

## Where a Bold Thrush Sings

*Scenes and sketches in an Irish parish, or, Priest and people in Doon*

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### *The Interview with the Agent.*

WELL, Bryan Coghlan's rent was raised, as he anticipated, at the rate of ten shillings per acre ; and for the fifty acres which he farmed—a considerable portion of which he and his father before him had reclaimed from the “ red bog”—he had now to pay seventy-five, instead of the fifty golden sovereigns he had hitherto paid yearly. As if to prove the truth of the saying that “ sorrows never come alone,” the two seasons following the rise in the rent were the most unfavourable for farmers for many years. There were two downright wet harvests. The potatoes rotted in the ground under a deluge of water, and the barley crop, the chief source of income to the Doon farmers, was partially destroyed before it could be gathered into the haggards. A disease also set in among Bryan's sheep, owing to the continued damp weather, causing most of them to perish ; and to make matters worse, two of his horses were killed by lightning in an exceptionally severe thunderstorm. Thus, in his case, misfortunes came treading on each other's heels like Job's messengers of evil.

At length the time came when Bryan owed a full year's rent, and had not the money, nor the ways or means of procuring it. In due course a “ notice to quit” was served on him. On the advice of Father John, and as a last resource, he went to the agent's office to make a personal appeal for time to pay, or else a reduction in his rent. After a brief visit to his newly-acquired estate, the landlord had returned to London to reside there permanently. His agent and cousin, Mr. Toler, had thus the sole management and control of the Doon property, where his will was law and his power despotic.

The day of Bryan's visit to the agent was an anxious one for his family, and as night approached and he had not yet returned home, many a journey did Mrs. Coghlan make from the house to the road to listen for the well-known noise of the jolting old side-car, and the familiar step of old “ Gilley's” jog-trot, and many an inquiry was made to know if there was “ any sign of him comin” At long last, however, he arrived.

As Bryan descended from the jaunting-car his wife and children remarked, with mingled feelings of pain and shame, that he exhibited indications of slight intoxication, or, at least, of being “ hearty.” Now, heretofore he had borne an unblemished reputation for strict sobriety. Many a time he was pointed to as a model for imitation by an irate wife, whose husband was in the habit of returning late in the evening from fair or market with “ just a drappie in his ee,” [1] and somewhat more eloquent and disputative than usual.

“ Look at Bryan Coghlan,” she would say ; “ what a correct, study man he is, that no one ever yet seen comin' home with the sign of a drop o' drink on him. He never loses more than half a day at fair or market, and he can be seen at his work, afther doin' his business—better than those that spind their day gaggin' an' loitherin' about public-houses—when you and the likes of you come home in the heel o' the day, sometimes stupid, 'toxicated, without either ‘ meg or geg’ in ye ; more times shoutin' and makin' holy shows of yerselves before the world. Signs on it, isn't he the snug man to-day.”

Hence it was that Bryan's wife and older children experienced all those feelings of pain and keen disappointment which we ever feel when some cherished hope is defeated, or some loved idol rudely thrown from its pedestal. However, they showed no other symptoms of annoyance than preserving a significant silence whilst he ate his supper, which he did after the ravenous manner of a starving man. The nourishing food almost immediately restored him to himself, and great were the remorse and shame he felt from knowing that his indiscretion in the matter of drink was noticeable to his family. It was only after the Rosary had been said, and when he was smoking his pipe after his usual placid and contented manner, apparently, that Mrs. Coghlan, anxious though she was to hear the momentous news, asked him about the result of his mission.

“ Well, Bryan, avic, and how did you get on to-day with the agent ? Will he give time till we sell the barley to pay the year's rent, or will he give any abatement on it ? I hope, Bryan, asthore, you have good news for us. Sure, I'm prayin' all day for God to move the heart of that hard man. God forgive me for speaking uncharitably of any one.”

“ Aye ; I seen him, Mary, avourneen ; don't fret yourself as you're always doin'. I think it will be all right.”

“ Did you tell him how the flood destroyed most of our hay and corn last year, and how the potatoes and turnips rotted in the clay, and how the sheep died of disease, and our two fine horses were killed by the lightning, and——”

“ Yes, Mary, I told him all that ; and I stated my case in as cpiet and respectful a way as I could, without whinin' like a beggar, of course, for I couldn't do that. I offered a half-year's rent and law costs, although I didn't say I had to borrow some of that same, and that the rest was made up by Tom, poor fellow, goin' off on the quiet to Yorkshire as a harvestman last autumn, and bringing home twenty pounds, earned by workin' like a galley-slave. No, none of the neighbours will ever know, I hope, that a Coghlan was brought so low as that. It might move a harder heart than his to tell what our noble boy did, but I couldn't do it. No, Mary, I couldn't do that.”

At the mention of this family secret—Tom's heroic act in going to the English harvest fields to work, pretending to the neighbours in Doon that he was merely going to visit his cousin, a priest in Lancashire—his mother and his favourite sister, Eileen, went over to where he was sitting in gloomy silence, and tenderly kissed his weather-beaten cheek—an act of fondness and gratitude which made the tears start from their hiding places despite his efforts to appear unmoved.

“ Well,” continued Bryan after this affecting episode, “ I asked him, in consideration of the losses that Providence was pleased to inflict on us—all in one year—to accept the half-year's rent, and to give me time for the rest, or else to make the year's rent for this one turn the same as th' ould rint before the rise, and I'd try and get it somehow ; altho' where to turn to raise it I don't know on God's earth. But anyhow that was all I asked for, and surely it wasn't unraysonable.”

