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# ONLY AN IRISH GIRL

BY

THE DUCHESS

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ONLY AN IRISH GIRL.

CHAPTER I.

"And was it only a dream, Aileen?"

"Only a dream, miss, but it consarned me greatly. Shure an' I never had the taste of a sweet sound sleep since I dramed it!"

Honor Blake laughs, and passes her slim hand over the old woman's ruddy tanned cheek.

"You dear silly old thing to bother your head about a dream! It will be time enough to fret when we've something real to fret about."

"Ah, mavourneen, may yez never see that day!" nurse Walsh murmurs with passionate fondness, as she takes the girl's hand between her own broad palms and presses and fondles it. "Shure it's like yesterday—I mind it so well—that yer mother, as she lay dying beyant there, in her big grand bedroom at Donaghmore, said to me, as I stood beside her with you, a wee thing, in my arms, 'Ye'll be a mother to my little one, Aileen, and guard her from all harm, as I would have done.' And I knelt down then and there, and took my solemn oath; and from that day to this it's the wan bit of sunshine in a cloudy world ye've been to me, alanna!"

Tears come into the girl's eyes. There is a sad feeling in her heart this evening, as she stands in the little cottage, and looks across the bog at the long fields of corn beyond the river; and at this mention of her dead mother—the fragile mother whom she has never seen—the feeling grows into passionate pain and longing.

"He's a mighty fine gintleman and a man of manes—I'm not denying it, darlint—but he's not the man for you. Take an old woman's advice, mavourneen! He's black of face and of heart. He's come of a race that ground the poor and raised the rints, and sent poor mothers and old men and babies on to the highway to die of hunger and cold and heart-wretchedness!"

"But Power has done none of these things," the girl says warmly.

"His father and his father's father have done them; and haven't we the word of the Holy Book for it—the sins of the fathers shall be visited on the children to the fourth generation?"

Honor shudders, and her pretty color fades. Is she thinking of the sins of the dead-and-gone Blakes, some of which she may yet have to suffer for?

"I must go now, Aileen; the boys will be home by this time. And when I bring this fine Englishman to see you—he is only half an Englishman after all, for his mother was one of the Blakes of Derry—you'll give him a welcome?"

"That I will, asthore, though it's little the welcome of an old woman will be to him while he has your swate face to look on."

The girl laughs and gathers her fur cape about her as she steps out on to the bog road, for a keen wind blows from the mountains. As she turns to leave the cottage, a man, who has been smoking in the shelter of one of the heaps of turf, straightens himself and walks after her. His steps fall noiselessly on the peaty soil; but some instinct makes Honor turn her head, and at sight of him her face flushes.

"Ah, what brings you here, Power? I thought you were away at Drum with Launce?"

"I went part of the way but turned back. Sure they'd nothing better to do! I had!"

"And have you done it?" the girl asks shyly.

"I am doing it now," he says, with a smile.

She does not answer him in words, but her eyes are filled with a sudden glow and sweetness.

"You will find your visitor at Donaghmore," he tells her, as they walk together across the yielding bog; "I met him at Garrick Station, and drove him over. Your father could not go, as he had to run off at the last minute to take the deposition of poor Rooney, who is dying, I'm afraid. The Englishman seemed to think nothing of it, when I told him how the poor fellow had been badly hurt in a fight. He evidently imagines it is the custom for one man to shoot another every week or so in the ordinary Irish village."

"Oh, Power, don't talk like that!" the girl says. "Sure, we all know these dreadful things occur only too often. Don't let us talk about them at all. Tell me what he is like."

"Like an ordinary mortal! He is gray as to his clothes, a trifle pasty as to his complexion, and more than a trifle fine in his manners. But you'll get on with him all right—girls like mashers."

"You know that I hate that word, Power! Why will you use it?"

"Because it describes your cousin to a nicety."

"Goodness! A masher!" the girl cries in dismay. "How will such a creature live at Donaghmore? He should have gone to Aunt Julia's in Dublin—he would have felt at home there."

Whereat they both laugh, natural hearty laughter that dies away in musical echoes.

Aunt Julia is one of the bugbears of the Blake family, her gentility and general fineness being altogether too much for them.

"Oh, hang it, the fellow's man enough to prefer Donaghmore and you to Merrion Square!"

"And Aunt Julia," the girl finishes slyly.

"Yes," he says. And then, with sudden passion—"Is this man to come between us, Honor? To-day as I looked at him I felt, if it was so, I could find it in my heart to shoot him dead!"

It is getting dusk here on the lower quarry road, which leads them by a short cut to Donaghmore. On one side stretches the bog, on the other the grim gray rocks shut out the sky. To Honor's nervous fancy it almost seems as if the rocks catch up his vengeful words, and echo them mockingly. More than one ghastly story is connected with this lonely spot; and, spoken here, the cruel words have double meaning.

"You are changed already," the man says more calmly, seeing the expression of horror on her face. "You and Launce have never been the same to me since that affair at Boyne. It is only Horace who remains my friend."

"And am I not your friend, Power?"

"There can be no friendship between you and me, Honor. There can be but one of two things—love or hatred. I love you as better men would tell you they love their own souls. I want you for my wife—no friend, but my very own, until death us do part! Honor, my darling—Honor, my own love, will you come to me?"

His arms close round her in the darkness, and with a low sob she yields to their masterful pressure, while his words—half fierce in their passion—seem to reach her like words heard in a dream.

Suddenly, out from the middle of the bog, comes a plaintive cry like the call of some night-bird. It is answered half a mile away, in the direction of Donaghmore, and then again there is silence. But it is no bird-call, Honor knows; and she raises her face from her lover's breast with a little sigh of fear.

"Don't sigh, my darling! Sure no harm could touch you with me," the man says tenderly.

But a chill has fallen upon the girl; her brief thrill of happiness has left a vague unrest behind it.

"I must go in now, Power. What will they say to me? I have never been out so late before!"

"And I have never kissed you before, nor held you in my arms," he answers almost incoherently. "Sure love like ours takes no heed of the clock!"

"My father will take heed of it, though," the girl rejoins, smiling, and hurrying, fast as the uneven path will let her, toward the lights that are gleaming now from all the lower windows of her home.

Donaghmore stands on a slight hill overlooking the river on one side and the woods of Colonel Frenche's estate on the other. It is a stone house, with deep-set windows and stout doors, that have withstood hard blows in their day. Save for Glen Doyle, Colonel Frenche's place, there is no house of equal size for miles around, and several visitors have remarked the loneliness of the situation; but to that the Blakes never give a thought. The solid old house, which faces all the winds that blow, is very dear to them. In its very isolation there is a charm that any other dwelling would lack.

"Honor," the young fellow says, as they reach the house, "will you speak a word of warning to your father and Launce? They won't listen to me, I know. But it is not safe to speak as they have been doing lately. This affair of poor Rooney's may show you the temper of the people. No man was better liked, but he couldn't keep a still tongue in his head, and he lies at death's door this night."

"And are we not to speak, Power? Have we not as much right to our opinion as other people? There never yet was a Blake who was a rebel or a coward!"

"There is a time to speak and a time to keep silent," he answers, taking her face between his hands,

and looking down, his dark eyes softening, at the pretty flushed cheeks and lips just curved into a pout. "My own love, trust me! I would not have you or yours bring a stain upon the old name—but silence can hurt no one."

From where they stand they can hear the sounds of voices and men's laughter and the chink of glass, which come through the open windows of the dining-room.

"Those windows ought to be securely fastened before the dusk falls, Honor. Your father is really too—too confident."

"What a prophet of evil you are, Power!" the girl answers lightly; but, all the same, her heart is filled with the vague fear that has been troubling her for weeks past, ever since her brother Launce got into a dispute with some farmers at Boyne Fair, and was threatened by them. "It's enough to make the old abbot walk again," she added, half smiling, half scornfully, "to hear you talk of danger threatening Donaghmore! Didn't he frighten the rebels away in '98, so that ours was the only safe house, lonely as it is?"

"The rebels of to-day are not to be so easily frightened or kept at bay," he answers meaningly. "Good-night, my darling, and remember my words!"

"Good-night," she says softly; and presently the great doors close behind her, and he is alone.

"Come in here, my girl, and give an account of yourself," her father's voice calls to her, as she is slipping past the open dining-room door. "Launce here thought we had lost you, but I knew there was no such luck."

The next moment she is standing in the brilliantly-lighted room, before the little knot of gentlemen—her father, her brothers, and their guest—gathered about one end of the long table.

"This is my little girl, Beresford; and, if she had been a boy, Heaven bless her, your uncle would have adopted her, and left her all the money he had hoarded! But it wasn't to be, I suppose."

The man he calls Beresford smiles slightly at this speech, and Honor sees the smile and resents it. Her gray eyes darken, her face turns suddenly pale and cold as she moves slowly forward to her father's side.

"By Jove, what a grand air!" Brian Beresford says to himself, eyeing her critically. "Where on earth did she learn to carry herself in that fashion?"

"You did not expect to find your cousin safe at home before you, Honor?"

"Yes, papa; I met Power, and he told me. He was saying too"—with a faint smile at Launce—"that he was afraid Mr. Beresford would find Donaghmore dull. He thought he would have felt more at home at Aunt Julia's."

The new-comer does not in the least understand the point of this speech, but he is perfectly conscious that there is a cut in it somewhere; and this consciousness is not lessened by the way it is received. Her father turns red in the face and says, "Tut tut! How absurd!" Horace smiles, and Launce breaks into open laughter.

"I am sorry if I am intruding," Mr. Beresford says stiffly. "I accepted your father's invitation as frankly as it was offered; but——"

"There, my boy, not another word," his host interrupts him, still red in the face, still frowning at Honor in a covert way. "I should have been cut to the heart if your father's son had refused or misunderstood me. But these younger people are full of their chaff; you'll understand each other in a day or so."

"I understand him perfectly as it is," Honor says to herself, as she walks out for the room, very erect and stately, and altogether on her dignity; "and I don't like him a bit. Power was wrong there—we shall never get on together."

As she is crossing the hall she sees that the front door stands open. She turns a little out of her way to close it, and as she does so she sees the shadows of two figures sharply outlined on the smooth gravel.

One man is bare-headed—he has just stepped out the house evidently—the other wears a low hat pulled down over his brows.

It is nothing out of the common for a servant to step out of the house to speak to a friend—domestic rule is not very strict at Donaghmore—yet a strange fear assails Honor. The window by the side of the door is open, and by standing close to it she can hear every word they say; but their words are meaningless—they are talking Irish.

Suddenly one of the men—it is their new groom, whom Launce hired at Boyne—says distinctly in English:

"He's no more from the Castle than you are. How soft ye are, to be sure! He's the masther's nephew from London. And sure, if the worst comes to the worst, he'd not count at all, at all; he's little better than a fine young woman in breeches. Faix, and I'd take half a dozen of his make as my own share of a good night's work; but be aisy—he'll be gone before even ye need raise a finger!"

While their hands are meeting and they are bending toward each other as if for a parting whisper, the girl flies swiftly up-stairs and into her own room.

Her heart is beating painfully, her cheeks are pale with fear and anger, and yet she cannot help laughing aloud as the man's words come back to her—"He's little better than a fine young woman in breeches!"

"Could anything be funnier or truer?" she says to herself with malicious satisfaction. "Oh, how I wish he could have heard them! It would take a bit of his starch out, I fancy, and teach him how little mashers are thought of at Donaghmore."

## CHAPTER II.

"I cannot see what fault you can find in him, Honor."

"Sure if he's faultless, isn't that fault enough, my dear?"

"But you are almost rude to him," Belle Delorme says plaintively; "and I'm sure I can't see why, for he is just a delightful man."

"Of course—you've fallen in love with him, Belle!" Honor retorts coolly. "You fall in love with every good-looking man you meet. The only marvel to me is how easily you contrive to fall out again."

"Sure it's as aisy as lapping crame," the girl says with a little affected brogue and a smile that shows all her dimples. "It would never do if we were all marble goddesses, you know. Life would be mighty dull if one couldn't flirt a trifle."

"Certainly your life should not be dull, if flirting can brighten it, my dear."

"No, it is not altogether dull," the other girl says demurely; "but it would be nicer if one could live in Dublin or London—wouldn't it now?"

She looks very pretty as she lies there, her slim lissom form stretched out in the full glare of the sunshine.

"What an artfully artless little creature you are, Belle! You mean to imply that, if Brian asks you to be Mrs. Beresford, you will say 'Yes,' for the pleasure of living in London?"

"And why not? Sure London is better than Donaghmore."

"And what is to become of poor Launce then?"

"Oh, Launce!" Belle says, turning pale. "You know quite well that he has eyes for no one but Mrs. Dundas."

"My dear, Launce was not born yesterday," Launce's sister assures her companion equably.

"Neither was Mrs. Dundas—nor the day before that," Belle bursts out angrily. "I vow she looks as old as my mother when you get a fair view of her in the daylight. But what does that matter? She has fascinated him!"

"How sweet the ways of women are,  
How honeyed is their speech!"

a man's voice says mockingly.

Honor turns lazily in her hammock, but Belle—poor blushing, mortified Belle—springs to her feet with a cry.

"I knew I should find you here eating all those strawberries!" the newcomer goes on placidly. "Girls do not expose their complexions to a sun like this for nothing."

"Where are the others?" Honor asks lazily.

"Deed and I hardly know. They strolled away by twos and threes till there wasn't a soul left to chum with; and then I bethought me"—with a mocking glance at Belle—"of you; and here I am."

"Polite!" her sister murmurs. "But, to tell the truth, dear, we should prefer your room—no, your strawberries"—for he has begun his onslaught already—"to your company."

"Sha'n't budge now till I've finished this pile," he retorts coolly; and the girls laugh.

