

## PRISCILLA'S JEWELS.

(BY ROSA MULHOLLAND, in the *Irish Monthly*.)

## CHAPTER II.—(Continued.)

"Well, I am sorry to doubt Mary's sweetheart," said Mr Dalrymple; "but, you see, I do not know Duncan, and I scarcely know Mary. I am more interested in Miss Emerson than in either."

A faint flush rose on Kenneth Craig's brown cheek, and he frowned slightly. Did this fellow who talked so glibly suppose that he himself was the only person interested in Miss Emerson's fortunes? He controlled his annoyance, however, and reflected that he must try to see his way to doing justice, and to put personal feelings out of the question.

"You think that Mary is incapable of conniving at Duncan's guilt?" pursued Dalrymple, after a pause, during which his eyes had been fixed on the wrathful rain-drifts, as they came hurling themselves one after another against the small window-panes, beyond which nothing could be seen but a distance of white foam and mist.

Mrs. Craig started. "Please do not put it so strongly yet," she said, "till we see further."

Mr. Dalrymple bowed with a slight smile. "I will not speak of the matter any more, if you wish it so," he said, gently. "I confess I have the turn of mind that dislikes doubt and uncertainty, and takes a sort of pleasure in exposing hidden truths."

"You mistake us, Mr. Dalrymple," said Dr. Craig, stiffly; "justice shall be done, if possible, but not more than justice, I hope. If Duncan be guilty, I think we may assume that Mary knows nothing of the matter."

"And yet, consider, if she became aware of Duncan's secret, would she betray him? Why should she turn so red and then so pale? Why should she be so angry at the mere mention of the matter?"

"Ah, Mr. Dalrymple, I am not with you there," said Mrs. Craig. "Take the word of an old woman for it, there are more blushes blushed for innocence than for guilt. Mary is wifed that the taint of suspicion should rest on her lover, and though her tongue is saucy and needs to be checked, I like her the better for her changes of color."

"Maybe so, dear madam, maybe so," said Dalrymple. "I have little knowledge of women, being singularly and unhappily free from family ties. And, having been brought up for the law, I am given to sifting and questioning. However, I will not interfere farther; and, if this tedious storm would only give way a little, I should thank you for your truly noble hospitality and kindness and make for the mainland."

"Oh, you must not speak of that," said Mrs. Craig, warmly. "It is a pleasure to have you—more pleasure than you imagine; and besides, though we are sorry to criminate Duncan, we are also anxious to sift out the truth. I am sure you will be a great assistance to us. So you really must not think of leaving Orra yet."

"There is not much chance of any one leaving it for many days to come, if he values his life," said Dr. Craig.

"No, confound it!" muttered Mr. Dalrymple to himself, as he rose and went to the window and stood staring vacantly out into the weird, white hurly-burly of the storm.

"As soon as it is possible to cross to the mainland," said Dr. Craig, "I shall put this affair into the hands of the police. It will be for them to search and investigate. If the jewels have been stolen on the island, the island must contain them, and perhaps they can be found. We must, if possible, arrange that no boat shall leave Orra but our own till the police are in possession of the place."

"You will find that a difficult matter to arrange," said Dalrymple, with a slight smile.

"I think the men of Orra, when appealed to, will be on their mettle to repel this charge or discover the thief," said Kenneth; "they are brave fellows, on the whole, and have a rough honesty of their own."

At this moment a knock came on the door of the drawing-room, and a man appeared in the doorway, drenched with the storm and a dripping sou'-wester hat in his hand. As he tossed back the wet hair from his forehead, he had a manly look, which struck all present.

A slight push sent him a little forward into the room, and Mary was seen behind him. She came forward then with two bright spots glowing on her cheeks and cast a disdainful glance at Dalrymple.

"Speak, Duncan," she said; "ye ha' got a right to lift your voice on Orra Island, more nor a stranger that has been fished out of the sea!"

But Duncan needed no urging, though shy at the first moment\* in presence of gentlefolk. He turned to Miss Emerson and spoke clearly and steadily.

"Madam," he said, "I hear there is a charge made against me, that ye were washed in wi' jewels on ye, and that Duncan MacElrath found ye and robbed ye. I wish to take an oath to my God that just as I got ye I gev ye up."

"I am sure you did," said Priscilla, eagerly.

"It's not her that's accusin' ye," said Mary. "There's your enemy," pointing to Dalrymple.

"My dear girl—" began Dalrymple,

"Dinna dare speak to me like that," said Mary, sternly.

"Tut, tut, Mary," said Duncan, and he seized her hand and held it.

"Sir," he went on, "dinna make accusals that ye can not bring to proof. But if you would make me out a thief, let it be man to man between us!"

## CHAPTER III.

Ten days passed, during which the island of Orra was still bound round with a ring of foam and fury, clashed with rain and darkened by storm clouds. Within the thick, low walls of the Lodge, life went on cheerfully. The two strangers felt themselves at home, and as a departure from under the roof of their entertainers was impossible, they both made the best of the situation.

