains that had been so dear to Doreen in her childhood. And the country people said of them, in the sweet old Irish phrase, that they were "God's own people."

Poor General Hereford had a series of unpleasant shocks. First he had to become accustomed to the idea that Max was not to be his son-in-law after all. Then he had to consent to Miriam's determination to learn something of sick-nursing, and to listen, with indignant astonishment, to her plain avowal that the only man she had ever cared for had been a penniless tutor, who was now dead, and that not for all the riches in the world would she marry her admirer, Lord Stoughton. Lastly, he had the severe trial of seeing Max actually renounce the whole of the Monkton Verney estate. All in a minute, as it seemed to the irate old man, this quixotic nephew of his decided that, although the land had been bought by his own father, it had belonged originally to God, and he gave it back now for the use of God's poor. The scheme for using the old ruins fell through, much to Claude Magnay's satisfaction. That part of the land lay low, and was near the lake. So the ruined Priory remained to gladden the eyes of the artistic. But the large, modern house, with all its comfortable arrangements, was admirably adapted to the somewhat unconventional Convalescent Home and shelter for the destitute, which Max Hereford devoted it to. An old friend of Carlo Donati's, Miss Claremont, undertook the management of the place; and the General found one sweet drop in his cup of bitterness; for Miriam was the nominal head of the house, and so, after all, was fated to be mistress of Monkton Verney.

"I am the first prioress," she said gaily, when, one April Saturday, Max and Doreen and several friends had come down from London to take part in some special festivity. "There were priors in former days, but the old order changes, and now, as every one knows, women are to have their turn. Monkton Verney leads the van."

She made a very charming prioress, and Claude Magnay and his wife agreed that Miriam had found her vocation.

"She would never have done as a regular sister in those frightful black clothes," said Espérance, smiling. "But in every-day dress, and with such a fellow-worker as Miss Claremont, and in an easy Convalescent Home like this, where they

have few rules and regulations, Miriam is quite in her element and ever so much happier than she was in her London life."

"I am glad the Worthingtons could come to-day," said Claude. "To tell the truth, I was a little afraid that, in the present burning stage of the Home-Rule question, Lady Worthington might have refused; but she is too genuinely fond of them. Why, just look; there she is walking most amicably with Donal Moore! Do you think he is talking politics? Yes; listen!"

"But," pleaded the Kelt, in his winning voice, "the land restoration of which you approve in a special instance like this is very much what we Land Leaguers have been striving for in Ireland."

"And you would ruin the present landlords," said Lady Worthington; "would drive them out of the country."

"Not at all," said Donal Moore, eagerly. "Let them remain by all means, if they wish to do so. They would not be ruined. They would be bought out; the compensation would be ample. All we want is that, as in the old days, the land should belong to the Irish people. Then, the State having put as low a rent as possible on agricultural land, cultivation would be encouraged, and the people, instead of being forced, as they are now in Ireland, to starve or to emigrate (with you here in England they have to starve or crowd into the manufacturing towns), would use the land, as God meant it to be used, for the application of labour, not as something out of which rent must be extracted to support an idle landlord."

"Do you think Lady Worthington will ever come round to anything that involves a radical change in the Land Laws, even one that included the compensation of the present owners?" said Espérance. "I have tried often to make her see how well our French system works."

"I don't know," said Claude Magnay; "but if any one can persuade the English, I think it will be Donal Moore; for a man more absolutely true and good I never met. Do you notice, by the bye, how every one calls him by his Christian name? Like Charles Lamb, there's something lovable about him that makes it a necessity."

Meantime, among the gray old ruins, Max and his wife lingered, talking happily of the dawn that had come to cheer the hearts of all who loved Ireland. At their feet, intent on picking daisies, was a baby girl of two and a half, in whose sunny face it was easy to see the father's colouring, and the mother's Irish blue eyes.

"This is what we should call 'a pet day' in Ireland," said Doreen, looking at the clear, blue sky, and at the fleecy, white clouds, and at the budding trees, lightly stirred by the soft air. "How glad I am that we can see this dear old place at its best. It reminds me of that day ten years ago, when we came here to escape from General Hereford,—that time, you know, when we were not even exactly engaged."

"The very day that I lost my temper and dismissed Baptiste," said Max. "If you could have foreseen all the trouble I should bring you, darling, I am afraid you would never have held out that hope to me on Rooksbury."

"Should I not?" said Doreen, with a little tender caress. "Is that all you know about it, asthore? Listen, there is baby singing to her daisies! What a clear little voice she has. I can't say much for her musical taste, though; she seldom treats us to anything more classical than 'Wait till the clouds roll by.'"

"Well, that's the best popular song we have had for some time," said Max; and, indeed, the pathetic air sounded pretty enough, as the baby voice chanted it, specially when Mollie and Bride, the two youthful little aunts, joined in the chorus. It was a pretty sight, too, to watch the children as they played in the ivy-covered ruins, and Doreen's sweet face had a look of rest and serenity which had been absent from the face of the girl Doreen, who, ten years ago, had talked with her lover in that same sheltered nook.