The sun slants fiery red between the boles of the old fruit-trees, burns little crimson patches on Belle's fair skin, and turns Honor's cheeks to the hue of wild poppies. The air is heavy with a dozen different odors—of ripening fruit, mignonette, wild roses, and—sweetest of all perhaps—clover from the great sloping fields outside the orchard wall.

Launce has thrown himself upon the grass almost at Belle's feet, and is talking in his low musical voice.

"Tantalizing the poor little thing!" Honor says to herself, as she peeps across at them from her nest among the branches.

She is very fond of Belle Delorme, and she knows that not in all Ireland could her brother find a sweeter, truer little wife. Perhaps he is of the same opinion—perhaps not. It is not easy to read the thoughts behind that square, masterful brow of his.

Presently they stroll away together, leaving Honor alone.

As she lies there in her low hammock, the shadows of leaf and bough flickering on her face, a hand parts the branches, and a man looks in at her.

She flushes deeply in her surprise at the sight of him, and then sits up with a jerk that nearly brings her out of her nest with more speed than grace.

"I'm sorry to have disturbed you," he says, smiling; "but I thought you were asleep, and I could not help envying the good fortune of the fairy prince who might be lucky enough to awaken you after the fashion of fairy princes."

Something in his voice or in his eyes as he looks down at her makes the light words seem almost tender.

"But no fairy princess ever come to Ireland, Mr. Beresford; it's only a 'fine country spoiled,' you know, and 'sunk in semi-barbarism'—not at all the sort of place for a fairy prince to come to."

"I don't know that at all, Honor."

It is the first time he has called her Honor, and she looks up at him half startled as he continues:

"It seems to me the fairy prince might travel farther and fare worse."

"But he might not think so, particularly if he was an English fairy prince," the girl says dryly.

"Why are you so hard on us, Honor? Why are you so hard on me? I should say. For you are sweetness itself to that little curate of Drum, and he's about the poorest specimen of the Cockney I ever met."

"You couldn't expect that any but the 'poorest specimen' would condescend to be a curate at Drum," she returns flippantly.

Taking no heed of her interruption, he goes on:

"You have grudged every kind word, every little attention lavished on me since I've been here. Often and often I've said to myself, 'I will go away and never look upon her face again.' But I have not gone."

"No," the girl says, feeling curiously abashed and contrite under the gaze of those calmly accusing eyes. "I'm sorry if—if I have been rude to you."

"I am glad to hear you say so. You have been rude certainly, but I am quite ready to forgive all that—quite ready to shake hands and be friends, if you care to have it so. If not, it is better that I should go away—at once."

She most certainly is not fond of this man; and yet she feels pained at the mere thought of his going away "at once." She holds out her hand almost pleadingly.

"Oh, do not go away, please!" looking at him with sweet, grave eyes. "I would rather shake hands and be friends."

"So be it!" he says, taking her hand, and holding it for a second in both his own.

He is a man of the world, strong and self-repressed; yet now he turns suddenly pale, and his eyes darken.

"Heavens, child, how I love you!" he cries; and the next instant he has stooped and kissed her on the lips. It is done in a second. The girl looks up at him from among her pillows, as hurt and angry as if the kiss had been a blow; and he looks back at her, amazed at his own audacity.

"On my honor, I did not mean to do it!" he says, almost humbly. "I did not know I should be such a weak fool as to yield to temptation in that mad fashion, only I love you so, and you——"

"And I am 'only an Irish girl,'" she interrupts him vehemently—"little better than a savage in your eyes. If I had been an English lady you would never have taken such a liberty—never!"

Her passionate resentment angers him, slow to anger as he is by nature and habit.

"If you hate me so much, Honor, that the touch of my lips insults you beyond forgiveness, the sooner we part the better," he says bitterly.

"You would please me best by going away, and never letting me see your face again," she answers with equal bitterness.

There is the sound of a step on the gravel, and a man's laugh—a peculiar vibrating laugh that brings the color into Honor's face—reaches them in the stillness.

But the steps pass on, and do not come near their corner among the old fruit-trees. Brian Beresford bends nearer to the girl, lying there amid the bending branches, with the sunshine on her averted face.

"You are only a child, Honor, for all your twenty summers! You no more know your own heart than I do. Take care! If you send me away—me and my love—you may find that you have made a mistake!"

But she will not answer him—she will not even look at him. For all the sign of life she gives she might be that Sleeping Beauty to whom he first likened her.

"If ever you should feel sorry, Honor, for what you have said to-day—if ever you should care to have me back, either as a friend or lover, send for me, and I will come."

The words are calm enough, but by some instinct she divines that the face bent close to hers is neither calm or cold. She hears him go away, as he came, through the gap in the high hedge, but she does not even open her eyes to watch him go. But, when all is still again, and she knows that he has passed away out of her life, as surely as he has passed out of the old-fashioned garden, she bursts into tears.

"Oh, what has come to me?" she says to herself again and again, in a very maze of wonder at her own sensations. "I do not love the man. His coming or his going matters nothing to me."

But, although she says this, not once but many times, the words bring her no comfort. They do not still for one moment the inexplicable pain that has risen in her heart. She gets up after awhile and goes back to the house, choosing the small door at the side, so that she may meet no one.

Aileen is ironing in the large front-kitchen, smoothing out, as she calls it, one of Honor's pretty white dresses. It is a labor of love with the old woman, and every week she comes up from her little cottage to perform it.

At sight of her young mistress standing in the doorway, bright-eyed and flushed, and strangely unlike herself, the good woman pauses.

"An' is it yourself, alanna? Shure my eyes have been aching for the sight of your face this hour or more! But what ails ye, Miss Honor darlint? Shure my black drames—bad 'cess to me for naming them

till ye—have not been troubling your mind?"

"No, no!" the girl says, laughing. "I am not troubled about anything, only hot and thirsty, and—yes, Aileen, I may as well own it—cross."

She laughs again, but her voice is tremulous, and she keeps her face well turned from the light.

"I wish it was only cross that I was, darlint!" the old woman says with the peculiar solemnity of her class. "But it's sore and heavy-hearted I am, and that's the blessed truth. I've done nothing but drame since ever I saw you last, and every night it's the same thing over and over again, till my brain is almost turned wid it, and I rise up in the morning all in a cold perspiration."

"Dear old Aileen," the girl says tenderly, "poor Rooney's awful death has upset you? It has upset us all for that matter! And then it must be so dreadful for you alone on that great bleak bog."

"Miss Honor, do ye mind my drame?"

"Every word of it, Aileen."

"Ye mind how I dram'd that the boys dug the grave out on the moss, and hid it out of sight wid green branches!"

"I do surely."

"Well, Miss Honor, ever and always in my drame that grave is there still. I watch the boys dig it deep in the black earth, and cover the gaping mouth of it; and me shaking and trembling all the time. But these past three nights—the saints be above us!—there's been another grave, alanna."

"Another grave!" The girl laughs. "Why, that is getting too dreadful!" She plucks a spray of roses from the open window behind her, as she sits on the great oak dresser, and shreds the delicate red petals all over the lap of her gown.

"Listen to me, Miss Honor, and cease your funning! This is no time to laugh and jest at a warning that comes from the saints themselves! That the masher is in danger of his life I know as well as if I saw the very bullet that was to shoot him. The grave was dug deep and broad—and deep and broad it would need to be, save us!—out there on yer own lawn, just forenent the drawing-room windies!"

She has left her ironing-table and come close up to the girl, her face—a delicate-featured face, peasant as she is—rigid with intense feeling, her eyes shining, her upraised hand tremulous.

"Oh, Miss Honor darlint, shure he'd follow you to the ends of the world! Take him away from this till the bad feeling has time to cool down. Things will right themselves, never fear—the old times will come round again; but, if the masher stays on at Donaghmore, he'll never live to enjoy them."

"But if he will not go away?" says Honor, a tone of anxiety in her voice. "You know how obstinate he is; and that letter from Dublin about landlords running away from their posts has upset him dreadfully. Oh, no, Aileen, he'll never leave Donaghmore!"

"Then the saints purtect him!" Aileen answers tremulously. "But as sure as my name is Aileen Walsh harm will come of it!"

### CHAPTER III.

"As sure as my name is Aileen Walsh harm will come of it!"

The words haunt Honor. They ring in her ears night and day, and spoil many hour's innocent pleasure for her.

But what harm can come? she asks herself. The country is quiet enough now to all appearance, though more than once, in the dusk, she has heard the shrill signal whistle pealing from hill to hill or dying away over the melancholy bog.

Of Power Magill she sees but little. He is now cold and absent, and so unlike himself that it is more a pain than a pleasure to be with him.

Brian Beresford she does not see at all. He has written to her father more than once since his abrupt departure, but she has not even seen his letters.



The squire blames her openly for snubbing "as decent a fellow as ever stepped in shoe-leather," and Launce stings her with covert hints to the same effect. It is all very miserable, but the girl bears it bravely. She must suffer, but she need make no sign. Even Launce's keen eyes are deceived at last, and he tells Belle Delorme that they have been on the wrong scent altogether.

"Honor never cared a button for the fellow—she never cared for any one but Power Magill, and never will, and that's the truth! So you see what a faithful family you are marrying into, my dear!"

But Belle only shakes her pretty head.

"She takes it a deal too easy to please me. I'd rather she would fret a bit. Sure it would only be natural! But the loss of a man like that out of a dull country house is something worth fretting about."

"You don't know Honor," Launce answers oracularly. "She's not the girl to lose her heart in a fortnight or three weeks' time to the best man breathing."

"I'm not saying a word about her heart, Launce; but I do say he took a mighty strong hold on her fancy."

"You think that she loves him, then?"

"I think she would if he'd give her the chance," the girl answers, smiling.

"What a queer little creature you are!" her lover says, looking at her with amused yet wondering eyes. "How on earth did you find it all out? I'll vow Honor never spoke a word to you about it."

"How do I know that the sun is shining or that there is clover in that meadow? Haven't I my senses like other people?"

So they pass on their way, laughing and happy; and the man coming out from the shelter of the larch-wood, which here borders the high-road, looks after them with a frown, and a word that is certainly not a blessing on his bearded lips.

"It's not your fault," he says to himself bitterly, as he watches the two sauntering along in the yellow sunlight, "that she cares for Power Magill, or that she ever cared for him, for that matter."

As he stands there in his well-worn shooting-coat, although he is dressed little better than one of his own keepers, no one could mistake him for other than a gentleman. He is a handsome man, with keen hazel eyes set far back under brows as dark as a Spaniard's, but his face, for all its comeliness, is almost forbidding in its sternness.

Turning off the road now, he makes his way across a field and down some rude stone steps to the bank of the river.

A little house stands here, nestling against the rocky bank. The old door hangs off its hinges, the one small-paned window is stuffed with rags.

Power Magill stoops as he enters the poor place, and his eyes, dazzled by the sunlight outside, look round the room in a vain search. He can see no one; a girl rises from a low stool by the hearth, where she has been coaxing a smoldering turf to light, and comes forward.

"Is your father in, Patsy?"

"He is not, your honor. He went to Derry to-day with one of Neil's foals, and he will not be home till the morning!"

"And your brother—where is he?"

"I can't rightly say, your honor! Maybe he is gone to the bog to——"

But he stops her, frowning impatiently.

"Tell them both that I came here for them. Say no more than that—they will understand."

Then he strikes out, glad to breathe the fresh air after that tainted atmosphere. The girl walks cautiously to the door and looks after him. She is barefooted, and on the earth floor her tread makes no sound.

"Heaven forgive yez!" she says almost fiercely. "The innocent creatures never hurt man nor beast till yez came with your foine tongue and your yellow guineas, tempting and ruining 'em! But I'll be even with yez yet!"

From this fetid little cabin on the river's side a brisk walk of ten minutes brings Power Magill to the gates of Donaghmore. As he passes up the drive he stops and turns aside for an instant to look at the ruins of the old Abbey, standing grim and cold and gray in the yellow sunshine.

The refectory is still standing, its three windows looking toward the stone house on the hill. There is a low arched gateway, but the gate is gone, and beyond in the great quadrangle the stones lie as they have fallen.

"What asses we are, the best of us!" Power Magill says grimly, as he looks at this relic of a dead man's wealth and power.

The old abbot—buried, so say the traditions of the family, under the ruins of the pile that he reared with such pride and vainglory—never lived to enjoy his riches. Twice he built the house, and twice it was destroyed; the first time partially, and by fire, the second time utterly. "For," so the story goes, "a wind rose in the night, and swept the great stones one from another, leaving the place as it is to this day." No Blake has ever been bold enough to rebuild it.

As Power Magill passes into the quadrangle, an owl flies out of the ivy, and sweeps so close before his face that he draws back, startled. The bird's cry is caught up and echoed round the empty spaces, till it seems as if the place must be full of mocking spirits. With a frown he turns and retraces his steps, never pausing to look back till he has gained the steps on Donaghmore. A dark cloud has obscured the sun, and the whole pile lies in the shadow.

Superstitious under all his cynicism, Power Magill shudders.

"It is an omen," he says: and the next moment the heavy door behind him swings open, and Honor stands on the threshold.

Her cheeks flush, her eyes brighten at the sight of him.

"Oh, Power," she says, with a ring of pleasure in her voice, "I was just longing to see you! I want to talk to you," she adds, coming down the steps and slipping her hand within his arm; "and we can talk best out-of-doors."

They go together across the lawn, and through a small green door into a high-walled garden, richly stocked with old-fashioned flowers.

"Another letter came this morning, Power—such a dreadful letter, worse than all the rest!—and last night Launce's bay mare was shot through the head. He is in an awful way about it, so is the *pater*. They have gone to Drum now to tell the police."

She is looking at him as she says this; and the cruel expression in his eyes and the mocking smile that stirs his lips make her heart beat with something like fear.

"They might have spared themselves the trouble—the police cannot help them."

"What can we do, Power? What ought we to do?" she says, almost piteously.