“ And, Bryan, alanna, what did he say to that ?” Mrs. Coghlan urged, looking at him wistfully, as if she suspected he was trying to evade her questions, as in reality he was.

“ Will he give time or the abatement, and will he withdraw the ‘ notice to quit’ that was served on us ? Sure that is what we are all dyin' to hear about. Surely, he didn't say he'd evict us, Bryan ; oh ! he didn't say that.” And at the thought of such a dread prospect she fairly broke down, and sobbed, woman-like, indeed.

“ Well,” said Bryan, “ there is no use in trying to conceal the truth from any of ye any longer. He towld me that if I didn’t pay the whole year’s rent at once, with law costs amounting to ten pounds—his own brother is the lawyer for the landlord now—that the decree would be executed, and that out I must go. I said that th’ ould landlord that’s gone—God be good to him—would not treat me so harshly, considerin’ that myself and my poor father before me paid in that office more than five thousand pounds in rint, as my receipts could show, and that it was the first time in over eighty years either of us ever asked a favour.”

“ I hope,” he said, “ you don’t take any special credit to yourself for paying your rent, you that pretend, I believe, to be descended from some Irish Chief or King, or some such rubbish.”

“ With that, Vaughan, the under-agent, and the young under-strapper of a clerk, began to snigger and laugh, and I could see them pointing at my owld frieze overcoat, and my old-fashioned hat, which seemed to amuse them vastly.”

“ No, sir,” I said, “ I claim no credit for paying my rent ; but considerin’ I am the largest tenant on the Doon estate, and one that never was in arrears before, I might get a chance of recovering myself after the heavy losses I met with, as, plase God, I will after another year. I have a large, helpless family dependin’ on me, and I hope, sir, you will treat me leniently.”

“ Why don’t you say ‘ your honour,’ my man, in speaking to me,” he shouted angrily. “ You are impertinent, and too independent for a beggar asking for favours. You must pay your rent and costs, or the law will take its course.”

“ I was about to make a further appeal, not heeding his jeers and insults, when he told me to go, or else he would call a policeman to put me out.”

“ Well, Tom, I was strongly tempted to resent this treatment, as well I might, for it was hard for flesh and blood to stand it ; but I thought of all of ye here, and, thank God, I kept down my passion and said nothing. Altho’ I’m a stubborn and proud man in my way, as becomes a Coghlan, when I thought of the whole of us, and of little Norah in the cradle especially, being put out in the roadside in the depth of winter, I lost even the spirit of a man, God help me, and wint down on my knees to that tyrant to beg for mercy. But, Tom, would you believe it, they only set up a guffaw of laughter at me, and the clerk went for a policeman to remove me. Two peelers came and pushed, or rather threw, me out of the rent office—although I was going quietly enough out—and I fell against the kerbstone outside and struck the back of my head against it, which left me insensible, I am towld, for some time. Poor James Dolan, our neighbour, who happened to be there, threw some water on my face and restored me. When we got to Egan’s, they gave me a glass of brandy, and to drown care and kill grief we had another drink or two, and that, together with eating nothing since morning, made me feel quare and giddy, as I was a while ago, God forgive me for showin’ bad example to the childre. Sure, I didn’t know what I was doin’ or where I was when I left that office after being laughed at, insulted and jeered at, and flung out like a common beggar into the street by that pitiful shoneen of a tyrant. But I won’t curse him ; no, there is a just God above, who—oh, let us pray to God for patience to bear our great trials.”

“ But, Mary, avourneen, and childre dear, how will I bear to see ye flung on the roadside, and maybe goin’ to the ‘ poorhouse.’ Oh, God help us, God help us.” And the strong man fairly broke down and sobbed like a child.

Mrs. Coghlan shrieked as she noticed a deep cut on the back of his head, caused by the fall he described against the kerbstone ; and immediately she forgot all about the threatened

eviction, and, by a sudden transition characteristic of the Irish nature, her whole concern was diverted into a different channel. The distracted hysterical woman became at once the “ministering angel,” [2] when she recognised that her husband was suffering pain, and with sympathetic care she dressed the wound, which, fortunately, did not prove a very dangerous one.

It was a study in the characteristics of generous, noble natures to watch the face of Tom—the quiet, unassuming, almost stolid Tom—while his father described circumstantially his interview with the callous, tyrannical agent, and its denouement. His usually genial open features contracted into a lowering expression, while his dark Celtic eyes flashed fire, and his hands, hard with toil and horny as the rhinoceros’ hide, clenched involuntarily with a force that would almost crush iron. When Bryan mentioned the brutal and unmerited ill-treatment to which he had been subjected, and showed proofs of it in the ugly cut on his head, Tom’s indignation rose to boiling point, and rising suddenly in an excess of uncontrollable anger, he struck the kitchen table a blow that might have felled an ox, saying with fierce emphasis :

“Father, I thank God I was not with you to-day at the rent-office ; for if I was, and that cowardly scoundrel treated you as he did in my presence, I would have choked him as I’d choke a rabbit, even though he had twenty police around him to protect him.”

The twin sisters with soothing words tried to appease his indignation, encircling him on either side and caressing him, as they used to do in childhood, with loving, sisterly fondness.