"My ears are still ringing," she said, "with the wonderful words we listened to last Thursday. You can't think what it was, Max, to sit in that same gallery where I had once suffered so horribly, and to hear the Prime Minister pleading for justice for Ireland. We ought to be better all our lives just for hearing that noble speech."

"Yes," said Max, thoughtfully. "It is something to have lived for. The nineteenth century has witnessed no greater scene; it was the recognition by the noblest of living statesmen that God will not permit England to oppress and drive out a nation, and then to plead expediency; it was the public recognition that the Irish have the right to make their own laws. It was very proper that my Day Star was looking down on it all," he added, stooping to kiss her.

"It feels to-day as if already the clouds had rolled by," said Doreen. "One can bear to think of Irish wrongs, because now

they must soon be righted."

"The hopelessness is gone," said Max; "but before Home Rule is won there is a very bitter struggle still before us, darling. Depend upon it, hatred, malice, slander, and prejudice will do their very worst. Our leader will not, just at first, find the majority of Englishmen as brave, as open-minded, as disinterested as himself. Pope says a man should never be ashamed to own that he has been in the wrong, which is but saying that he is wiser to-day than he was yesterday; but it takes a great mind to do it, and most of us have narrow minds."

"I know," said Doreen, "that the battle is not yet over, and that there will be a great call for patience and for suppression of our Irish party differences, for the sake of the great national question. But since the Prime Minister spoke last Thursday, it has ceased to be a question of the Irish against the English; we are joined now with all true lovers of freedom and justice; and, as Donal Moore is always saying, we are really furthering the cause of the oppressed of Great Britain, as well as the oppressed of Ireland. Sometimes I think, Max, that history is going to repeat itself, and that Ireland is to be rewarded for all her centuries of suffering by being allowed once more to be the missionary nation, and to carry the good tidings to other countries—the tidings that the rich are no longer to live in idleness on the toil of the poor, the good news that the earth is the Lord's and not the landlord's."

"Do you see that Michael and Una are beginning to find that Monkton Verney is enchanted ground?" said Max, with a smile, as through the broken archway they caught a glimpse of the young engineer and the pretty violinist, who, at seventeen, seemed to be winning the happiness of which she had known so little as a child.

"It is no surprise to me," said Doreen. "And I have given Michael no end of elder-sisterly advice. He is going to follow my line, and not to think of any engagement as yet. But I can't see why they should not have the comfort of understanding each other, and of writing. Michael quite agrees that they ought not to marry yet awhile."

"And what about the difference in their religious opinions?"

"Well, that can't be helped," said Doreen. "Theoretically mixed marriages are a mistake; but perhaps I, who have seen the perfect happiness of a father and mother, who, like these two, differed on many important points, do not think it so very great an objection. Differences are against one's ideal; but there's something better than uniformity—there's the unity that comes from Christ's spirit of love in our hearts, and it's given to Catholics and to Protestants alike if they follow Him."

"You are quite right, darling," said Max, a thoughtful look lighting up his face, which in the last few years had gained so much in strength and manliness. "It is not by fierce denunciations of other folks' religious views, or by selfish fear lest Ireland should retaliate for our past persecutions, that we follow Christ or help His cause. The only things He ever did denounce were hypocrisy, indifference, and oppression. Here comes Dermot with his notebook."

"I want to know what is the real true name of this Convalescent Home," said the family journalist, who, at the age of fifteen, had the proud privilege of styling himself "London correspondent to the 'Glenbride Examiner.'" "I can't get any sense at all out of Miss Hereford. She will only declare that I must put her in print as the first prioress, and she protests that the Home resembles nothing so much as the Cave of Adullam."

Max and his wife laughed.

"People can call it whatever they please," said Doreen, with a mischievous look in her blue eyes. "The prioress may call it the 'Cave of Adullam,' and the General, I am told, calls it 'Hereford's Folly,' but Max and I have a particular name of our own for it that we keep for our private use, and I shan't tell it even to you, dear boy, though you are the very nicest, as well as the youngest, representative of the press I ever saw. You can mention instead, if you like, that the infant daughter of the member for Firdale presented floral offerings, all round, with delightful impartiality, to people of every nationality and every shade of opinion."

"And that she wound up," said Dermot, lifting the little maid on to his shoulder, till her grannie bonnet towered above the heads of all present, "by proving herself a true descendant of the O'Ryans, and giving three cheers for Ireland. Come, baby! Show them that you have voice enough to fill the Albert Hall!

" 'Here's loved old Ireland,
Good old Ireland,
Ireland, boys, hurrah!' "

THE END.

FOOTNOTES:

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Transcriber's Note:

1. page 152—deleted comma after 'Beriot's'
2. page 171—removed surplus quote mark at end of paragraph '...to Mrs.Hereford.'
3. page 178—changed 'Herz blättchen' to 'Herzblättchen'
4. page 246—superfluous double quote mark removed at start of verse
5. page 295—missing double quote mark added at end of letter
6. page 383—final quote on paragraph '...'Hearts of Oak' for an encore?' changed to a double quote mark
7. page 509—word 'humerous' corrected to 'humourous' in sentence '...tragic, pathetic, humerous by turns,...'

[End of *Doreen. The Story of a Singer* by Edna Lyall]