"I told you long ago what you ought to do. It's almost too late now—Launce has made the place too hot to hold him, and that's the truth, Honor. The sooner he goes back to Dublin the better for all of you."

"Poor Launce—I don't see what he has done!"

"He has done enough to get his *quietus*," Power answers grimly; "and he would have had it long ago if he had not had a friend to speak for him."

"And these are the people we have lived among all our lives!" the girl says, with a sigh. "Oh, Power, it seems as if it couldn't be true!"

"It's true enough," he answers her, more gently. "The men are maddened by a sense of their wrongs! They are not prepared to love those who openly side with their oppressors."

The vehement passion in his voice, the fierce flush on his cheeks, chill the girl and check the words that rise to her lips.

Why appeal to this man? He is not on their side, but against them. He loves her, she knows, but does he not love this "cause" to which he is pledged, body and soul, better than her?

"Well, we must do the best we can," she says after a pause—a lengthy, ominous pause it has seemed

to Honor. "It is to be hoped the poor fellows will come to their senses in time."

"And meanwhile?" he questions her.

"Meanwhile we must take care of ourselves," the girl answers briefly and coldly.

"My darling, you don't know what you are talking about—you have been led away by Launce's boasting. You cannot see your danger as I, who loves you, see it. Come to me, Honor! Be my wife, and let me take care of you. I swear you shall never repent it—never!"

For an instant she looks at him, startled; then the color floods her face, and her eyelids droop.

"As my wife you will be safe and happy—for don't we love each other?"

"Then," she says—and she shivers even in the hot sunshine—"you think I am not safe here, in my own home?"

"You are not!" he answers impressively.

"Then my father and the boys are not safe either?" she questions more eagerly.

"The certainly are not safe, Honor. If they had any sense they would leave the country while they can."

"And yet it is now you would ask me to leave them," she says, almost disdainfully—"to leave the dear old *pater* and the boys just when they need me most? It's little you know of me, Power, or you would never dream of asking me to do such a thing."

"If you could do any good," he begins; but she interrupts him with a swift, almost imperious gesture.

"I could do the good that Rooney's wife did him, if ever it should come to that with us at Donaghmore."

"Honor, why do you think of such things?"

"It's time to think of them," she says wearily, "when they are acted before our eyes. How can I tell how soon it may be our turn? I said it was not true when Launce came in and told us that poor Rooney was shot like a rabbit, before the eyes of his wife and little children. I cried out against it in horror. 'There is not a man in the place who could do such a thing!' I said; but I am beginning to know better now."

A look of anguish crosses the man's face as he listens to her. He is a gentleman, and his better nature must revolt from crimes like this.

"The man had been warned. If he had held his tongue, no harm would have come to him."

"And we have been warned," the girl says, with a bitter smile, "and we have not held our tongues, and therefore harm will come to us."

As the words pass her lips she shivers, remembering Aileen's warnings. It seems to her that Power's face has grown harsh and cruel, like the face of a man who is her judge more than her lover.

"Honor, do you want to break my heart? You know how I love you, have loved you always. Launce hates me—your father has plainly said he will 'never give his only girl to a rebel;' and I am that in his opinion. But why should they stand between us, my darling? What right has any man to come between such love as ours?"

"No man can come between us, Power. Have I not given you my plighted word? But, if my father and brother are in danger, my place is with them. You see that, don't you?"

The beautiful face is close to his own; he feels the clasp of her soft hands in his, and suddenly, with a sigh that is almost a groan, he takes her into his arms and kisses her passionately.

## CHAPTER IV.

"Oh, Honor, is it true?" Belle Delorme cries breathlessly, as she meets her friend midway on the Rectory lawn. "Launce has been telling us—but sure he laughed so we couldn't believe him—that the old abbot has begun to walk again."

"It is quite true that people say he has," Honor answers guardedly.

She is pale to-day, and there is a weary look in her eyes that give a pathetic expression to the whole face.

"And he has really been seen, dear?" exclaims Belle, raising her hands in dismay. "Oh, but it is dreadful! Sure we never thought such things could happen in our day."

"What a goose you are!" Launce says, coming up at this moment. "Such things, as you call them, never happened and never will; it's all a hoax—some scamps doing it for a lark; and one of these nights when I've nothing better to do, I'll go down and ferret out the rascal."

"Oh, no, no, Launce, dear! Promise me that you'll do nothing of the kind," Belle cries in genuine distress. "It would be madness. If the old abbot is walking, depend upon it it is for some good reason; trouble is coming to the family in some shape of form."

But Launce only laughs at her, and even Honor will not confess her belief in this supernatural visitor.

"If it could tell us anything," she says in her grave way, "it would be different—good might come of it; as it is, it does nothing but scare away visitors and keep our servants in such a state of terror that they can't attend to their work. It is really very disagreeable."

"Oh, Honor darling, how can you talk like that?" Belle cries with a little shiver. "I declare you are almost as bad as Launce."

The lawn at Donaghmore rectory is covered with guests. A table has been set under the trees, and Mrs. Delorme, in a delightfully cool-looking dress and with delicate ribbons in her lace cap, is busy making tea. There are pretty colors, gay voices and bursts of musical laughter on every hand.

Some of the girls are good-looking, more than one or two are handsome; and the men in their tennis flannels and gay caps show well by contrast.

"Your cousin is here—he is staying with the Frenches—so mamma had to ask him," Belle whispers almost nervously; and the next moment Honor finds herself face to face with Brian Beresford.

She has never seen him since that day he stooped and kissed her under the cherry-trees. Honor's cheeks turn crimson as she remembers that passionate kiss.

"Does he think of it?" she wonders as she meets his eyes.

"I thought you had gone back to England," she says. She hardly knows what she does say, so stupid is she feeling.

"I did go home, but could not stay long; I had business in Ireland that could not be neglected."

"Business?" she repeats wonderingly.

"Yes," he says gravely—"important business; it may keep me here for some time yet."

She listens in surprise, but she is too proud to ask him what his business may be. Perhaps he would not tell her if she did; but he is nothing to her—less than nothing. Why should she trouble about his affairs?

"What have you been doing to yourself, Honor?" They have come to the narrow wire fence that separates the rectory lawn from the rectory paddock. "You are as pale as a ghost. Have you been fretting?"

For an instant she looks at him coldly, almost angrily; then the tears come into her eyes. Something in his voice, in the way he is looking down at her, in the touch of his hand, as he lays it over hers for an instant, has gone straight to her heart.

"I am not very happy certainly; it is an anxious time for us all just now."

"Yes," he says, pretending not to see her tears, "and it is lonely at Donaghmore; but you are not so unprotected as you appear to be. There are those on the watch who would gladly die to shield you from danger."

"I used to think so," she answers sadly, "but I am not so sure of it now."

"But you may be sure of it, Honor—I will answer for that myself."

She smiles as she listens to him. What should this Englishman know of the feelings of the people? He means to be kind of course; but his words carry no comfort—how should they? Looking at him as he stands before her, she cannot but own that, if his face is proud and a trifle cold in its repose, there is something true and winsome in it. The keen eyes meet hers unflinchingly, the firm lips under the heavy moustache have not a harsh curve about them; it is a face with power in it, and some tenderness and passion too, under all its chill composure.

"He has the look of a man one might trust through everything," she says to herself almost with a sigh; and then she turns to go back to her friends, angry that he should have won so much thought from her.

"Don't go yet, Honor; it's cooler here than among all those chattering women; and if you want any tea, I can bring you some."

The sunshine is beating fiercely down upon the groups scattered over the center of the lawn; but here under the trees the grass is flecked with cool shadows, and the two catch the breeze—such as it is—that comes from the river.

"I don't care for any tea, thanks; but I do enjoy this shade," she says almost reluctantly; and still indifferent to a degree that might be called rude, she lets him find a seat on the low bough of one of the ash-trees, well out of reach of the sunshine.

He does not offer to sit down beside her, though there is plenty of room.

With his shoulder against a tree and his hat well pulled over his eyes he stands and talks in his easy, half-grave, half-mocking way, that, in spite of herself, the girl finds charming.

He does not appear to be in the least anxious to interest or amuse her; yet he does both. Before long she is laughing as she has not laughed for weeks—a pretty color has come into her cheeks, her eyes are sparkling. No wonder the man looking at her feels his heart thrill!

If ever he thought that he could go away and leave this willful Irish girl, whose very willfulness has caught and chained him, he knows now that the thought was a vain one.

She is the one woman in the world for him, her love the one thing needful to crown his life. Other women may be fairer, other women may be ready to give him love where this girl gives him but a mocking tolerance; but no other woman can ever be to him what she is.

Of love and lovers there is no thought in Honor's head this sunny afternoon. She thinks her cousin has improved, that he has even grown quite tolerable, and there it ends, so far as she is concerned.

On their way back to the house they pass Launce and Mrs. Dundas walking very close together, and talking seriously.

Honor looks at her coldly. She does not like the woman. Her bold eyes, her lithe figure, in its French-cut gown, the very grace and *chic* that have made Kate Dundas the belle of the county jar upon Honor.

"I am very sorry Launce has gone so far in that quarter," her companion says, when they are well out of ear-shot. "These fascinating women are always more or less dangerous."

"Oh, Launce can take care of himself!"

"I doubt it," Brian answered dryly.

"Oh, but he can!" Honor persists, with a laugh. "We all can, for that matter; indeed, and it's my opinion there is not a susceptible heart in the whole family."

"Probably not. I don't believe in susceptible hearts myself."

A faint smile stirs her lips as she listens. It was not true, then, that passionate declaration that has rung in her ears since she first heard it:

"Heavens, child, how I love you!"

"How would it have been with me now if I had believed him?" she asks herself. She can quite believe that the loss of this man's love—after once believing in it—might prove a source of very keen regret to any girl; but fortunately she had never believed in it; and now it could never be anything—true or false, faithful or unfaithful—since she has given her plighted word to Power Magill.

"I wish Launce would go back to Dublin," Brian says after a pause. "He is only getting himself and other people into mischief down here. Can't the *pater* see that?"

"My father can see no fault in Launce—neither can I, for that matter. I really don't see what harm the poor fellow is doing."

"He is doing harm, Honor—take my word for it! He would be best away."

"We do not think so," she says coldly; and there the matter ends.

It is getting dark as the little party—Honor, her two brothers, and young Jack Delorme—turn in at the gates of Donaghmore. They have been talking and laughing merrily; Honor is in good spirits to-night, or pretends to be; but as they pass inside the gate a silence falls upon them.

Launce is walking on the grass, well under the trees, Jack Delorme in the very middle of the gravel path, swinging a light stick, while Honor and Horace are a little in advance. As they reach the ruins Jack stops.

"I wonder if the old abbot is above ground to-night, Launce," he says. "It would be only polite of us to pay him a visit if he is."

As the mocking words pass his lips, Honor turns to gaze at the gray pile, which looks very rugged in the dusk. She stops instantly.

Is she dreaming, she asks herself with a gasp of surprise, or is that a shape moving slowly between her and the doorless space that leads into the old quadrangle?

Horace sees it at the same instant; and the solo he is whistling—"My Queen"—with variations more or less ear-piercing, not to say distracting, dies away on his lips. He is little better than a lad, and his scorn of the supernatural is not by any means real.

"Oh, Honor," he exclaims, drawing close to her, "what can it be? Don't you see something over there?"

"It is a shadow of some branch, dear; it can be nothing else! Wait and see if the others notice it."

"Honor, I dare not stay!" the boy says nervously. "It is cowardly of me, I know, but there is a terror on me, and I—oh, what is that?"

A sudden shriek—so long, so shrill, so blood-chilling that the hearers stand aghast—breaks out upon the still air. A second later it is followed by an imprecation and a rapid rush of feet, as Launce and Jack Delorme spring, with one impulse, toward the ruins.

Honor neither stirs nor cries out. She holds her brother's hand tightly in both her own, and prays in an incoherent fashion; and all the time a strange unreal feeling is creeping over her.

"Can these things be?" she is asking herself. "Are spirits allowed to come back and torture the living?"—for this fear is the keenest torture her vigorous young life has ever known.

It is all over in a few minutes, though it seems to her that they have been standing there a long time, and then her brother and Jack Delorme come up to them.

"By George, we nearly had the fellow!" Launce says panting. "Never saw a nearer shave than he had in my life! I could have sworn he was within reach of my fist; yet when I struck out, the brute was gone!"

He is flushed, excited, angry; Jack is cooler and graver. His face, as he bares his head to the light breeze, looks pale.

Honor divines instinctively that he, like herself, has seen something supernatural in this apparition.

But Launce scoffs at any such idea.

"It is some blackguard," he says scornfully, "got up on purpose to scare folks! He was within an ace of getting his skull broken for his pains."

Is it their overwrought fancy, or does a low mocking laugh float back to them?

Honor shivers.

"Let us get into the house," she says. "I feel as if I could not breathe out here; and don't let us talk any more about it, please!"

But Launce cannot hold his tongue; he does nothing but scoff at their credulity, and when they reach

the house the first thing he does is to go straight to the dining-room and tell the whole story to his father.

The old man looks grave as he listens; it even seems to Honor if a little of the ruddy color dies out of his face.

"Best let these things alone, my boy," he says at last.

In his own young days such things as warnings were neither scoffed at nor disbelieved in.

"Let us keep our powder and shot for men of bone and muscle like ourselves, Launce, and not waste them on shadows."

If he had said, "Let us ask the old abbot up to supper, and treat him to a jorum of whiskey-punch," Launce could not have looked more surprised.

"Well," he says in a tone of disgust, "I did think you had more sense, father, than to believe in a fellow walking about some hundred and fifty years after his own funeral."

The old man smiles, but he says no more; and Honor feels that the appearance of this phantom has cast a gloom over the house that was scarcely needed.