“Oh, Tom, dear,” said Eileen, “why did you say such a wicked thing ; sure we must forgive our enemies, and do good to them that calumniate us and persecute us, as our Catechism teaches. Ask God to forgive you, Tom, for saying what you did, and remember how our Lord with His last breath, when dying on the cross, prayed for those who crucified Him, saying—‘Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.’ Oh, Tom, this cross is the will of God, and let us bear it patiently for His sake.”

“Yes, Eileen, darling,” he replied, the same gentle, childlike Tom once again, “I do ask God’s pardon for that outburst of passion ; for His sake I forgive that man from my heart, and for your sake too, my gentle angel of peace, my sweet preacher of forgiveness of injuries.”

Eileen was Tom’s favourite sister, and exercised over the good-natured giant an almost unbounded influence. We shall learn more of this dear Irish girl in the course of this short story.

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### *Bryan Coghlan Evicted.*

THE law took its course, as Mr. Toler intended it should, and Bryan Coghlan was evicted from the home round which the tendrils of his heart’s dearest affections were entwined. It is not our intention to describe the oft-enacted scene—an eviction in Ireland. For him it was a severance from the fondest ties, and the most endearing associations of his life. That old house and farm were for him the dearest, and most sacred spot on earth ; every object around, every bush and tree, were like the familiar faces of cherished friends. The house where he was born, and where he passed his boyhood and youth ; the house into which, more than twenty golden years ago, he brought his happy blushing bride ; where the christening and merry-making took place ; where his children were born, and where their innocent prattle and merry laughter so often resounded ; that house, consecrated and sanctified by the holiest and sweetest associations and memories, was no longer his : he dare not cross its threshold again. How doubly dear to him now seemed all these old familiar things, which his eyes had rested on day after day, the same, only more time-dimmed and tarnished, that met the wondering

gaze of his childhood sixty years ago : the moth-eaten dresser, with its shining rows of blue plates and jugs of fantastic shape, and wonderful colours, and unknown antiquity ; the capacious antediluvian chest, and the settle-bed, where, for two generations, all sorts and conditions of servant-boys slept the dreamless sleep of the toil-wearied ; the faded glass-case in the cozy parlour ; the crazy sideboard ; the asthmatic old sofa ; the blurred pictures ; the unsteady chairs, and the children's " creepy stools ;" and the much-mended cradle that seldom ceased from rocking to the tune of the soft lullaby for nearly twenty years—all these, with their inseparable associations, appealed to Bryan Coghlan's affections with a force never felt before. No wonder that the strong man wept bitter tears in parting from these " lares," and " penates" of his hearth and home.

However, he gave up peaceable possession, although his heart was wrung with grief to have to leave the home of his fathers. His son, Tom, also, acting on the prudent advice of his mother, and of their good old pastor, Father John, offered no resistance, knowing how futile it would be to raise his naked arm against the sabres of the armed escort who protected the sheriff. Once only did he show any indication of the latent fire smouldering within, when a bailiff laid his hand on her shoulder, and gruffly ordered Mrs. Coghlan to leave the house, as she lingered about the quenched fire on the now cold hearthstone, with weeping little Norah in her arms. He gave the cowardly bully such a look that the fellow slunk away in fear like a whipped hound.

Bryan and his family were refused admission as " caretakers," as his " snug" house and farm were given to a poor relation of the agent's. He consequently sought refuge in the neighbouring town of A——, where he found employment. Tom and Eileen, in the hope of retrieving the fallen fortunes of the family, went to America, whither their passages had been paid by an uncle in New York. One of the boys Father John received into his house, as he believed him to be a likely subject for a vocation to the ecclesiastical state ; moreover, he intended to send him, at his own expense, to the Diocesan Seminary, a project which he afterwards carried out. Mrs. Coghlan and Kathleen laboured hard to supplement Bryan's earnings, and to fill the mouths of the younger members of the family (whose appetites seemed, if anything, to have increased by the change of air), by " taking in washing"—an occupation in which there was keen competition in the poor town of A——.

It was a sad change for all of them, from the homely affluence, soothing quiet, and health-giving occupations of country life, to the pinched poverty, noisy garishness, and foul air of a wretched, unsanitary back-street. There was something very pathetic and touching in the efforts they made to make the new abode in some way resemble the old home in Doon. The few miserable utensils and articles of furniture, which they were permitted to carry away from the scene of the eviction, they arranged with reverent, hands in such a manner as to recall the fireside joys, and dreamy happiness of the past. The old churn, as bright and polished as ever, was placed in the kitchen—now, at least, more for ornament than use—and often Bryan would lift the " dash" and imagine once more that churning day had come round. He would view with satisfaction the well-scoured pails and " noggins," and an ancient crock and keeler heirlooms of " the owld place" but when he heard the hollow, mocking sound the empty vessel made as the dash descended, he would go and sit sadly in the corner by the fireside and weep.

The longing desire to see his former home grew so strong in him that one Sunday evening, unknown to his family, he stole off to feast his eyes once again on—

" That spot of earth supremely blest,  
A dearer, sweeter spot than all the rest," [3]

his former home.

