

THE LITTLE CHAPEL AT MONAMULLIN.

BY NUGENT ROBINSON.

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THERE came a day when the men in the smoking-room of the club asked each other, "Where the doose is Noel?" when wily matrons found their gushing notes of invitations unanswered; when toadies, hangers-on and sycophants found his apartments in Half-Moon street, Piccadilly, closed. There came a day when club and matron and toady thought of him no more. The wave of oblivion had passed over him and he was forgotten. *Sic itur ad astra*. Away from the fatal influences that had, maelstrom like, sucked him into their whirl, new thoughts, new impulses, new aspirations burst into blossom, and his old love—Art—turned to him with the radiant smile of the bygone time.

There is red, red blood in the veins at twenty-five, and white-winged Hope ever beckons onwards with soul-seductive gesture. He determined to seek change of scene and of thought. As Sir Everard Noel, the President of the Four-in-Hand Club; the owner of Katinka, the winner of the Chester Cup; the skipper of the *Grisolda*, that won the Queen's prize at Cowes; the best rider with the Pytchley hounds, every hotel on the Continent, every village in Merrie England, would recognise him, and the old toadying recommence, but as plain Mr. Brown, an obscure artist, with a knapsack on his back, he would be free, free as a bird, and the summer morning this idea flashed across his mind found him once again a bright, happy and joyous man.

Sir Everard Noel was a gentleman of warm temper and great energy, prone to sudden impulses and unconsidered actions. No sooner had he made up his mind to go upon the tramp than he started; and, considering that he would be less liable to recognition in Connemara than in Wales, made Galway the base of his supplies, and knapsack on back, containing sketching materials and a change of flannel, a few days' walking brought him to Monamullin in glorious health, splendid spirits, and prepared to enjoy everybody and everything.

"How much more delightful all this is," he thought, "than the horrors I have passed through—horrors labelled pleasures! Faugh! I shudder when I think of them. Let me see, it's ten o'clock; at this hour I would be about half-way through a miserably unwholesome dinner, spiced up in order to meet the requirements of a demoralised appetite, or yawning in an opera-box, with six or seven long, dreary hours before me to kill at any price, especially with brandy and soda. How delicious all *this* is! How fresh, how pure! What a dinner I ate of those rashers and eggs! And such tea! By Jove! that old lady must have a chest entirely for her own consumption. If my bed is as comfortable as it looks, I shall not awaken till the *padre* returns from Jyvecote. How disagreeable to meet Jyve or any of the lot! I never knew any of them but Jasper and the father. What a glorious old gentleman is Father Maurice—simple as a child, with the dignity of a saint. I had better get to bed now, as I shall begin on a Virgin and Child for him to-morrow; or, if his Stations are daubs, I can do him a set, though it will take me a deuce of a time. I must visit the chapel to-morrow; I suppose it's very dingy." And with a good stout yawn Mr. Brown—for we shall continue to call him by this name until the proper time comes—turned towards the cottage.

Mrs. Clancy met him at the door.

"I was afraid ye wor lost, sir," she said, as he entered the hall.

"Not lost, my good lady, but found. I suppose you lock the doors here earlier than this."

"Look!" she exclaimed, almost indignantly—"lock, indeed! There's not a bowlt nor a bar nor a lock on the whole house. Arrah! who wud rob Father Maurice but th' ould boy?—an' he'd be afeard. He daren't lay a hand on anything here, an' well he knows it, God be good to us!"

"I suppose you've been a long time with Father Maurice, Mrs. Clancy?"

"Only sence me man—the Lord rest his sowle, amin!—was lost in the night av the great storm, nigh fifteen year come the fourteenth av next month, on a Frida' night. He was a good man, an' a fine provider, an' wud have left me warm an' comfortable but for the hard times that cum on the cunthry be raison av the famine. Ye might have heard tell of it, sir."

"Oh! indeed I did."

"Och! wirra, wirra! but it was an awful time, glory be to God! whin the poor craythurs was dyin' by the roadsides and aitin' grass to keep the sowles in their bodies, like bastes."

"I was far away then, in China," said Brown.

"That's where the tay cums from; an' very inferior tay we're gettin' now, sir, compared wud what we used to get. I can't rise more nor a cup out av two spoonfuls, an' well I remember whin wud give me layves enough for to fill a noggin. Are ye thinkin' av Maynewth, sir?" asked Mrs. Clancy, exceedingly desirous of some clue as to the identity, habits and occupation of her guest, as it would not do to face Monamullin with her finger in her mouth.

"Maynewth?" he replied. "What is Maynewth?"

"The collidge."

"What collidge?"

"The collidge where the young priests is med."

"Oh! dear, no, Mrs. Clancy," he replied, laughing heartily. "I am a painter."

"A painter!" she said, in considerable astonishment.

"Yes, a poor painter."

"Musha, now, but that flogs. An' what are ye goin' for to paint?"

"Anything that turns up."

She thought for a moment, hesitated a little, scrutinised his apparel, hesitated again, and at length said, "Wud ye be afther doin' his riverince a good turn?"

"I should be only too delighted."