"And Launce ought to have had more sense than to talk to the *pater* about it," she says to herself, as she watches the squire's anxious face. "He ought to have remembered that the last time that horrid old abbot was seen about poor grandpapa was shot; and of course everybody said the abbot had come to warn him."

## CHAPTER V.

After that night no more is seen or heard of the old abbot.

"Wait till the moonlight nights are past, and he'll turn up again," Launce says in his scoffing way.

But the nights are dark enough now—it is an almost sunless September, and yet they see nothing of the figure. To Honor has come an additional trouble—the engagement between her brother and Belle Delorme is broken off. Poor little Belle goes about like a ghost; her miserable eyes, which go so far to contradict the smile on her lips, fairly haunt Honor.

"If Launce ever loved her he could not bear to see her looking like that!" the girl says, in her angry surprise that he, her favorite brother, should prove so cruel. But Launce just now has eyes for no one but Kate Dundas.

The widow is more fascinating than ever. Two gentlemen are staying on a visit with her, one from London and one—who is eyed with suspicious disfavor by her poorer neighbors—from Dublin Castle itself.

There are dinners or card-parties almost every night, and, to use a vulgar expression, Launce Blake is never off the doorstep.

People are beginning to say that he will marry her and snap his fingers at the old squire, who, for some reason best known to himself, is no admirer of the brilliant widow.

"It's the greatest pity in the world that you couldn't keep your temper!" Honor says reproachfully to her friend, when she comes to tell her that the engagement is at an end. "I always told you Launce would not stand being found fault with; sure a child could lead him."

"Yes," Belle answers bitterly, "such a child as Kate Dundas! I knew from the first how it would end, dear. The woman means to marry him, and she will do it."

Honor sighs. It is dreadful to think of handsome Launce, with his brilliant prospects, being sacrificed to this woman, ten years older than he is, and the widow of a very "shady" major of dragoons.

"It is not as if he loved her!" says Belle, almost with a sob. "He does not love her. It's all a 'bewitchment,' as old Aileen would say; and, when she has got him, he'll be miserable."

"But we mustn't let her get him, dear; we must stop it, you and I."

"Then I'm sure I don't see how we are to manage it," Belle sighs.

Neither does Honor, but she is not going to admit that.

Twilight is setting in when Belle gets up to go home.

"Oh, dear, why have I stayed so long?" she says, with a little nervous sigh. "It will be almost dark before I get out on the road."

"And what about me here alone all the day—and I shall be alone for hours yet! The *pater* has gone down to the Low Acres, and the boys are shooting Colonel Frenche's covers. They can't be home till dark."

"I don't know how you live, and that's the truth, Honor. We often say so at home. I should go mad, I know I should."

"Oh, I don't feel like that in the least; but sometimes I am lonely—very!"

And in truth it is a very wistful face that watches pretty Belle hurrying down the avenue. Honor has grown very thin and pale of late, and to-night, in her white gown, she looks thinner and paler than ever. She is feeling the need of a friend sorely. Often Brian Beresford's words come back—"If ever you should want me, either as friend or lover, send for me, and I will come."

She wants him now—his friendship, she feels, would be a stay and shield for her—but she never dreams of taking him at his word, and asking him to come back to Donaghmore.

She is feeling unusually depressed as she looks out at the sky, which is slowly changing from pink and opal to a sullen gray.

A morbid dread has been upon her all the day, and the sighing of the wind in the pine-trees—for a storm is rising over a neighboring mountain—does not tend to make her more cheerful. She stands a little while watching the grass bending before the breeze and the dead leaves swirling and eddying round on the smooth-cropped lawn.

"The rain will be coming down before Aileen could get half-way home," she says to herself, and straightway goes down to the kitchen to forbid her old nurse's departure.

The old woman is sitting before the fire, her head slightly turned, as if she were listening.

At the sound of Honor's step on the tiled floor she springs upright.

"How ye startled me, honey! Shure in that soft white gown ye might pass for one of the blessed saints themselves. I took ye for a spirit—I did an' troth, Miss Honor, at the first glance."

She seems unusually tired and excited, but she will not hear of staying for the night at Donaghmore.

"Is it a tough old woman like me to be afeard of a sough of wind or a few drops of rain? No, no, my lamb! I'll go home this night, the saints being willin'!"

It is almost dark in the front hall as the girl passes through; only a faint gray light comes in at the open door.

In the drawing-room the windows stand open just as she left them; and, wondering a little at the old butler's carelessness, she proceeds to fasten them herself.

As she does so she sees a man cross the drive quickly from the servants' quarters at the back of the house. He is followed after a brief space of time by another man, and both disappear in the direction of the gates.

"I did not know they had visitors in the kitchen to-night," she says to herself, and straightway forgets all about it.

More than an hour passes before she hears her father's step in the hall.

"Where are the boys?" he says, as she comes out of the drawing-room to speak to him.

"They have not come from the colonel's yet. They said they might be late."

"A man has been shot on Keif Moss—shot dead, and by mistake for some one else, they tell me."

She reads the fear that is blanching the strong man's face, and making his voice sound low and husky



in the empty hall.

"Not Launce, father! Don't tell me that it is Launce!"

"Heaven only knows! It was some one who was coming from that hateful Rose Mount; and, let Launce go east or west, he ends there before the day is out."

She knows it is too true; and suddenly her composure gives way, her strength with it, and, throwing her arms about her father's neck, she bursts into tears.

Very drearily the hours pass to the old man and the girl waiting and listening in the large lonely house.

It is twelve o'clock before Horace comes home. He has seen nothing of his brother since they met for lunch at the colonel's. He would ride off then and there to make inquiries if his father would let him; but the squire will not hear of such a thing. He sends them to their own rooms, and sees to the fastening of doors and windows—a thing Honor has never known him to do in all his life before—and then he sits down in the large empty dining-room—the scene of many a jovial feast—to wait for the morning light, and the news that must come with it!

But this is fated to be a night long remembered at Donaghmore. All her life long Honor will look back upon it with dread—will remember the deep anxiety, amounting to despair, that makes its black hours as they creep by seem like days in ordinary life.

It is a moonless night, and the wind, which has risen to a gale, fills the air with noises—the rattling of loosely-fastened shutters, the sough of the pine trees behind the house, the thousand-and-one eerie sounds that a high wind and night bring into empty rooms and corridors.

It is useless to go to bed—she could not sleep. Even if there was no storm, the horrible doubt—which grows less a doubt every hour—that the man who has met his death on Keif Moss is her brother Launce would be enough to banish sleep from her eyes.

And then Aileen's dream of the grave cut deep in the moss, and hidden from sight by green branches—it all comes back vividly now, and adds to the girl's torture. She has no longer the strength to scoff at these things. And, if that was a warning of the death that was lying in wait for her darling, then the other dream of the grave out there on the lawn, in view of their own windows, might not that come true?

As the thought occurs to her, she draws back the curtains and looks out. It is too dark to see anything, and she is turning away, when the glimmer of a light in the direction of the old ruins makes her start and pause.

"What can it be?" she asks herself.

It is glowing more brightly now, a fixed point that grows more luminous every instant, till suddenly—as she stands watching it—it goes out.

The gale is at its height now, making doors and windows rattle, tearing at the branches of the stout old trees, rioting and shrieking over the empty fields; but it is not the wind that Honor hears as she stands there breathless, one hand to her heart, the other holding by the bed-rail to steady her from falling. It is the sound of an opening door, of softly-tramping feet, of harsh voices speaking in a muffled key, that makes them ten times more terrible and threatening.

At the same instant Horace—his room is next to hers—rushes past the door and down the stairs in headlong haste.

Then rise the shrill screams of women, and over all her father's voice, resolute and undaunted.

"Not from this house, my men." The words come up clearly to her as she stands at the top of the stairs, faint and dizzy with fright. "Not while a drop of blood runs in our veins. You may kill me—it is an easy thing to shoot an old man——" But here his words are drowned in a burst of yells and howlings terrible to listen to.

The next moment Honor is down in the hall, and has pushed her way past her brother and the terrified servants to where her father stands, his back to the dining-room, his face turned toward the little group of men who, with black masks over their faces, have forced their way into the hall.

It is a terrible scene—the girl will never forget it. These uncouth menacing figures, the frightened faces of the women gathered about the staircase, her young brother, as pale as any woman there, but

cool and calm. But the one figure distinct from all the rest is that of her father, drawn to his full height, his resolute face turned full upon his cowardly assailants. He looks quite ten years younger than he did when she left him a few hours before, and there is a stern look on his face that frightens her. She has heard of the "fighting Blakes," and she begins to understand that even yet the old spirit has not died out in the race.

He sees her, but he makes no effort to send her away. In this supreme hour of trial the love of his heart recognizes her right to be with him even if it should be the bitter end.

"Go back, Miss Honor!" some one shouts. "Shure, we would not hurt a hair of your head!"

But the girl smiles coldly. She has no fear for herself; her one care, her one dread is for the safety of those others, who are dearer to her a thousand-fold than her own safety.

The men talk fast and furiously, but she hardly hears their words. She is waiting for what must come after, when all their threats have failed, as she knows so well they will fail.

They demand arms—with which they know the house to be well supplied. "Give them arms, and they will go in peace, for the present, squire," one man adds, with menacing emphasis.

For answer Robert Blake raises his right arm, and they see the muzzle of a revolver; and now a louder and more angry cry comes from the crowd.

"You know me, James Phelan," the squire says calmly, addressing an old tenant whose voice he has recognized; "tell these men that I am a dead shot, and I will fire if they come a yard nearer."

For an instant the crowd sways back, then it rallies. Those behind push the front rows mercilessly forward. The men are thoroughly excited now—there are more of them than at first appeared—and Honor feels that the next few moments will decide her fate and that of those dear to her.

Suddenly the great hall lamp falls to the floor with a crash, and the whole place is in profound darkness. For an instant the men, pressing toward their prey, pause, afraid, it may be, of a stray bullet striking them in the obscurity.

Then a loud shout is raised, and the hall, the stairs, the corridors are filled with a struggling, panting, furious mob.

Honor feels herself lifted out of the crowd, and let down inside the library, close to the door.

"Don't move for your life, and don't speak!" a voice says softly, close to her cheek, and then she is alone; and, save for the lightning that illumines the room almost every moment, she is in darkness.

Outside there are loud hoarse cries, heavy blows, and trampling feet, the indescribable horror and confusion of a fierce fight fought with blind rage on both sides.

It cannot be that her father and Horace—for on the servants she does not count at all—are keeping all these men at bay so long!

The suspense becomes torture. She feels that at any risk she must know how things are going, and, cautiously opening the door, she looks out.

The hall is full of police; most of the attacking party have been disarmed—a few have escaped, but she does not know that; three men, however, are making a pretty tough fight for it still. But even as Honor stands and looks on, powerless in her dismay, it is over; the men are struck down and secured.

"This is no sight for you, Honor," a man's voice says suddenly, and, looking up, she sees Brian Beresford before her, with an ugly cut on the temple, from which the blood is flowing freely.

"You!" she gasps, holding her hands out to him with a gesture infinitely touching in one so cold and proud as Honor. "Oh, Brian, I have been wanting you so! I—I thought you would never come back!"

"You see you were mistaken," he says coolly. How the man's pulse are throbbing, how the welcome in her glad sweet eyes has thrilled him, no one looking at him could divine. "I said you were not so unprotected as you imagined," he adds, looking round with a grim smile. "We got here in time to foil the rascals—thanks to Aileen!"

"Why, what had Aileen to do with it? She went home hours ago."

"No, she did not. She crossed the mountain to Drum—a stiff climb for a woman of her years—and gave us notice that the house was to be attacked some time to-night, and off we came."

"Gave you notice?" the girl repeats. She looks dazed and faint, as well she may—a hollow-eyed, white-faced wraith of a girl, in her creased white gown.

The captured men are filing out now in twos and threes, closely guarded. Suddenly Honor starts forward, she has caught sight of a face that, disfigured by blows as it is, she would know among a thousand, and her heart seems to cease beating with the shock.

The tall man marching past between two policemen looks at her for an instant, and then turns his head aside. It is the one thing too much for Honor. With a heart-broken cry that has a thrill of horror in it she falls forward at her cousin's feet.

"Confound the fellow!" he says to himself, as he lifts her gently in his arms, as if she had been a child. "If he had not held out, like the fool he is, she need never have known a word about it."

## CHAPTER VI.

Kate Dundas's most bitter enemies cannot deny that she is a beautiful woman. Dangerous she may be—a modern Circe, many of whose admirers find their way to Kilmainham, but, above and before everything else, the woman is beautiful. But it is not her face nor her figure, lithe and lissom for all its ripe maturity, that so holds men's hearts in thrall. There is a charm about her, a curious magnetic power that is even more dangerous than her beauty.

"I would not care to see much of your Mrs. Dundas," an old squire once said, talking of her. "I never knew but one woman who had the same coaxing, fooling ways with her, and, begorra, sir, she was a demon in petticoats!"

But that was only the opinion of a blunt old farmer; Launce Blake knows her a great deal better, or thinks he does. In his own way he is almost as handsome as she is; a tall fair man, with eyes so dark a gray that they look black under their thick lashes and a smile as sweet as a woman's. But, as he sits in Mrs. Dundas's pretty room to-night, he is not smiling—he has come here from Colonel Frenche's, as his father guessed he would—he is looking very stern indeed, and "altogether unmanageable," as Kate Dundas says to herself. It is not the first time by many that she has seen him in this mood. Launce is not one of her humble adorers, and perhaps she likes him all the better on that account.

"I am sure I don't know why you should be so angry," she is saying, in her pretty soft voice, which has just a touch of the Devonshire accent in it. "The man is nothing to me; but since he brought a letter from the poor major's old friend, Major Cregan, I had to be civil to him. I couldn't—could I, now"—coaxingly—"send him back again?"