He arrived about dusk at the old place, entering the farm from the rear, or the bog side. He traversed each well-known field and renewed acquaintance with every familiar bush and tree and gate, as if they were sentient, living things. His stock, as well as the most valuable of the furniture, had been bought by the incoming tenant, or grabber, at the "cant," at a nominal price, since none of the neighbours, of course, would bid for them. Many of these animals were still on the farm, and the poor dumb beasts recognised their former master. Old "Gilley" whinnied when he saw him, and, trotting up to him, rubbed his white, hooked nose against his shoulder, and then followed him wherever he went like a dog; old "Nanny," the goat, and old "Neddy," the donkey, and old "crumple-horn," the cow, all came to him to make their obeisance, and to sadden his heart by their dumb sympathy and friendship. In order to get a view of the house without being seen he got into the haggard from the rear, and concealed himself behind a cock of hay, from which place he viewed all the familiar surroundings until tears blinded his eyes. By an unlucky accident, however, a son of Preston's, the new tenant, discovered him and recognised him. Without accosting Bryan he made the discovery known to his father; and the worthy pair at once planned as infamous a scheme as could well be imagined to injure an innocent man.

Since the eviction Preston was under special police protection, and the two constables had just then called on their usual evening visit of inspection. It occurred to the father and son, that if they could manage unperceived to set fire to the cock of hay, under which Bryan lay concealed, and then have him arrested for the arson, they would have a plain case against him for a serious criminal act. The young man dexterously managed to carry out the diabolical inspiration, and Bryan, who was lost in sweet and bitter recollections of the past, was arrested by the patrol near the burning hay, apparently caught red-handed in the commission of crime.

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*Bryan Coghlan's Family on "The Waves o' The World."*

As might be expected, Bryan Coghlan was convicted at the next Assizes, notwithstanding his protestations of innocence and his explanation of how he came to be where he was when arrested. For the time being, at least, evil triumphed, and God, for His own wise ends and in His own inscrutable ways, permitted an innocent man to suffer, and a sorely-tried wife and her guiltless little ones to lie under shameful imputations, and to undergo a fresh and unmerited ordeal of suffering. He was sentenced to two years' imprisonment with hard labour. If human justice, however, regarded him as an incendiary, his wife and children knew he was as innocent of the crime imputed to him as little Norah herself; for he fully explained to them the reasons and circumstances of his visit to the old place on that fateful Sunday evening. And they never loved him or admired him more than when he stood in the dock, the victim of a foul conspiracy; for his was a case of loving "not wisely but too well" [4] his childhood's cherished home.

When Mrs. Coghlan, who was in court, heard the harsh sentence, she uttered a piercing shriek and fainted in the arms of her daughter, Kathleen. When she recovered consciousness she was accorded a brief interview with her husband after he was taken back to prison. She found him in a sullen and gloomy mood, for well had he recognised that cry of anguish which the intensity of her grief wrung from the tender, sympathetic heart of his loving, gentle Mary. For the first time in his life she heard him utter wild and bitter imprecations on his persecutors and the destroyers of his happy, peaceful home.

But as he listened to the sweet, persuasive voice of his wife, reminding him of the Christian duty of forgiveness of injuries, and calling to his mind the example of the Divine Redeemer Himself praying for His executioners and asking their forgiveness from His Heavenly Father, even with His last breath, Bryan's better nature asserted itself, and he bowed his head

in shame and sorrow. Surely, the recording angel dropped a tear which blotted out the guilt of that wild passion of revenge which momentarily usurped his usually gentle, forgiving heart.

“ But, Mary, avourneen, what will become of you and the childre,” he said, “ when the bread-winner is gone from ye, and poor Tom and Eileen, maybe, not able to send home anything for long enough yet ? Oh ! my heart will break if ye have to go into the ‘ poor-house’ at last.”

“ Bryan, asthore machree,” she replied, “ don’t you remember what Father John said one Sunday in Doon Chapel, that when the Lord wounds anyone He cures them and heals them, and when they fall He puts His hand under them so that they won’t be bruised. Didn’t he say that God chastises those He loves, and that they must pass through fire and water before He brings them into refreshment.

“ Don’t fret for the childre, Bryan, avic : won’t God care for us and feed us as He feeds the birds of the air, and clothe us as He does the flowers of the field. God is good, and He’ll do what’s best for us all. Who knows but, maybe, Bryan, we’ll be back in th’ ould place again, plase God, happier than ever. I feel that, black as the night is now, there’s a bright day in store for us all yet.”

And as he gazed on the mild, resigned, upturned face of that heroic woman, the bitterness and despair left his heart, and he felt that he had heard the voice of a prophet. The gentle preacher of peace and forgiveness, by her own simple and persuasive eloquence, reconciled that almost desperate man to his hard lot. He brought with him as his companion into his gloomy prison cell hope “ that springs eternal in the human breast” [5] hope in the infinite goodness and mercy of that God who inspired His prophet to say :

“ I have been young and am now old ; and I have not seen the just man forsaken nor his seed seeking bread.”—(Ps. 36.)

For Mrs. Coghlan’s life now became a desperate struggle with poverty. Their kind old pastor, Father John, visited her often, and after his departure a pound note was sometimes found under a plate or jug on the table. An occasional letter came also, containing a similar amount. The post-mark was “ Doon,” and the superscription on the envelope was suspiciously like the crabbed, rheumatic hand-writing of old Mary, the good “ Soggarth’s” house-keeper. After a half-year or so, however, the family were obliged to remove to a cheaper house, and to a wretched back-street, generally peopled by those poor pariahs of Irish society who dub themselves “ tinmen” a class often “ more sinned against than sinning,” [6] but who had given to this tumble-down quarter the opprobrious name of “ Tinkers’ Lane.”