In truth, Priscilla, having recovered her strength and youthful spirits, was as happy as a bird tripping about the old house and making herself useful to her friends. Her little fingers had a knack of beautifying all they touched, and, encouraged by the old lady, they touched a good deal in the very simple establishment. The shabby old drawing-room began to have a bright and less shabby appearance; dull objects shone, the nicest things came to the front, and the least lovely retired into the shade. Even at cooking Priscilla proved an adept and introduced some tempting American dishes into the *ménage*.

With Mr. Dalrymple doubtless the time hung more heavily upon his hands; but he was anxious to make himself agreeable, and was to be seen holding Mrs. Craig's skeins of wool while she wound them into balls, and playing at backgammon with the old lady when, being tired of knitting, she put away her work-basket. In Dr. Kenneth's study there was always an open book upon the book-shelf, and sometimes the young doctor sat opposite to the book; but the truth was Dr. Craig's mind was not with study during those days of the three weeks' storm. His thoughts were occupied chiefly by Priscilla and her fortunes, and by the humble pair whose lives had been cast under a cloud by suspicion concerning the jewels. He found it very hard to associate Duncan in his mind with a robbery, and it was much easier to believe that the gems had gone down into the deep. As the days went on, and Priscilla became dearer and dearer to him, Dr. Craig felt less and less inclined to see Duncan proved a thief and the jewels restored to Miss Emerson. Priscilla a rich woman, must be allowed to go her way out into the world and forget Orra Island. He, Kenneth, would not seek to withhold her from the brilliant fate that might await her. But Priscilla, penniless, destitute as she was, might be freely wooed and perhaps won to stay among those who had already learned to love her dearly. In the old, storm-girt house she was gay and full of life; and she "took to" his mother as if she had been a child of her own. Neither did the girl seem unhappy when Kenneth would at times linger by her longer than was necessary, though she must, he thought, often see his soul in his eyes. No, repeated Kenneth Craig to his inmost thoughts, while he stared at the pages of his medical book; he could not bring himself, try as he would, to wish that Priscilla's jewels could be found.

And yet all the more must he exert himself to search out the truth. When this interminable storm should come to an end (it must surely soon abate), then steps would have to be taken to put crooked things straight. In the meantime, life with Priscilla in the house was sweet; sweeter than it ever could be again in the future without her.

To his other guest Dr. Kenneth had taken an unreasoning dislike, which, he was bound to confess to himself, had its origin chiefly in jealousy. Here was a man of some charm of manner, of considerable culture, intelligence, and experience, a man of the world who had seen and could talk of many strange places, such a man as often fascinates a woman; a person of property besides, with power to confer advantages on his wife, and he had nothing to do all day but make himself agreeable to Priscilla. "Well, why should any one object to such a state of things? Priscilla, destitute, should be a rich man's wife, if she chose; let the man who could make her happiest win her."

Meantime, Priscilla had thoughts of her own, which were new to her, and which she did not share with anyone. She fancied that she perceived (it was not hard to perceive) that Kenneth loved her, and with her woman's instinct she had divined that he was worthy of her love. The thought that he could take her into his heart, destitute as she was, owing the very clothing she wore to his mother's bounty, made her own heart swell and her eyes fill with tears; and lying awake at night, listening to the roar of the wind and waves, sometimes having to remind herself that she was not still in the cabin of the doomed vessel, but safe under the roof of the man who had rescued her, she vowed within herself that if it should be proved that Kenneth wanted her in his life, no other man should ever take her from him!

With these thoughts strengthening in her mind, Priscilla suddenly became anxious for the return of her jewels. That Kenneth should love her in her poverty, and afterward be obliged to receive good fortune from her hands, seemed to her a most beautiful and desirable arrangement, and with all the ardor of a generous nature, she hoped and prayed that these things might come to pass. She began to listen with interest to Dalrymple's theory of the improbability of the loss of all her gems in the sea, and looked more and more sadly on Mary, as she thought of the possibility of Duncan's having possession of her property.

There was a little room at the back of the house, where Mary spent a good deal of her time ironing linens and muslins for the household—a small room with a tiled floor and stove and ironing-table. Here Priscilla often passed some hours helping Mary with her tasks. It was useful work such as she liked, and pleasant too, when she felt weary and stiffened from sitting in the drawing-room reading or sewing with Mrs. Craig, or talking to Mr. Dalrymple.

One afternoon, she had put on one of Mary's white aprons, and tucked up her sleeves, showing a pair of round white arms, whiter than Mary's and more dimpled at the elbows. The two girls had worked some time in silence, and Priscilla had noticed with sorrow how pale Mary looked and how dark about the eyes.

"Mary," she said, softly, "I wish you wouldn't grieve so much."

"How can I help it, Miss Emerson?" said Mary, bitterly. "Whatever way things gang wi' us there's a pain and a care. When the storm overs, and the boats get out, the police will be here lookin' after Duncan. An' if he canna clear himself his character is gone."

(To be Continued.)