Launce listens gravely; it is quite a long speech for her to make—as a rule, her eyes, her slow sweet smiles, speak for her.

"That sounds very well—and it may be true, as far as it goes—but it is not all the truth."

"Oh, Launce, how unkind you are!" She is lying back in her chair, the lamplight falling upon her bare arms, her round white throat, and the diamond cross that sparkles on her bosom.

Her dress of some soft yellow stuff that shines like silk and drapes like velvet. She wears no flowers or ornaments of any kind, except the cross on her breast and some old-fashioned gold pins in her hair. Launce Blake, as he looks at her, feels the glamour of her beauty stealing over him like a spell.

His heart is beating furiously; his jealousy and distrust are waning fast before the passion of his love that is grown to be a part of his life.

"Is it any wonder that I am racked with fear? You are so beautiful, any man must love you! And this Hunter—who is he, that he should take his place in the house more like the master of it than a mere guest? And what right has he to keep every one away from you?"

"Dear"—she laughs softly; she has such an exquisite laugh—liquid, entrancing—"the man is ridiculous, I grant you. But then—so many men are ridiculous!"

Is she laughing at him? The eyes raised to his have just a touch of mockery in their lustrous depths, or he fancies they have. He is never quite sure of her—this woman who holds him by so strong a tie. There are times when he is driven half frantic by her "humor," just as there are times when he thinks himself the happiest man on earth because she loves him.

"We are all fools where a woman is concerned!" he says bluntly, and walks to one of the windows,

setting it wide open, and letting the wind rush in with a shriek that makes Mrs. Dundas start in her chair.

"Oh, what a terrible night!" she says shivering. "I do not envy you your ride over the bog, if you take that road."

"Of course I shall take it, as usual! Why not?"

She is looking at him, a curious anxiety in her drooping eyes.

"But Launce, is it safe as things are now?"

"Safe or not, I choose to take it," he says coldly.

"But Mr. Hunter was saying only to-day that you are too venturesome."

"Mr. Hunter is an Englishman and, if he is not misjudged, a spy; it is only natural he should think so."

"A spy?" she repeats, paling a little and looking at him—she has risen, and is standing with him before the open window—with eager, questioning eyes. "Who says he is a spy?"

"More people than I could name are of that opinion."

"But do you think he is a spy, Launce?"

"Faith, I neither know nor care what he is! He is not a gentleman! Anyone could see that with half an eye!"

She turns from him with a little passionate gesture, and her face—though he cannot see it—looks for an instant almost cruel in its anger.

"You are so fastidious, dear. We cannot all be Blakes of Donaghmore, you know."

"We can all speak the truth, I hope, and the fellow doesn't even do that."

"Ah!" she says coldly. "Then it would be useless to ask you to stay to dinner and spend the evening in such company?"

It is what he has been longing to do; but something in her voice or her face as she turns aside jars upon him. As they stand there they can hear the thud of horses' hoofs coming at a rapid pace down the Boyne road—it is Mrs. Dundas's guests returning. It is getting dark fast now, and the wind is already furious in its strength as it sweeps down from the mountains.

"Do shut that window, Launce, or we shall have all the lamps blown out!"

He does her bidding mechanically; then he turns and looks at her standing beside him in her pretty gown, the one woman, so he tells himself, who is all in all to him.

Nearer and nearer come the hoof-beats; the precious moments are flying fast; and if they are to make up their little quarrel to-night there is no time to lose.

"I am going now, Kate. Am I to go like this?"

"You are so cross, Launce," she murmurs.

"Nay, give things their right names! Say I am jealous—madly jealous, because I am in love!"

"Oh, if you are only jealous, dear——"

"You know I am as jealous as ever poor Othello was."

"And with as little cause," she whispered softly, nestling her cheek against his shoulder.

The riders are at the gate now; in another minute they will be in the house; taking her in his arms, Launce kisses her and lets her go.

"My darling, how could I live till to-morrow if we had parted in anger now?" he whispers, looking at her with eager impassioned eyes.

Is it fancy, or does the face raised to his suddenly become harsh and wan? He looks down at her, startled; but there is no time for questions—the gentlemen are in the hall now, all talking and laughing at once, it would appear, by the noise they make, and he must go.

A light rain is falling as he passes out at the gate; he will have to walk home, for he sent his horse back by the groom more than an hour ago. The road is intensely dark; but that is nothing to him—he knows every inch of the way, just as he knows every inch of the dangerous path across the bog which he will have to take to reach Donaghmore. In spite of the wind there is a mist—a low clinging gray mist which hides the fields, nay, the very hedgerows between which he walks, and carries sounds—the bark of a dog, the shout of some lad out after his cattle[,] even the echoes of steps far ahead of him on the road—in the most marvelous manner. He is just turning aside to step down into the bog path when a dim shape flits out, like a ghost, from the midst and bars his way.

"Who is there?" he says gruffly. "What do you want?"

"Thank goodness, it's your honor's self!" a woman's voice answers timidly. "I am Patsy McCann, Mr. Launce. Ye mind me?"

"To be sure, Patsy! But what on earth brings you here at this hour, and in such a storm too? I hope you don't come so far from home to do your courting, Patsy?"

"Troth, an coorting's not in my head, yer honor! I've other and blacker thoughts to trouble me!"

"I'm sorry for that, Patsy."

He speaks kindly—it is his nature to speak kindly to a woman—but he is impatient to get home.

"Whist!" the girl whispers, pressing closer to him, till he can see her eyes raised eagerly to his. "Don't go for to cross the bog to-night, Misther Launce. Shure the longest way round is the shortest way home! Don't press a poor girl to speak plainer, but turn back, as you vally your life, Misther Launce!"

"Tut, tut, my girl! I'm far too tired to walk round by Drum at this hour."

"Walk till yer drop, Misther Blake, but don't cross the bog this night."

"Then you must tell why."

But the girl only wrings her hands and moans. She had not expected to meet with opposition of this kind. She took it for granted that when he heard it would not be safe to cross the bog he would go back. She did not know the temper of the Blakes of Donaghmore.

"There, get home, Patsy," he says at last, out of patience; and he is feeling tired after his long day's sport too. "It's time all honest girls were at their own firesides."

"Sorra an inch will I stir till yez promise not to put yer foot on the bog this night! Shure the boys are out, not by twos nor threes, but by scores; yez would be shot down before yez could get half-way over!"

"Ah!" he says, and draws a deep breath. It is not a pleasant prospect, but the hot blood of a fighting race is running fiercely in his veins.

At this moment the sound of men marching in step comes through the stillness. Yielding to an impulse for which he could find no reason, Launce draws back a step—the girl has disappeared as if the earth had opened and swallowed her—and in another second a small party of men, walking two abreast, is close beside him—county police unmistakably; and a tall, upright man is a little in advance of the rest. He is speaking in a low voice as they come up, but Launce hears every word.

"Good idea to think of following young Blake. They are sure to assault him; they have been waiting for a chance like this for weeks past. Then we must just close in and catch as many of the rascals as we can. Look out for this Magill—a tall fellow in a soft felt hat. I would give fifty pounds to land that fellow safe and sound in Kilmainham."

As Launce listens a furious anger stirs within him—a rage so strong that it is as much as he can do to refrain from springing out upon the cowardly speaker. He knows the man now—he would recognize those smooth false tones among a thousand—it is Mr. Hunter, Mrs. Dundas's guest and friend, the man whom from the first he has disliked and distrusted. A horrible suspicion, a chill doubt, makes him shake from head to foot. Did Kate know of this? Could it be that the woman he loved had seen him go out, a predestined victim, so that this spy might lodge one or two more rebels in Kilmainham jail? A bitter word breaks from his lips as he thinks of it. This poor girl—for now that the police have passed Patsy has reappeared, like a phantom, out of the darkness—in her ignorance and helplessness has been more true to him than the woman he has loved so passionately.

"You have saved my life, Patsy, and I'll not forget it; but I'm not sure that it would not have been better for me to have gone on in my ignorance and taken my chance!" he says grimly.

"The saints be thanked!" the girl answers solemnly. "I have done what I said I would do, and my heart is aisy this night!"

## CHAPTER VII.

A chill gray dawn is breaking when Honor Blake opens her eyes. She is in bed in her own room, and her father is sitting beside her, watchful and anxious. At first she wonders to see him there, then slowly a dim sense of pain and fear comes back to her.

"You are better?" he says cheerily. "That's right! I'll go away now, and you'll get a sleep; but Aileen shall stay in the room, in case you should feel faint again."

"Faint?" she repeats, with a smile. "Have I been faint then?"

"Faith and you have, my dear! I never knew any one stay so long in a swoon before. I half thought you were dead when I saw you first; but you are better now, and we'll talk no more about it."

As he rises, she sees that he carries his left arm in a sling and that he looks tired and pale. Then suddenly every detail of the past night comes back to her, and she feels for a few seconds as if she should sink back into unconsciousness again.

"It's nothing—a mere scratch; but they insisted on dressing it up like this!" her father cries hastily, seeing the change that has crept into her face. "No one is much hurt but that rascally groom of yours. He's got a skinful that will keep him quiet, or I'm mistaken!"

"Father," the girl whispers faintly, "some one was in it last night who—who must be saved at any price. It would kill me, I think"—pantingly—"if harm came to him."

Her father's face, as he listens, has grown as hard as a face cut out of granite; and she knows, before a word is spoken, that her plea has fallen upon deaf ears.

"They must take their chance," he says grimly; "I would not stir a finger to save the life of any one of them."

Honor knows that there is no more to be said; but as she sinks back among her pillows, a passionate determination to save this man whom she loves rises in her heart. But does she love him? He has been very dear to her all her life; but now a great gulf has opened between them—they can never be to each other as they have been. The past is as dead as the love that made it so bright and so beautiful; but, for the sake of that dead past, she feels that she must save him from the consequence of this mad folly into which he has been led or driven.

The birds are singing, now, the sky has grown suddenly rosy, and the new day is as calm and bright as the night was wild and stormy. But to Honor Blake no peace comes, no brightness. It seems to her she shall never know peace again.

As she is turning into the morning-room, a heavy step on the tiled floor makes her look round; and Launce stands before her. With a glad cry the girl flies to him.

"Oh, Launce," she sobs, "we thought you were shot last night; and we——"

But he stops her almost impatiently.

"And what happened here last night? What is the meaning of that—and that?"—pointing at bullet-holes in the walls and the door.

"Why, Launce, have you not heard?"

"I have heard nothing," he says shortly, "about Donaghmore."

She looks at him wonderingly—at his soiled dress, his haggard face and fierce eyes, so unlike the face and eyes of her favorite brother.

"Where have you been all night, Launce? And what has happened to make you look so dreadfully ill and—and strange?"

He has followed her into the morning-room and closed the door behind them.

"I have been to Drum with the body of that fellow who was shot on the moss."

"Oh, Launce, who was he?"

He sinks down upon a chair before he answers her—a man tired in body and mind. Utterly worn out he looks now in the clear strong light.

"He was Mrs. Dundas's friend and guest—her lover, for all I can tell," he says scornfully. "I hope she is proud of him and of the end he has come to. He was shot down like a dog. I heard the cry he gave, I was so close behind him."

The tears are rolling down Honor's cheeks; she is trembling so that she can scarcely stand.

"Oh, Launce," she cries piteously, "and it might have been you!"

"It ought to have been," her brother says, with a low harsh laugh that echoes dismally through the quiet sunny room. "That is where the mistake comes in!" Honor looks at him in dismay. He is so unlike himself that he frightens her. "I was to have gone first—according to their program—so that the men might attack me and give the police the chance of coming down upon them unawares. She saw me go out of her house to what she thought would be certain death, and she never lifted a finger to keep me back. That was womanly, wasn't it?"

The girl cannot answer him. She has never liked this woman—she has shrunk from and distrusted her always; but she never dreamed she could be capable of treachery so base and cruel as this.

"And whom do you think they were after?" Launce says, after a pause. "Power Magill! To think of a man like that being mixed up with the rabble rout that was out last night! But they missed him; and, though I hate the fellow, I was glad that they did."

The girl has crossed the room and is standing close beside him now, her hand on the arm of his chair, her white face bent toward him.

"No, Launce, they did not miss him—he was taken here!" He listens; but it is evident that he does not understand. "Yes, in this house," the girl goes on coldly, "where he has been a welcome guest and friend all his life! He came in with the rest to threaten and rob—and murder, too, if need be, I have no doubt! We have been fortunate in our friends and neighbors, Launce!"

"By Jove!" he gasps, and sits and stares at her—a man thoroughly startled and distressed.

Not to him need she apply for help in the plan that has already vaguely formed itself in her mind. She knows quite well that he would rather hinder than help her in any effort to save Power Magill. If he is to be saved at all, it must be at once, before they have time to remove him to Dublin; and the girl's heart throbs and her brain grows dizzy as she tries to think out her simple yet daring scheme. It is that some one—as near his height and build as possible—should get leave to visit him, and then that they should change clothes, and Power Magill should walk out in place of his visitor. She has read of such things being done before; why should they not be done again? But the question is, What man in the county would willingly take the place of Power Magill?

"It must be done," the girl says to herself, as she listens to the talk going on about her; for of course every one is talking of the men taken in the affray of the past night, and their chances of heavy punishment. "Some one can be got surely, to run the risk—if not for love, then for money!"

Brian Beresford is away at Drum; and she is glad of it—it would be awkward to have him about the house at the present crisis.

About a mile from Donaghmore, on the Boyne road, stands a cottage that, in the summer season, is almost hidden from sight by the masses of wild roses and jasmine that cover its old walls. It is a picturesque little place enough, and wondrously clean for an Irish cottage; but it is not in good repute in the place. Magistrates shake their heads when they hear of meetings held on the quiet at Hugh Scanlan's; and more than once terror and disaster have been carried into quiet homes by order of the men who meet there.