Needless to say it was gall and wormwood to the proud spirit and sensitive feelings of the once respectable and, indeed, affluent family, to have to live among the dregs of society ; amidst scenes oftentimes repulsive to the delicate sense of decency and the deep-rooted instincts of piety which they had brought with them from their quiet rural home. Here, however, as in their former abode, they “ kept to themselves,” and their habits of cleanliness and thrift, and their unobtrusive, kindly demeanour, secured them the goodwill and respect of their neighbours. Indeed, their example served as a mission in that unsavoury quarter ; and often as the murmur of the nightly Rosary was heard through the crazy door or thin partition walls of the Coghlan’s cabin, the scolding termagant or the tipsy “ tin man” would cross themselves, and retreat shame-faced to their houses, to meditate on the lessons of piety which they had learned in the happy innocent time of their first Communion and Confirmation days.

At length, however, Mrs. Coghlan and her daughter, Kathleen, fell ill of typhoid fever, and had to be removed to the workhouse hospital.

The three younger children were also admitted, as being destitute, and the remainder of the family, through the good offices of the parochial clergy, were committed to an industrial school. Thus the dread spectre which Bryan Coghlan had seen in dreams long ago, and which nightly shaped itself to his gaze in the glowing embers on the hearth-stone in his old home previous to the eviction, had now become a reality.

The “poorhouse,” the prison, the industrial school, and “furrin parts”—such were the places which now sheltered the happy family which, in our opening chapter, we saw seated round their own comfortable and cheerful fireside, in the calm enjoyment of domestic bliss. What an example of the truth of the adage, that “man proposes, but God disposes.” Yet they bowed their heads in humble submission to His will, believing, as only the faith of the Irish peasant can, that He “ordereth all things sweetly,” and that “for those who love Him, all things work together for good” (Rom. 8.)

After passing through a lingering illness of many months Mrs. Coghlan and Kathleen recovered ; and the latter secured a situation as servant in the house of a farmer of something like the same standing as her father formerly had. She came frequently, however, to visit her mother and the three children who remained with her in the workhouse. The break up of the poor home in the town of A——, and the distressing fact of Bryan’s imprisonment, and Mrs. Coghlan’s present habitation, were mercifully concealed from Tom and Eileen in America. It was decided not to embitter the exiles’ lot, already hard enough, by this tidings. Hence, correspondence with them was kept up from the old address in Irishtown. The kind-hearted old postman was well aware of the innocent deception, and duly delivered the American letter for Bryan Coghlan to his wife in the workhouse.

The lot of the poor exiles, Tom and Eileen, had also been a hard one ; for they found the stern realities of life in that “home of the free” to be very different from the El Dorado of the Irish peasant’s dreams. For a long time, toil and slave as they might—Tom as a casual coal-heaver, and Eileen as a scullery-maid—they could save no money to send to the dear ones at home. How often they thought what a mockery was that dream of their childhood days about a fairy land—always associated with America—where, as the nursery rhyme has it, “the streets were paved with penny loaves, and the houses thatched with pancakes.” Now they found crowds of stalwart Irish youths standing idle at street corners, with no man to hire them—ragged, forlorn, and hungry, strangers in a strange land ; and, like the prodigal son of the Gospel, vainly longing after their father’s home, poor though it might be, far away in dear old Ireland ; or else they saw Irish girls—the parish belles of a few years ago—now faded and prematurely old ; the fresh bloom of the Irish hills departed from their cheeks, and, alas, too often, the sweet simplicity of Irish modesty and innocence from their hearts.

At last, however, Eileen got a good situation in the house of a wealthy Irish family in New York. About a year after arriving she fell seriously ill, and was obliged to spend a time in hospital, where a kind Sister of Charity became acquainted with her history, and recommended her on her recovery to a Mrs. Quinn, who very soon learned to love the gentle, devoted Irish girl as a daughter.

Tom, in a fit of desperation, went off with a party of adventurers to Klondyke, the newly-discovered gold fields of the far west.

Success came to him at long last ; and as he struck the rich, gold-bearing stratum in his “claim” after weary months of useless toil and unheard-of privations, he did not know whether he should shout with joy, or weep. Truth compels us to relate, that when he saw the precious metal “pan out” so plentifully, and then thought of the poverty of the dear ones far away, the brave, unselfish, big-hearted Tom cried like a child ; but they were tears of delicious joy. As expeditiously as might be he realised his fortune, which amounted to over

a thousand pounds, and started at once for New York to bring Eileen with him back to Ireland. Her kind mistress was very loth to part with her ; and the children, with whom she was a great favourite, were inconsolable when they heard that she was about to leave, for they dearly loved the gentle, winning Irish girl. Although she had been treated by Mrs. Quinn and her husband with the utmost kindness—in fact, as one of the family rather than a servant she never recovered thoroughly from the effect of her previous illness ; and the hectic flush and short cough, which Tom quickly noticed, made him all the more anxious to restore her to the bracing air of her native heath. Her kind benefactors presented her with three hundred dollars as a token of their esteem on her departure—for her dowry, they said ; and soon the exiled brother and sister were speeding homewards, to lay their hard won treasures at the feet of their idolised parents, and to place them once again in comfort, and even affluence, far greater than they had before.