"Thin ye might give the back doore a cupple o' coats o' pain afore ye go."

The artist burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, long, loud, joyous and rippling as that of a schoolboy's, again and again renewed as the irritated puzzle written in the housekeeper's face met his glance. At length he burst out after a tremendous guffaw:

"I am not exactly that sort of a painter, Mrs. Clancy, but I dare say I could do it if I tried; and I will try. I am more in that line," pointing to the picture of Daniel O'Connell suspended over the mantelpiece.

The cloud of anger rapidly disappeared from Mrs. Clancy's brow upon this explanation, and in a voice of considerable blandishment she half-whispered:

"Arrah, thin, mebbe, ye'd do me a little wan o' Dan' for the kitchen, honey."

After another hearty peal of laughter Mr. Brown most cordially assented, and, taking his chamber candle—a flaring dip—retired to his bedroom.

"*Ma foi*," he gaily laughed, "this is homely. Do I miss my valet? Do I miss my brandy and soda? Do I miss my Aubbuson carpet, my theatrical pictures, my Venetian mirror, or my villanous French novel? Not a bit of it. This is glorious; and what a tub I shall have in the morning in the wild Atlantic!"

Father Maurice's guest was up, if not with the lark at least not far behind that early-rising bird, and out in the gently-gliding wavelets, buffeting them with the vigorous stroke of a skilful swimmer. The ocean on this still, clear morning was beautiful enough to attract wistful glances from eyes the most *blasé*. The cloudless sky was intensely dark in its blue, as though the unseen sun was overhead and shining vertically down. The light did not seem of sea or land, but it shone dazzlingly on the low line of verdure-clad hills, on the cornfields in stubble, causing every blade to glister like a golden spear, on the whitewashed cottages, on the bright green hedges, on the line of dark rock, and enveloping the mountains of Carrig na Coppie in the dim distance in blue and silver glory. The colors of the sea were magical, in luminous green, purple and blue; and out across the billowy plain great bands of purple stretched away to the sky line, as a passing cloud flung its shadows in its onward life-wy progress. The artist felt all this beauty, drinking it in like fee-wine, till it tingled and throbbled in every vein.

After partaking of a breakfast, the consumption of which would have considerably astonished some of his *quondam* London set, and having lighted his meerscham, Mr. Brown set out for a stroll through the village, accompanied by half a dozen cabin curs, who, having scented the stranger, most courteously made up their minds to act as his escort. The inhabitants of the cabins *en route* turned out to look respectfully at him. Children timorously approached, curtsied, and, when spoken to, retreated, in laughing terror. Matrons gazed and gossiped. A cripple or two touched their caps to him, and on every side he was wished "goodluck." He was Father Maurice's guest, and, as a consequence, the guest of Monamullin. Whitewash abounded everywhere; scarlet geraniums bloomed vigorously, their crimson blossoms resembling goutts of blood spurted against marble-slabs. A shebeen or public-house was not to be seen; order and peace and happiness reigned triumphant.

"A few trees planted down this street—if I may call it so—would make this an Arcadian village. I must ask Father Maurice to let me have them planted. A fountain, too, would look well just opposite that unpretending shop. I wonder where the church can be?"

A man with a reaping-hook bound in a hay rope happened to be passing, to whom he addressed himself.

"Can you tell me where the church is?"

"Yis, yer honor; troth, thin, I can."

"Where is it, please?"

"Av it's Mass ye want, Father Maurice is beyant at Moynalty Castle."

"I merely want to see it."

"An' shure ye can, sir; it's open day an' night."

"But where is it, my man?"

"Where is it? Right forinst ye, thin. Don't ye see the holy and blessed crass over the doore?"

The chapel was a small, low, cruciform building, very dingy despite its whitewash, and very tumbledown-looking. It was surrounded by a small grass-plot and a few stunted pines. A rude cross with a real crown of thorns stood in one corner, at the foot of which knelt an old man, bare-headed, engaged in repeating the rosary aloud, and two women, who were rocking themselves to and fro in a fervor of prayer. Within the church the fittings were of the most primitive description. The floor was unboarded, save close to the altar-rails; a few forms were scattered here and there, and one row of backed seats occupied a space to the right. The altar, approached by a single step, was of wood, a golden cross ornamenting the front panel, and a series of gilded Gothic arches forming its background, while the tabernacle consisted of a rudely-cut imitation of a dome-covered mosque. A picture of the crucifixion hung over the altar suspended from the ceiling, and, as this was regarded as a masterpiece of art by the inhabitants of Monamullin from time immemorial, we will not discuss their aestheticism here. The Stations of the Cross were represented by small colored engravings in mahogany frames, and the holy-water font consisted of a huge boulder of granite which had a large hole scooped out of it.

(To be continued.)

An indictment for murder has been found against Nathan H. Brown, of Deering, N. H., the accused being eighty-two years old.

There is considerable excitement at Shelby, Oceana County, Mich., over recent discoveries of gold in that vicinity. Good paying quantities were found on a bed of rock at a depth of eighty feet. The first was discovered in sand pumped out of a drive well, about 20dols. worth having been separated from a cubic yard of earth,