Scanlan is a man over eighty, but erect and vigorous, and full of subtle cunning. It is to this man Honor turns in trouble and perplexity. He is no friend of hers—all her life she has been taught to look upon him as an evil man and a bad neighbor, who would do any harm that lay in his power to her or hers. But to this she never gives a thought now. Power must be helped; and, if any man in Donaghmore can help him, it is Scanlan.

The afternoon sun shines brightly upon the strip of garden as she opens the gate and walks up to the half-closed door. From the threshold she can see all round the one room that the place contains. It is low, and would be dim but for the great fire burning, hot as the day is, on the low hearth. The owner of

the cottage has been sitting before the fire smoking; but, at the sight of Honor standing on his doorstep, he rises to his feet.

"Good-evening!" the girl says in her low clear voice. "I want very much to speak to you! May I come in?"

For an instant the ready tact of his race seems to forsake the old man, and he stares at her stupidly.

"Robert Blake's daughter asking to come into my house?" he mutters, raising his withered hands with a gesture of the most intense surprise.

"Yes," the girl answers gently. "I am in trouble; and I want you to help me, if you will."

She has stepped forward uninvited, and is close beside him now, looking up into his face with eyes that have not a shadow of fear or even distrust in them.

"There are more than yourself in the deep trouble this day, miss."

"Yes; and it is about one who is in deep trouble that I have come to talk to you."

He has placed a chair for her full in the light of the open door, where he can see every sign of feeling that crosses her face; but he keeps well in the shade himself. Oh, how Honor's heart beats as she looks up at him and realizes that in this very room the leaders of last night's outrage may have met to arrange their plans! She is not afraid, though her reason tells her there might be grave cause for fear in placing herself in the hands of a treacherous man and an open enemy of her father's house.

"Faith, miss, an' if it's all wan to you, you may do the talking and I'll listen! Talking is mighty dangerous for the loikes of me, these times!"

"Yes, I know," the girl replies; "but I do not want you to talk. I will tell you what I want you to do, and then you can say, 'Yes' or 'No,' as you think best. But, oh"—with a sudden clasping of the gloved hands lying on her lap—"I do hope you will say 'Yes!'"

And simply and clearly, her pretty voice broken in its earnestness, her eyes shining like stars as they fix themselves on the gray wrinkled face before her, she tells him what it is she wants done, and how much she can offer toward paying for the doing of it.

"It is not much," she says, looking at the small roll of Irish pound-notes in her hand, "but it is all I have of my own in the world; and, when he is free, he will pay you himself liberally."

The old man listens to her like one lost in a dream. She looks to him more like an angel than a living woman as she stands there pleading so earnestly—for, in her agitation, she has risen and is facing him, the sunshine falling like a glory all about her.

In his excitement he takes to blessing her in Irish, and, as the rapid words, instinct with strong feeling, [lack in the text] upon her ears, Honor draws back disconcerted.

"Are you angry?" she says. "I thought you would have been glad to help him! He has given up everything—friends, position, home, and country, it may be, for this cause to which you belong."

"And I have nothing to give up but my life," the old man answers with sudden unlooked-for dignity; "and that I would lay down this hour to see him free and safe once more."

"Then you will help us?" she says eagerly.

"Shure I'm the most helpless of ould creatures, but I'll do what I can," he answers guardedly, and with so swift a change of voice and manner that Honor almost loses hope.

However, there is no choice left her now, nothing to be done but to give the man her poor little bribe and go home, leaving Power Magill to his mercy.

Little does the girl dream, as she walks sadly back to Donaghmore through the waning light, that she has formed a protecting barrier round the old home and its inmates that will outlast the storms of years.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Very slowly the days pass at Donaghmore; a detachment of the constabulary keeps strict guard over the



old house, the master of which lies sick unto death.

It seems as if the old man's life is fading with the year. The shot that entered his arm shattered the bone immediately below the elbow, and, the wound not healing, this, together with the shock and excitement of that night's work, is telling on him.

Honor goes about like a ghost; she looks pitifully changed; but there is only faithful old Aileen to be troubled by her looks. Launce has gone back to Dublin and Horace has joined his regiment at Aldershot.

One care has been lifted off the girl's heart; Power Magill is no longer a prisoner.

The first thing that Honor heard on her return from Scanlan's cottage was that Power Magill and two others had got away, having given their guards the slip on the mountain road between Glen Doyle and Drum.

The body of the man who was shot on the moss that terrible night has been taken to Dublin by his friends, to be buried among his own people; and, if he was Kate Dundas's lover, as Launce in his jealous rage declared, the widow has certainly taken his loss very coolly.

But there is one thing that she is not taking quite so coolly, and that is the desertion of her admirers. Rose Mount is no longer the center of attraction to the neighborhood—its pretty drawing-room is deserted. Men do not care to visit at a house about which such ugly reports are circulated. They even fight shy of its beautiful mistress in public, and this is perhaps the cruelest form which punishment could assume for such a woman as Mrs. Dundas. She knows nothing of friendship and very little of love, but her desire for admiration is boundless, and her chance of that in Drum or Donaghmore is at an end forever.

November has set in cold and stormy. It seems to Honor, nervous and anxious as she is, that the wind never ceases day or night, and sometimes its shrill moans make her feel as if she were going mad.

Her father is able to come down-stairs now, but he misses the boys, and complains fretfully of the loneliness of the house.

One day Honor walks over to the rectory to see Belle Delorme. Belle is in the drawing-room reading a yellow-bound novel, which she slips dexterously out of sight at the sound of her visitor's voice.

Belle is not quite so piquant and dashing as she used to be, perhaps; but if she has been fretting for Launce—as Honor thinks—she has certainly lost none of her good looks in the process.

She looks up now with a smile as Honor enters.

"I was just going over to tell you the news, dear. I know you never hear anything at Donaghmore."

"The news!" Honor falters, turning from white to crimson; her first thought being of some new danger threatening Power Magill.

"Oh, it's nothing very wonderful—perhaps nothing that you will call news after all!" Belle says hurriedly, seeing that swift blush and understanding it. "It is just that Ross Mount is closed, and its mistress has flown away to England. Sure they are saying now that she has a husband over there, alive and well, a farmer somewhere in Devonshire. Maybe she has gone back to him."

"Maybe she has," Honor assents coldly.

"And they are saying too," Belle goes on more gravely, and looking anxiously at her friend, "that the two men who were with Power Magill have got off to America. I'm sure I hope it is true!"

Honor says not a word. She is thinking of the man who is left a homeless wanderer on his native mountains—an exile within sight of his own walls!

"It's an awful pity about poor Power, isn't it, Honor? Sometimes I cry my eyes red thinking of him," Belle goes on in her pretty plaintive voice; "and I often think he must have gone with the rest to Donaghmore to keep them in order. He couldn't have gone, you know, to—to do any harm!"

Honor looks at her gratefully, and the words linger in her mind and comfort her in some vague way during her long and lonely walk to Donaghmore.

The sun has set as she enters the gates, and a mist which has crept up from the river makes the wide empty space on her left, as she walks up toward the house, look more like a lake than solid earth.

She has left the ruins behind her, not without a nervous shiver in passing, when the sound of a step, falling lightly but regularly on the strip of grass by the side of the drive, arrests her attention and sets her heart beating rapidly.

"It is all my own foolish fancy," she says to herself, and walks faster.

The step follows faster too. She stops, and instantly that light footfall is silent. Not a creature is to be seen. The old ruins rise grim and bare between her and the pale evening sky, but not a sound comes from them.

"It must have been my own fancy," she tells herself, and, reassured, starts forward almost at a run.

But listen! Again the step sounds behind her; more distant and far less rapid than her own, but clear and unmistakable. Her heart gives a great throb, the color dies out of her cheeks, and by the time she reaches her own door she feels ready to fall from haste and fear.

The old butler is crossing the hall and he looks at her curiously.

"Have you seen anything to startle you, Miss Honor?" he says at last.

"No; I have seen nothing. Why do you ask?" Not for worlds would she own to any one the ghostly fears that shook her out there in the dusky avenue, with the sound of those following steps in her ears.

"Well," adds the butler, "one of the girls has just come in, miss, in a state of great fright, and says that she saw the old abbot himself at the corner of the avenue, watching the house for all the world as if it held some treasure of his own."

"Nonsense!" Honor says, turning suddenly pale, even in the lighted hall. "I hope these silly tales are not going to begin again. Your master will be very displeased if they come to his ears."

As she enters the sitting-room she sees that her father is not alone.

A tall man is standing on the rug before the fire, talking with much animation. It is Brian Beresford.

"I have taken the liberty of invading you without even an invitation," he says, coming forward with outstretched hand.

"And you are welcome," the girl answers softly. "Besides, your last invasion was so well timed, we may well forgive this one."

"Ah," he says, smiling gravely, "that was a rough sort of invasion! I hope I shall never have to attack Donaghmore in that fashion again."

"I hope not indeed!" Honor agrees promptly. "I don't think I could live through another night like that."

"Oh, yes, you could—through a dozen such, if necessary. I quite admired your bravery. I never saw a young lady so cool under fire before."

She blushes as she listens; her heart thrills with a half-reluctant pride at his praise.

"What has come to me," she says to herself crossly, "that I can't look at the man without blushing? It's time I had more sense."

"I have come to stay a day or two," he tells them.

A week passes, however, and he does not go away. To Honor it is a week of very mixed sensations. She has never before known any one like this stolid Englishman, who under all his composure hides a passion so fiery, a will so strong.

On his part he is very grave and gentle. Not once does a word of love pass his lips; and she is glad of it, for she is in no mood to think of love or lovers.

"It would be horrible to think of such things," she tells herself, "while poor Power Magill is wandering in homeless misery."

She is thinking of him to-night as she looks out at the moonlight, lying chill and white on the grass and the bare flower-beds.

"Where is he now?" she asks herself with a shivering sigh, as she listens to the restless creak and sough of the trees. It is a question she is asking continually; but who can answer it?

He may be lying dead on some bare hillside, or at the bottom of some dark gorge in the mountains.

From the drawing-room window she can see across to the drive. Some one is coming slowly toward the house—a girl, little more than a child, with an old cloak flung over her head—country fashion. Honor watches her, and wonders which of the village people have been brave enough to pass the ruins of Donaghmore at this hour.

The girl comes straight on to the window at which Honor is still standing. When she is quite close she opens her cloak and holds out a letter—not a bulky letter, a mere scrap, closely twisted; and, without a second thought, Honor raises the window and takes it out of her hand.

"Who has sent it, Nora?"—for she recognizes the child now that she sees her face.

But Nora only shakes her head and hurries away, passing over the moonlit grass like the mere shadow of a girl.

The gentlemen are stirring in the dining-room now; she can hear their chairs being set back, and her father's voice as he opens the door for their guest.

There is not a moment to be lost if she is to read her letter in secret, and instinctively she feels that it is meant for no eyes but her own. Untwisting it rapidly, she spreads it out and reads:

"Will you venture to the old ruins at dusk to-morrow, to see one who needs your forgiveness, even if you must refuse him your pity? P. M."

As she reads the tears rush into her eyes, half blinding her; the sorrowful pleading words grow dim and indistinct.

"How he must have suffered," she says to herself, "to have changed like this!" Masterful Power, who used always to take obedience for granted! There is something pitiful in it that goes straight to the tender woman's heart, loyal to its old traditions.

As she was putting the paper into the bosom of her dress, the drawing-room door opens, and Brian Beresford enters, followed by her father. Brian's eyes at once seek her where she stands beside the open window, her fingers playing nervously with the tell-tale scrap of paper.

His face darkens at once, and she knows that he has seen and understood.

## CHAPTER IX.

Never has time passed so slowly to Honor Blake. All the morning she goes about her work with a listless preoccupied air that could not fail to attract attention if there were any one to heed the girl or her moods.

Perhaps Brian Beresford heeds them; but Honor never gives a thought to him. She would be glad if he would go away and leave her to herself; but since he makes no such offer, she puts up with him.

And now, in the late afternoon, she sits down at the piano, more to pass the time than to amuse their guest. In truth, as she plays she forgets him altogether. The music, now low and sweet, now wild and martial, soothes her and brings back some of her lost nerve.

Brian Beresford, looking and listening, frowns, and then sighs. She is an enigma to him, this stately, contradictory Irish girl, with her moods and her prejudices, and, above all, her reserve. He has met no one quite like her. The women of his world are of a totally different type—he can understand them easily; but Honor he cannot understand.

He feels his heart soften as he looks at her. He is proud, and it has jarred upon his pride terribly that a man like Power Magill should have been preferred to him.

"And the chances are, now the fellow is in disgrace, she will cling to him all the closer," he says to himself bitterly. He does not care to own it, but in his heart he is savagely jealous of Power Magill.

Very softly is Honor playing now—a sort of dirge or lament for the chief of a clan. Suddenly she stops, and her head droops low over the keys. She has forgotten everything but the sore pain at her own heart and the anxious dread that is making every breath a torture to her.

"What if he should be taken to-night?" she is saying to herself. "How do we know that that child is to

be trusted? How dare he trust any one when there is such a heavy reward out for him—poor Power?"

The tears come into her eyes as she thinks of him. It grows more bitter to her every moment, the thought of this meeting that is so close at hand now.

"Honor," Brian says gently, "will you not let me help you? You are in some trouble, I know." He has crossed the room and is standing beside her. "You can trust me, surely?"

"I could trust you with my life; but this secret is not my own."

"I know it is not; nevertheless you might trust it to me."

She raises her head and looks at him, and something in his face brings the color into her own. He is very brave and true, a safe shelter in trouble—she has proved that—and her heart yearns for the help he could give her. But it may not be. His sympathies are all on the side of law and order, and she has ranged herself, for this one night at least, among the opposite ranks.