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### *Homeward Bound—The Passing of Eileen.*

It would be difficult to imagine happiness greater than that of the devoted brother and sister, homeward bound after the terrible privations of their self-imposed exile ; enriched with wealth, beyond their most sanguine expectations, and yearning with all the tender love of their Irish hearts for the dear ones they had left behind them in holy Ireland.

The cup of their happiness was full to over-flowing ; the goal of their ambition was almost reached. Shortly they would be back again in the old home, for Tom had gold enough to purchase it, and the whole townland of Lumcloon as well. They would be all united again under the old roof-tree, happier and more prosperous than ever before ; and the bitter past would seem like a dream. But, alas, in the inscrutable ways of His all-wise Providence, God was pleased to mix a bitter ingredient in that cup of bliss ere the lips yet touched it, and to send a fresh trial—the sorest one of all—to that already sorely tried family.

On the second day's voyage the weather became very rough and stormy, and, in consequence of this, Eileen suffered so severely from sea-sickness that she burst a blood-vessel. The ship's doctor declared that a return of the hæmorrhage would most probably prove fatal, especially as her once vigorous constitution had become weak and debilitated under the strain of anxiety and “ hope deferred,” as much, or more so, as from the drudgery and foul air of cellar-kitchens. Fortunately there was a priest among the passengers, and he administered the last rites of the Church to her ; and gently, and with the tact begotten of long experience in similar sad offices, he broke to her the tidings of her precarious and dangerous state. Young though she was, and full of hopes of a bright and happy future, she was by no means frightened or appalled at the prospect of death. Why should she be, for she was a child still in simplicity, purity, and innocence.

Speaking of this scene afterwards—as an example of a good death—that priest, an eminent Jesuit Missionary, said in one of his sermons :—

“ I felt inclined, after she had made a general confession of the sins (so-called by that tender soul) of her life, to kneel down before her and ask her prayers, for she was a saint, and had never lost her baptismal innocence.”

For some days she lingered on, her condition growing gradually weaker and weaker. There was general sympathy and pity among the passengers for the gentle, winning Irish girl, and her fine, manly brother, the story of whose self-sacrifice and exertions on behalf of the dear ones at home had become public. When Tom, who seldom left the bedside of his sister,

appeared on deck, he was besieged with inquiries for the sufferer, and many were the friends and admirers which he gained by his heroism and his trials.

The ship was now off the Western Irish coast, the Black Hock Lighthouse near Achill Head being visible. Eileen's condition was now pronounced hopeless, hæmorrhage having again set in. It was near sunrise when she asked in a weak, faltering voice :

“ Tom, are we near Ireland yet ? If God wouldn't blame me for it, I'd like to get one more sight of Ireland before I die. Sure, after dreaming of it every night for two long, weary years, I think I would die easier if I got another glimpse of it—God forgive me for saying so.”

“ The captain says, Eileen, dear,” he replied, “ that in an hour's time the mountains of Mayo can be seen, and then I'll lift you up to that window over your head to look out, if you're strong enough. I'm afraid, however, you're not.”

“ Thank you, Tom, alanna ; you're a good, kind brother to me, and I'll pray for you especially when I go to Heaven ; because you suffered so much in earning that money that will, please God, restore father and mother and all to the old place. But, Tom, I'll never live to see the coast of Ireland—I feel I won't ; and don't weep for me, Tom, as you're doing, because you've had trouble and sorrow enough already, I know, although you won't say anything about it, you're so generous and noble. I know they will bury me in the sea, Tom ; but you'll get my name put on the family headstone in Doon graveyard to remind the people to pray for me, Tom, ashore. Give my three hundred dollars to little Norah ; maybe she might go into a convent, away from the cares of the weary, sinful world. When I'm in Heaven, Tom, I can look down on ye all round the fireside, and imagine I am among ye again. And when ye are all at Mass in Doon Chapel, I'll look down on ye, as I used to do from the little organ loft when I sang in the choir. Father Hughes here—God bless him for all he did for me—says I'll be in God's choir in Heaven among the angels around the great White Throne.”

The good priest, who was present at this affecting scene, was moved even to tears as he answered :

“ If ever one deserved to be an angel in Heaven, I have no doubt you do, my child.”

The storm, which had lasted for several days, had now completely subsided, and the sun rose gloriously on a calm and untroubled sea, on a balmy, beautiful morning in August. Slowly from behind the Nephin range it ascended, clothing each rough pinnacle on the coast line with a flood of rosy-red, golden light—Slievemore, Croagh Patrick, and Muilrea being silhouetted against the back-ground of the horizon like the masts of some monstrous phantom ship. It was, indeed, a gladsome and a grand sight, that sun rise at sea on that Autumn morning, as

. . . . . “ Jocund day  
Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain-tops” [7]

of holy Ireland : and the sight of it, could she witness it, would have gladdened the heart of the dying girl as no other purely earthly spectacle could. But it was not to be. She was fated never again to rest eyes on that land of which she dreamed, and which held those for whose dear sakes she toiled and spent herself in a strange land.

As the sun rose higher it sent a glorious ray right through the port-hole of the cabin, and its lambent, soft light rested on the pale, beautiful face of Eileen, encircling it as with an aureola of glory.

“ Tom,” she said, in a scarce audible voice, and with a sad, yet sweet smile, “ I won’t see Ireland, after all, for my sight is growing dim, and I can hardly see even you, now, or Father Hughes : but I will soon see a far more beautiful place. I will see God, face to face, and our Blessed Redeemer, and His Holy Mother ; and I’ll pray for you all, and I hope you will pray for me, and get Masses—”

With a long, gentle breath, and a sigh such as one gives when the mind is relieved of some great anxiety or trouble, her pure and gentle spirit passed, and she was dead : the brave, noble Irish girl was dead in the spring-time of her young life—dead within sight of the promised land of her heart’s yearning love, yet fated never to reach it. Oh ! the pity of it ! the pity of it !

As Father Hughes, with humid eyes, gazed on the placid features of the fair, young Irish girl, “ so coldly sweet, so deadly fair,” [8] he was forcibly reminded of Romeo’s pathetic lament over the supposed lifeless form of Juliet

“ Death, that hath suck’d the honey of thy breath,  
Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty :  
Thou art not conquered : beauty’s ensign yet  
Is crimson in thy lips, and in thy cheeks,  
And death’s pale flag is not advanced there.”

And the sight recalled, too, Poe’s weirdly beautiful lines

“ Ah, broken is the golden bowl ! the spirit flown for ever !  
Come, let the burial rite be read—the funeral song be sung—  
An anthem for the queenliest dead that ever died so young—  
A dirge for her, the doubly dead in that she died so young.” [9]

She was buried at sea ; and when Tom saw her poor remains lowered over the ship’s side, he turned his face heavenwards, and cried out in accents of grief and anguish of soul, which awed and terrified the spectators of the sad scene :

“ O God ! teach my revengeful heart to forgive the tyrants who drove us from our happy home, and brought my gentle, angel sister to this watery grave. O God ! soften my heart to forgive, if I can’t forget.”

For the rest of the voyage he was a sad and gloomy man, and when he set foot, at Queens-town, on the land he loved, he felt far more heart-broken and desolate than he did when leaving it two years before. How different everything would have seemed had Eileen been by his side. What might have been under happier circumstances that was the sad theme of his reflections as he walked the streets of Cork, cold and emotionless amid its gay and light-hearted throngs. Every fair and beautiful face he saw and they were many in the city by the silvery Lee—only served to remind him of a face to him far more fair than any, a dead face down in the slimy deep.

When he arrived in the town of A—— and learned the particulars of his father’s and mother’s misfortunes, mercifully concealed from him before, he was able to bear them more stoically than he otherwise would. Procuring admission to the workhouse, he first went to the chapel, there to pray for light and direction how best to break to his mother the sad tidings of Eileen’s death. He had not far to go to find her, for there, kneeling a few benches before him, her eyes fixed on the Tabernacle, was his own mother at her usual occupation—praying, always praying.

Thus she spent a good portion of each day, and the poor inmates, her companions in misfortunes, revered and loved her, she was so silent and good, so gentle, uncomplaining, and unselfish. She was now more than a year in the workhouse, and as week after week passed, and the “sickening pang of hope deferred” [10] became harder to bear, her confidence in God’s goodness only increased, and her conviction grew stronger that happier days were in store for her and hers. She felt that God’s invitation through the mouth of His Prophet was specially directed to her, because she was poor and destitute.

“All you that thirst come to the waters, and you that have no money, make haste, buy and eat ; come ye, buy wine and milk without money, and without any price” (Isa. 55).

Tom had written from America announcing his intention of speedily returning with Eileen, but only vaguely hinting at his good fortune, as he wished to give them all an agreeable surprise on his return. Hence, he was astonished to find his mother apparently bowed down with grief, for the tears streamed from her eyes, as he watched her, while her lips moved incessantly in prayer ; and she gently swayed her body to and fro after the manner of those in great distress. She was speaking in a low tone to little Norah and Brigid, who were by her side and looking into her tear-dimmed eyes with awe and wonder. Drawing nearer, unperceived, Tom heard her softly murmuring in the following startling manner, and spellbound he listened as she soliloquised—

“Oh, my dear Eileen, I know I’ll never see you again. It must be true—I saw it all so plain before my eyes last night. Childre dear, ever since I got Tom’s letter I was dreaming every night of her, that she was ill comin’ home on the ship. And last night I saw her dead ; her poor white face, and her eyes closed, and she looking beautiful and smiling as when she was an infant asleep in the cradle. And I saw her coffin lifted up and let drop into the sea ; and I saw poor Tom leanin’ over the side of the vessel looking down after it as it sank, and the big tears falling like rain into the salt-water ; poor, noble, splendid fellow, and I thought his heart would break. Oh, wirra, wirra ! my darlint child, my lovely, purty cailin ; movrone, movrone.”

For some time Norah and Brigid had been plucking at her skirts unheeded, and now they whispered to her :

“Mamma, look at the grand-dressed man behind you. Isn’t he like Tom’s picture that’s in your box ; the picture you kiss every day.”

Turning round, she met her son’s gaze fixed sadly and meaningly on her, and amidst suppressed sobs she cried out :

“Oh, Tom, why are you here without her ? Where is she, Tom, agra’ ; where is she, my own darling child ?”

Pointing solemnly upwards, he answered : “In Heaven. I heard all you were saying just now, mother. It’s all too true, what you dreamed ; God Himself broke the news to you, but she’s happy, mother : let us pray for her and ask her to pray for us, for surely she’s an angel in Heaven.”