"Don't think me curious, Honor," he says earnestly; "but I am sure you are in need of a friend's help, and I would like you to let me give it."

"No one can help me—not even you," she answers gently, getting up and looking at him with those troubled eyes that move him so strangely.

"And yet you are so good to me always that I should like to tell you my trouble if I might. But it is better not, perhaps."

"Let me say one thing, Honor. If this trouble of yours is connected with Power Magill—and I believe it is—you will not forget that he is a dangerous man, a man not to be trusted."

"I will not forget," she answers with a shiver, as she thinks of the meeting that is drawing nigh so rapidly.

The sun has set, and a cold mist is rising. It is very peaceful but rather dreary outside; and inside, in the familiar pretty room, the shadows are gathering.

Brian Beresford draws a step nearer. He had not meant to say one word of love to her—this willful girl who makes so light of him and his devotion; but, standing so close beside her in this tender gray twilight, impulse masters his judgment.

"Honor, has my love no power to touch you? Must this man forever stand between us even in his——" He is going to say disgrace, but the piteous look on the girl's face stays him.

"Oh, Brian, don't talk to me of love now—I cannot bear it!"

It is the first time she has ever called him Brian, and in her face, as she turns it from him, crimson from brow to chin, in her very attitude, as she stands with clasped hands before him, there is some subtle change that chills him.

"Then promise me that when times are brighter and you are happier you will listen to me, Honor."

"Perhaps," she stammers; and then, with tears in her eyes: "Oh, how cruel I am! I'm not worth loving!" And she is gone before he can say another word.

For so stoical a man, Brian Beresford is strangely excited to-night. Long after Honor has left him he walks up and down the darkening room, and, when the old butler comes in to light the lamps, he goes out on to the terrace and continues his measured tramp to and fro, smoking and thinking, and watching he scarcely knows for what.

Ever since he saw Honor hide away that scrap of paper in her dress he has been tormented with jealous fears.

"If the fellow were once out of the country I should feel all right," he tells himself. But the fellow is not out of the country—nay, may be in the immediate neighborhood for all he can tell, and in consequence he is racked with anxiety.

From the terrace he can see the ruins clearly at first; then the mist partly blots them out, and presently he can only guess at their position. But he has no interest in the ruins. He is not in the least superstitious; and certainly he does not believe in the old abbot.

He has reached the end of the walk and turned to go back, when the sight of a tall slight figure,

coming rapidly down the steps not many yards away, brings him to a sudden halt.

"Ah!" he says, as he recognizes Honor. "Then it was not without cause that I've been so uneasy! A warning, these people would call it, I suppose."

It is a terrible blow to him, striking to the very root of his love. He hates mystery; and to find this girl, whom he had thought perfect in her maidenly pride and purity, stealing out in the dark from her father's house fills him with dismay.

For an instant he feels tempted to follow and speak to her, then he turns back. He can hardly control himself so far as to speak calmly, and every faint far-away noise makes him start.

"She is safe enough," he tells himself a dozen times; but he finds no comfort in his own assertions.

In his heart he feels convinced that she has gone to meet Power Magill; and in his jealous fury he almost hates her for it.

"Where is Honor?" her father asks fretfully; and then, as time goes on and she does not come in, he says again, "Where can Honor be?"

"I will go and find her for you," Brian says at last—he can bear the suspense no longer. "She cannot have strayed very far. I was talking to her a while ago."

He speaks lightly enough, but his heart is not light. A curious depression has come upon him. It seems to him that his love for this girl has died, and that half the brightness of his life has died along with it. He has not the least idea in what direction to begin his search.

The heavy iron gates at the end of the avenue are closed, but not locked, and he opens them and walks out into the high-road. Once, as he passes a narrow lane, he fancies he hears a slight rustle in the bushes that grow close and low at the side of the path; but, when he stops to listen, he can hear nothing, and so sets it down to fancy.

"Surely she has not gone into the village on a night like this," he says to himself at last, daunted by his want of success; and at the bare surmise he feels his face burn hotly.

Turning, he walks rapidly back—for the village lies in the opposite direction, past Donaghmore—and, as he comes near the gates, he is startled to see a car drawn up by the side of the high wall, and evidently waiting for somebody.

The driver has been standing beside his horse, and at the sound of Brian's step he leads the animal slowly forward. Apparently he does not wish to be seen; and indeed he might easily escape the notice of any one less quick of sight than Brian Beresford.

"Hallo!" Brian shouts; but he receives no answer; and, taking a stride or two, he gains the horse's side. The man walks on the other side of the animal, close by the wall; and, what with the darkness and the way his hat is pulled down over his eyes, his own mother might be pardoned for not recognizing him.

"Whose car is this?" Brian demands sternly, "and for whom are you waiting here?"

"Sorrer a sowl I'm waiting for, your honor! The best face in Derry wouldn't tempt me this minute. I'm just dead beat meself—and the baste! It's to Boyne Fair we've been this day, and a terrible time entirety we've had of it."

Brian looks at the man and stops. He seems to be speaking the truth; and, if he is not, Brian knows the Irish peasant too well by this time to expect to force it from him.

With a short "Good-night," he turns away, and the man looks after him with a scowl.

"It's a bullet in yer skin that I'd give yez this blessed night if I dare take my own way," he mutters savagely.

Very slowly Brian Beresford walks back to Donaghmore. He is not so calm now, not so sure of Honor's safety. His fears are rising with every step he takes through the murky darkness. He feels that, if she is not in the house when he reaches it, he shall be able to keep silence no longer. Even at the risk of betraying her secret the squire must be told.

As he is passing the ruins a faint sound reaches his ear. He stops instantly and listens, his head bent, every sense on the alert. He is not thinking of Honor now—not in his wildest dreams would he connect her in any way with these weird unholy old ruins; but he is anxious—as anxious as ever Launce was—to

solve the mystery that attaches to the place. Again it comes, a long-drawn, gasping cry, with this time a ring of fear in it.

"Good heavens, it is a woman!" he says, and goes quickly, but very quietly and cautiously, in the direction of the sound.

He has gained the low-browed gateway leading into the great quadrangle, when a dark figure dashes past him, and the next instant there is a loud report. He feels a sharp pain in his shoulder, and knows that he has been hit; but he does not give a thought to that in his intense excitement. He is conscious of but one thing—Honor's voice calling his name.

"Brian—oh, Brian, come to me!" The shrill clear tones ring through the ghostly silence.

## CHAPTER X., AND LAST.

Honor hastens down the avenue, looking neither to the right nor left. Her head is dizzy, her heart beating heavily in this nervous dread that has come upon her. She starts at every shadow that crosses her path; the sound of the wind in the pine-trees almost makes her scream, and when, just as she reaches the ruins, a low whistle breaks the quiet, a sharp cry of terror escapes her lips.

"Whist, miss! It's a friend," a deep voice whispers close beside her, though she can see no one; and the next moment Power Magill comes out from the low doorway and calls her gently by name.

"My darling, this has been too much for you!" he says, seeing the dread on her face as she stands close beside him. "I should not have asked you to come here; but I felt that I could not go away till I had seen your face, and heard you tell me with your own lips that you have forgiven me."

He has led her across the great paved court to a corner where they can stand together without being seen by any one passing along the avenue.

There is something awful in the silence that broods round them; but the girl's nerves are too much shaken for her to be quite conscious of her surroundings. The man standing beside her is no less agitated.

"Honor, you know that, in acting as I did, I brought suffering upon myself—horrible suffering—apart from all social considerations! You have never doubted my love? You are true to me still; and I'm thankful for it. I would rather see you dead at my feet than know you were false to your solemn promise!"

The passionate voice, speaking so close to her ear that she can feel his hot breath on her cheek, the pale eager face peering into hers, as if to read its secret even in the darkness, strikes a sudden chill through the girl. For the first time personal fear—fear of the man before her—assails her.

"Have you no word for me?" the man pleads wistfully. "You stand there like a spirit, and say no word of comfort or of pity! By heavens, if I did not know all that you dared for my sake, I should swear that you had no love in your heart for me!"

"Love for you!" she cries at last, speaking on the impulse of the moment, as it is in her nature to speak. "Why should I love you? What love had you for me when you shot my father—when——"

But he steps her almost savagely.

"I fired only one shot that night; but— [lack in the text] ses on my false aim!—that missed the man I hated."

"And that man was Brian Beresford?"

"Yes," he answers slowly, defiantly, even, "it was Brian Beresford. It is no fault of mine he is alive to-night."

"And you would have killed him?" she cries, drawing back from him.

"Why not? He would have sent me to Kilmainham."

He is changed already—the girl divines this instinctively, and shrinks still farther away from him against the damp wall. This life that he has led—separated from friends and equals—has done its work.

"And now, Honor, we have no time to lose. Everything is ready for me to get away to-night, but"—

with a sudden break in the passionate voice—"oh, my love, I cannot go without you!"

"You cannot go without me, Power?" the girl gasps. In her wildest dreams no such fancy as this had risen to trouble her. "But you must go without me! I cannot go with you!"

"And why not, if you love me?"

"But I do not love you," the girl says calmly. "I am very sorry for you; but all love is done with between us. Surely, Power, after that night you knew it would be so?"

He does not answer her, and his silence fills her with more anxiety and fear than could any passionate outburst.

He has walked to the end of the court, and stands there, looking over the broken parapet. Once she fancies that he raises his hand, as though beckoning to some one, but she is not certain, because it is so dark and he is so far off. As she stands shivering, she hears a step go slowly past. Surely it is Brian's step? Oh, what would she not give for the sight of his face now? And then his warning comes back to her—"He's a dangerous man—a man not to be trusted." Can it be that he knew him better than she did? Power himself has not been careful to keep this meeting from his friends. More than once she has caught a glimpse of dark figures passing to and fro at the farther end of the court, where the pillars are still standing; and, as she realizes the fact that she is alone, a helpless girl, in the midst of these men, desperate and lawless as she knows them to be, it is only by an immense effort she keeps from screaming aloud. It would be useless, she knows—it might even bring about the very results she has most to dread.

"Honor," her lover says, coming back to her, "I have no time to plead with you, and sure I have no need to tell you again how I love you. I thought and hoped you would have come with me this night of your own free will; but since you will not do that, by St. Joseph, you shall come without it!"

From the road comes a sudden shrill whistle, and the girl's heart sinks within her. Oh, how mad she has been to put herself in the power of this man and his associates!

For an instant, as she leans against the wall behind her, a faintness steals over her. Her eyes grow dim, and there is a sound in her ears like the rush and roar of the weir down the river.

When this feeling has passed away she hears Power's voice speaking, as it seems to her dizzy brain, out of great darkness.

"There is a car waiting to take us to Boyne. Once there we are with friends, and you can make all needful preparations for our journey."

She does not answer him; she could not. Her lips are dry and quivering with the terror that has come upon her.

At this moment some one glides from behind a pillar and touches Power on the arm. With an impatient gesture he moves back a little way to listen to the man's message; and in this one second Honor sees her only chance of escape.

With a slow gliding motion she gains the end of the wall, and sees the open square of the old court before her.

Some one may be watching from behind those broken buttresses, she knows; but she is desperate, and has no time to count the chances. With a rapid step she crosses the square, and is almost at the open gateway when a man steps forward and holds her back by the arm.

"Not so fast, miss! Shure ye'd not be for forgetting the masther!"

With a sharp cry of fear she struggles to get free; but she might as well try to fly as to loose her arm from the grip of those grimy fingers.

Surely the steps she heard a little while ago are coming back again—more slowly this time, but still coming! Yes, and it is Brian—she knows it; she cannot be mistaken, and, yielding to a sudden impulse, she calls his name aloud, calls it again and again, in her utter helplessness and misery.

She does not think that he will hear and come to her. She has no hope of help from any quarter, as she looks round upon the dark menacing faces of the men who have gathered so noiselessly and rapidly about her. She is in their power—she realizes that; and, as a Blake of Donaghmore, she expects but little mercy, unless it be granted her for Power Magill's sake.

He has come up to her now, and the men fall back a little at a sign from him.

"Are you mad, Honor?" he asks hoarsely. "Is it your own death or is it mine that you seek this night?"

"Oh, let me go home!" she moaned, looking at him piteously. "If ever you loved me, Power, let me go home!"

But a threatening murmur rises from the men about them.

"If I would trust you to carry our secret back to Donaghmore they would not," he said curtly. "No, no, Honor—there is no turning back for either of us!"

The steps—the slow, heavy tread, as of a man in deep thought—are close at hand now. She can hear them plainly; so does Power, for he pauses and seems almost to hold his breath in the deep stillness that has fallen upon the place.

Through this quiet Honor's despairing cry—"Brian—oh, Brian, come to me!"—rings sharply out.

She hears a shout as if in answer; and the hoarse murmur of threatening voices fills her heart with fear. She has twisted her ankle on the rough stones, and now, when she tries to move, she cannot, so she crouches back against the wall and waits for the help that she is sure is coming in an agony that is fast merging into unconsciousness.

"Honor, where are you? Speak!"

She tries to answer: but her voice has failed her; she can only moan faintly in her great pain.

And clearly, above all the sounds of this terrible night, she hears a man's voice saying sternly:

"Back, Magill! Would yez risk the lives of your friends for the sake of a woman?"

Then comes silence—a great silence—and darkness; and the terror and the pain and the longing for Brian all fade away together.

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Fortunately Honor's swoon does not last long. The cold night air revives her, and she opens her eyes to see Brian Beresford kneeling beside her. He had almost stumbled over her in his eager search for her, and at the first glance he thought that she was dead.

Everything is intensely quiet as the girl raises her head from his shoulder and looks round her with terrified eyes. There is not a sound to tell that the place has so lately been filled with armed men.

"Where are they?" she whispers, trembling. "Oh, Brian, if they come back they will kill us both!"