“But, Tom, avic,” said Mrs. Coghlan, when they had left the workhouse chapel, “you didn’t hear all about that dream which I was telling to the childre. I dreamed, Tom, that we were back in th’ ould place, and that I saw Eileen risin’ out of the sea, and flyin’ through the air towards Lumcloon ; and I saw her restin’ above th’ ould place and lookin’ down on us with a sweet, sad smile ; then she went away upwards like a white bird ; and I saw other

white birds come to meet her, and they passed away into the clouds. Of course, Tom, they were angels, and I knew she was gone to Heaven, and that I'd never see her on earth again."

"Mother," he said, "she prayed in her illness that God would allow her to see Ireland once more before she died. God, I have no doubt, permitted her pure spirit to pass over the old home, on her way to Heaven, and so her wish was gratified, after all ; and so will her wish to regain the old place, also ; for I am told it is for sale now, as the tenant who 'grabbed' it from us is dead—drank himself to death, I believe—and the landlord is a bankrupt, and the estate in Chancery. I have money enough to buy it back, thanks be to God ; and we'll soon be all together again under the old roof, and happy, too, please God."

"Ah ! Tom," said Mrs. Coghlan, "not all together, surely ; for won't her vacant chair be there to remind us of our loss ; and how can we be happy without her, my poor, dear, darling Eileen, my sweet saint."

The man who had so cruelly wronged Bryan Coghlan admitted his guilt on his death-bed ; and the latter was immediately released from prison, where he had spent more than a year. Tom, with the aid of his "almighty dollars," recovered the old homestead and farm on favourable terms ; and, in a short time, the family, collected from the four winds, were gathered together again round the old fireside—all save one. Time, the great healer, gradually softened and toned down their grief for her loss into a gentle, tender regret ; she was the heroine and the saint of the family, where the name of Eileen ("poor Eileen, Lord have mercy on her") was ever breathed with a mixture of melancholy pride and enduring love. For them hers was, indeed

"A name forever sad, forever dear,  
Still breath'd in sighs, still usher'd with a tear." [12]

Tom spent a portion of his hard-earned gold in getting an oil painting of her executed by a well-known artist from a photograph taken in America, when she was in the full bloom of her health and beauty. He had it hung up in a conspicuous place in the parlour, with the following verse of his own composition printed under it in gold letters :

"Enshrined in love, embalmed in tears,  
Thy memory shall not die ;  
But greener grow with lapse of years—  
Sweet angel-soul ! good-bye."

Often in the evening after work was over, or on Sundays, he, or one of the family, might be seen gazing on the speaking likeness of the dead girl with moistened eyes, and with a far-away look of inexpressible love and sadness. Father, mother, brother, and sister reserved for her a sanctuary in their hearts—aye, in their very hearts' core, where nothing else dare enter ; and night after night, when, after the Rosary, Mrs. Coghlan announced in a faltering voice : "Five Paters and Aves for poor Eileen," every head was bowed in reverence, and each voice joined in the petition in tones more tender and pathetic than usual.

"I'm thinkin'," Mrs. Coghlan would say sometimes, "that if Eileen was with us now, we would be too happy ; and who knows that, maybe then we might forget God, and get too fond of the world. It's best as it is, childre dear. My time won't be long in it, anyhow ; and won't it be a grand thing for me to think of on my death-bed, that I'll have her to meet me and welcome me when I enter into the next world, waiting for me at the gates of Heaven, with her arms open to embrace me."

Kathleen and Norah entered a Convent of the Sisters of Mercy, and James, Father John's protegee and pupil, is a student in Maynooth College. Tom is the most universally respected and honoured man in the parish of Doon. He is spoken of generally as " Mr." Tom Coghlan. There isn't a man in it who does not swear by him and look up to him, nor a *cáilín* who would not feel proud and honoured by his smile of recognition.

We shall take leave of him, as he sits under an apple tree, on a beautiful evening in early Autumn, reading aloud for his brother, Brendan, portions of the ballad poetry of Ireland, of which he is a great student and admirer ; indeed, he is something of a poet himself. As his eyes wander around the comfortable farmhouse of Bryan Coghlan, with evidences on every side of peace and plenty, he thinks that he sees realised there that picture which the lonely Irish student is said to have drawn in his Parisian seminary, and which that great Irish poet, Sir Samuel Ferguson, translates so beautifully from the Gaelic

“ A plenteous place is Ireland for hospitable cheer,  
Where the wholesome fruit is bursting from the yellow barley ear ;  
There is honey in the trees where her misty vales expand,  
And her forest paths in summer are by falling waters fanned ;  
There is dew at high noon-tide there, and springs i' the yellow sand,  
On the fair hills of holy Ireland.

“ Large and profitable are the stacks upon the ground ;  
The butter and the cream do wondrously abound ;  
The cresses on the water, and the sorrels are at hand,  
And the cuckoo's calling daily her note of music bland,  
And the bold thrush sings so bravely her song i' the forests grand,  
On the fair hills of holy Ireland.”

- [1] Burns.
- [2] Scott—“ Marmion.”
- [3] J. Montgomery—“ The West Indies.”
- [4] Shakespeare—“ Othello.”
- [5] Pope—“ Essay on Man.”
- [6] Shakespeare—“ Othello.”
- [7] Shakespeare—“ Romeo and Juliet.”
- [8] Byron—“ The Giaour.”
- [9] Edgar A. Poe—“ Lenore.”
- [10] Scott—“ Lady of the Lake.”
- [11] Pope—“ Eloisa to Abelard.”

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