The same thought is in his own mind; but not for worlds would he put it into words. The men fled in a panic, thinking he was not alone; but let them discover that they have only one man to face, and they will soon return and make short work of him.

He knows it well; but what can he do? He cannot leave Honor, and, with his wounded arm, it would be impossible for him to carry her so far as the house. And as he holds her there, her cheeks against his shoulder, her little cold hands in his, he thinks that death itself with her might not be so very terrible after all.

"They will not come back," he tells her—"at least not yet. They will be afraid."

But even as he speaks a stealthy footfall breaks the quiet, and a man's voice says low and guardedly, yet distinct enough for them to hear:

"Have they had time to get to the house, Neil?"

"Troth an' they have, sor—twice over! I'd take my oath they didn't let the grass grow under their feet, once they got free!"—and the man laughs grimly, a low mocking laugh that echoes through the lonely place.

Honor clings more close to Brian, and shivers like one stricken with ague. So far they have not been seen; and the men—Power Magill and his servant—must have passed close to them. But any moment a stir, a heavy breath may betray them.

"If I thought there was a chance of overtaking them, I would follow them even now," Power Magill says fiercely. "To think a fellow like that should have baffled us at the last moment! If it were not for the men's cowardly fear that the police were with him, he couldn't have done it."



"Faith, and that's true for yer honor!"

Very slowly they come back again, talking earnestly. It is evident from what they say that Power Magill has offended his friends by to-night's rashness and, though his companion speaks respectfully there is a veiled threat in his words that Power cannot but feel.

"I would do it over again," Power answers sternly, "if it was my life that I was risking in place of my liberty."

"But the boys don't care to risk their liberty—why should they, the cratures?—even for a beautiful young lady like Miss Honor—Heaven bless her!" the other man says sturdily.

His master retorts angrily; but they are too far off now for their words to be heard; and again silence reigns.

It is long before Brian and Honor dare to move, though the girl is trembling with cold and the man's arm is paining him intensely—longer still before they venture out of their hiding-place.

Honor will never forget that walk up to the house in the chill damp night, the dread of pursuit making her heart throb wildly. Her companion is very silent; and, when he does speak, his voice sounds cold and harsh. More than once she tries to thank him for coming to her help so bravely; but the words die away on her lips. She finds it hard to believe that this man spoke tenderly to her only a little time ago. His very words ring in her ears and serve to make his grim silence more oppressive.

"He is sorry already for having spoken then," she says to herself; "but he need not be. I shall never remind him of them—never!"

They are within sight of the house before she can summon up courage to thank him for coming to her aid.

"It was so brave of you," she adds simply; "for of course you did not know how many you might have to face! I'm afraid I am very stupid—I don't know how to thank you as you deserve."

"No, no," he says hastily, almost impatiently. "Pray do not thank me at all; I deserve no thanks, I assure you! I would have done as much for any woman!"

There is something almost cruel in the way in which he says it, and tears well up in the girl's eyes.

"I know you would," she says, with cold gentleness; "but that does not make the act less brave."

Suddenly he turns on her with unexpected passion.

"I was not half so courageous as you were, Honor! I would not have met Power Magill at such an hour and in such a place for any consideration. You were—if you will let me say so—recklessly brave to do such a thing."

The light from the open door streams out, and she looks up at him as he speaks. His face is ghastly pale, and his tone is angry and scornful. She realizes for the first time how strange her rash act must appear in the eyes of this fastidious Englishman. The women of his world would never have done such a thing, she knows; but that does not trouble her—it is the scornful surprise on his face that cuts her so cruelly.

"Never mind," she says to herself, suppressing a sob as they go up the steps together. "I am not a fine London lady, and I don't wish to be; if the pater and the boys are content with me as I am that is enough. It is nothing to me what this man thinks."

Brian is almost past conscious thought just now; but he hides his pain bravely till they get into the house and he has seen the great doors fastened securely; then he sinks down exhausted, and Honor sees, by the blood on his sleeve, that he has been wounded.

Instantly the whole place is in confusion. A messenger is sent off at once to the chief constable at Drum and another fetches Doctor Symmonds, who when he arrives finds his patient very low indeed.

"It is not the wound," he explains to the squire, "it is the loss of blood that has done the mischief. A little longer, and the poor fellow would have bled to death; as it is, he will need the greatest care to pull him through."

\* \* \* \* \*

"My dear Honor, I do wish you would try to like him!" Belle Delorme says, looking up at her friend with pretty pleading eyes. "I'm sure he's awfully fond of you—any one can see that."

"And he's rich—why don't you tell me that?" Honor returns scornfully. "Every one's head seems to be turned by the man's money—even the pater's."

"Your head is not turned," Belle observes dryly, "nor your heart either, unfortunately."

"Tell me one thing," says Honor, facing her friend suddenly—"do you think this George Cantrill is as nice as Launce?"

"As nice as Launce? Well, no, I don't; but then"—gravely—"you don't often see any one who is quite as nice as Launce, do you, dear?"

"I intend to wait till I do, then," Honor retorts.

"Brian Beresford was nearly as nice," Belle says demurely, looking innocently at Honor; "but then he was English, and he had an awful temper—hadn't he?—and—" But she stops with a little gap of surprise, for the man himself, very worn and gaunt-looking, is walking toward them. "Why, Honor, did you know he was coming?"

Honor turns and looks at her tranquilly.

"Did I know who was coming, dear? Aren't you just a trifle vague this morning?"

"I'm awfully glad," the girl answers, with a curious smile; "and I think I'll go home now. Dad is sure to want me; and— How do you do, Mr. Beresford?"—turning swiftly. "I'm delighted to see you back in Ireland."

"Thanks, Miss Delorme," a deep voice answers; and Honor looks round and sees him standing on the grass quite close to her—this grave, bearded man who left Donaghmore four months ago, looking so very ill and worn. He looks ill now, for that matter; but at the sight of him her heart gives a great leap and the color comes into her face.

"An unexpected guest, I can claim no welcome," he says, looking at her almost wistfully.

"But you are as welcome as unexpected," Honor answers, holding her hand and smiling graciously.

He barely touches the slim white fingers; he looks away from her, as if the sight of her beauty pained him.

Belle has disappeared; they can hear her singing as she flits between the great tree-trunks, a dainty figure in her gay print gown.

"You have been ill again?" Honor says gently. She is feverishly excited, but no one could imagine that from her manner. Her voice trembles a little, but that is the only sign she gives of the tumultuous emotion that the sight of this man has roused in her.

And she thought she had forgotten him—that if he never came to Donaghmore it would not matter in the least. His scornful words had hurt her cruelly; she had never forgiven them, and he knew that she had not.

Though she had been so kind to him all those weeks that he lay hovering between life and death he had not been deceived. He left Donaghmore fully conscious that he was not forgiven.

But that did not trouble him. He had been strong in his resentment then; he had judged her, and disapproved of her in his calm judicial way, and there was an end of it.

"I've had a nasty touch of low-fever, that is all."

"And you never let us know!"

"No. Why should I? You had trouble enough with me!"

"Trouble!" the girl says passionately; and at the sudden change in her voice he raises his head. "Do you forget it was through my fault you were suffering—that if I had not acted so foolishly that night you would not have been shot? Oh, I think of it sometimes till it almost turns my brain!"

It is an exquisite April day, the air is keen and sweet here in the heart of the old-fashioned garden, full of the odor of budding leaves and freshly-turned earth, mingled with the perfume of the great lilac-

trees, which are one mass of bloom.

To Honor's Celtic beauty-loving nature such a day as this is full of delights; it soothes her.

"If you have forgotten me," she says more calmly, "for all the pain I brought upon you, I have never forgiven myself."

"I don't know that I have forgiven you," he says, looking at her almost sternly. "There are things a man like me finds it hard to forgive; but as for that stray bullet—it was a mere accident—I have never blamed you in the least for that."

"Then what else had you to forgive me for?"

He laughs, and moves a little way from her—a restless black figure among all his morning freshness.

"Oh, we won't talk of it!" he says, almost awkwardly. "I was a fool to come back, though, and, by Jove, I ought to have known it!"

"No, you are not a fool," the girl answers bitterly; "but you are certainly the worst-tempered man I ever met."

"Thank you for your good opinion!"

"You are welcome; it's an honest opinion so far as it goes. And now we had better go in; you will want something to eat, and you are tired, I dare say."

"Yes, I am tired of a good many things," he replies, with a short laugh.

They walk together back to the house, between the beds of early wall-flowers and the Lent lilies nodding in the sunshine.

"I suppose I ought to congratulate you, Honor."

"Congratulate me," the girl repeats, looking at him with some surprise; then a sudden thought comes to her, and she smiles; but he does not see the smile.

"Yes—on your engagement to this fellow from Dublin. He is very rich, I hear."

"Immensely rich," the girl agrees calmly. "And then he is clever too; he writes—I'm sure I don't know what he writes; but he is literary."

"I'm glad you think so highly of him, and I hope you will be happy," he says after a pause.

"Thanks. I could do with a little happiness for a change, you know! I've not had too much of it in my life, have I?"

"And yet you ought to be happy, if ever a woman ought! You are young and beautiful—I think sometimes you hardly know how beautiful you are; and perhaps that is your greatest charm."

"Oh, yes, I do!" she answers, showing her white teeth and her dimples in a sudden smile. "But, after all, as you said once, if you remember, I am only an Irish girl; and the wonder is that such a fine gentleman as this George Cantrill should look at me! Don't you think so?"

"No, I do not," he returns frigidly. "I think you are a fit wife for any man!"

"And since when have you thought that, Brian? Tell me the truth," the girl says, stopping on the narrow path, and looking up at him with lovely imperious eyes.

The man's heart yearns for her, as she stands there in her grace and beauty, and the passionate love he has tried so hard to subdue rises and masters him.

"What does that matter? I know it now!" he says hoarsely. "Should I be here to-day if I did not?"

"And what brought you here to-day, Brian?" She is looking at him, and he feels his cheeks burn under her glance.

"It's too late to talk of that now," he says, trying not to look at her.

"Let me be judge of that; tell me"—coaxingly—"why you came all this way, and you so ill—not fit to travel?"

"I came to ask you to be my wife, Honor. I fought against it as long as I could; but my love was

stronger than my pride, and I came, even at the risk of being mocked at for my folly. But I had not been five minutes in the house before I heard you were going to marry this fellow from Dublin, and even then I was fool enough to come out to look at you. I could not go away without one glance at your face."

"I should think not," Honor says softly.

"Oh, it was very stupid of me!" he answers, with a grim smile. "But there's not much harm done, and I shall go by the next train."

"But"—with a swift hot blush—"you have not done what you came to do!"

He looks at her angrily. He sees nothing but mockery in her face, and his heart is sore, for all his pride resents it.

"Of course not! Why should I ask another man's betrothed to marry me?"

"But I am not another man's betrothed," the girl says, with a little sob. She is acting in a very unlady-like manner; but this is not the time to stand on etiquette; a little false pride now, and this man whom she loves with all her heart would slip out of her life never to return. She trembles and turns pale at the mere thought. "And I do think, if you came all the way from England to ask me that, you should ask me," she stammers, and turns rosy red again.

"Good heavens, Honor, are you making a fool of me?"

She does not speak; all her sweet audacity has fled before the passion in his eyes, in his voice, in his touch as he clasps her hand.

But, looking into her face, he needs no words to tell him that at last he has won the desire of his heart. He knows now what he has gained in winning her love, and how empty the years would have been without it. She is the one "good gift" that can crown his life, this beautiful willful woman whom once, in his ignorance, he called ONLY AN IRISH GIRL.

## **THE END.**

Typographical errors silently corrected:

Chapter 1: *eying* silently corrected as *eyeing*

Chapter 1: *Delorne* silently corrected as *Delorme*

Chapter 1: *\_ward\_s* silently corrected as *words*

Chapter 2: *contrve* silently corrected as *contrive*

Chapter 2: *'How sweet* silently corrected as *"How sweet*

Chapter 2: *speech!"* silently corrected as *speech!"*

Chapter 3: *Alleen* silently corrected as *Aileen*

Chapter 3: *his letters* silently corrected as *his letters*.

Chapter 4: *nothiug but scare* silently corrected as *nothing but scare*

Chapter 4: *It ever he thought* silently corrected as *If ever he thought*

Chapter 4: *Honor foels* silently corrected as *Honore feels*

Chapter 5: *answered* silently corrected as *answers*

Chapter 5: *burst into tears* silently corrected as *bursts into tears*

Chapter 5: *some with it* silently corrected as *come with it*

Chapter 5: *corriders* silently corrected as *corridors*

Chapter 5: *to see anythng* silently corrected as *to see anything*

Chapter 5: *for you, Honor.* silently corrected as *for you, Honor,*

Chapter 6: *when he think himself* silently corrected as *when he thinks himself*

Chapter 6: *Mr. Hunter is an Englishman* silently corrected as *"Mr. Hunter is an Englishman*

Chapter 6: *he should think so.* silently corrected as *he should think so."*

Chapter 6: *If harm* silently corrected as *if harm*

Chapter 7: *I never new* silently corrected as *I never knew*

Chapter 7: *frightens her. I was* silently corrected as *frightens her. "I was*

Chapter 7: *throughly* silently corrected as *thoroughly*

Chapter 7: *in its earnestness.* silently corrected as *in its earnestness,*

Chapter 9: *perferred to him* silently corrected as *preferred to him*

Chapter 9: *Then promise me* silently corrected as *"Then promise me*

Chapter 10: *rush and rour* silently corrected as *rush and roar*

Chapter 10: *the crosses the square* silently corrected as *she crosses the square*

Chapter 10: *but you are certainly* silently corrected as *"but you are certainly*

Chapter 10: *replies. with* silently corrected as *replies, with*

Chapter 10: *short laugh."* silently corrected as *short laugh.*

Chapter 10: *harm done. and* silently corrected as *harm done, and*

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