

morning of April 6 all over the country the work of collecting the papers commenced, beginning at half-past eight o'clock in the morning and closing for the day at six. The returns for the smaller counties will be first published, but it is believed that before the entire result of the census will be presented to Parliament at least 18 months must elapse.

## A GIRL'S STRATAGEM.

(By KATHERINE TYNAN.)

BETTY LA TOUCHE had not sustained the family tradition for beauty, though some held her handsome, and her worst enemy could not say she was plain-looking. She was a tall girl, almost too slender, with a face which seldom by any chance had any colour in it, vivid, scarlet lips, and a strange pair of eyes, half grey, half hazel, which were apt to take a topaz colour when their owner was excited. Her mother had been a beauty, and a worthless one. Harry La Touche had never had a happy hour from the time he became possessor of her until he lay, a dying man, on the grass of the Fifteen Acres, shot in a duel which her heartless coquetries had brought about. Betty remembered him dimly; a fresh-looking, honest-faced fellow, to the last an incongruous presence in the gambling saloons, whither his wife's follies drove him. She remembered his kissing her in the grey dawn of the morning he went out to die, and putting her down so tenderly on her warm pillow. Growing older, she came to learn the story of that day, and it filled her with a great bitterness against her mother, now an elderly butterfly, known in half the cities of Europe. She had dragged her little girl in her train almost from the time she could walk. She was no beauty, her mother said half complacently, and there was no fear of rivalry. However, the bitterness grew and grew, and had become almost insupportable, when Mrs La Touche took it in her head to bestow her faded person upon a parson ten years her junior, who had been long devoted to her or her jointure. They were in Belgium when this happened, and Betty very gladly shook the dust of the hot little Belgium town off her feet and travelled homewards to Ireland, where she had not been for twelve years.

It was in the last years of the last century, and the journey was a toilsome, and even dangerous one, but it was accomplished safely. She was going to her father's aunt, whose country house was on the outskirts of the city at Inchicore, not far from Phoenix Park, a quiet and little frequented place, though somewhat spoilt by his Majesty's prison of Kilmainham, in the near vicinity. The packet had been half the week tossing about in the Channel, and Miss La Touche was a bad sailor, so she was a pitiable object for her presentation to her great aunt. Still, when the coach deposited her at the green-barred gate of her new abode, she felt the life creeping back in her veins, and the joy in her heart at the pleasant sight.

A long garden stretched away from the gate, rosy and white with apple blossoms, over which stood up a grey old house framed in creepers with gabled roof and twisted chimneys, the diamond-paned windows open, and all, basking in the morning sun, looking a very haven of rest. Down the long pathway came the stateliest of ladies in a stiff dove-coloured silk-gown, with a lace kerchief crossed on her bosom, and a cap of the same, frail as a cobweb, on soft, white hair. Peach-coloured ribbons in gay knots adorned cap and kerchief, and matched with mild violet eyes which looked out of her worn fair face. She gathered the tired girl into such a motherly embrace as she had never known in all her life; then, having dismissed the hackney coach, carried her off into the shaly old house, where her maid Hester was waiting with almost as warm a welcome. And then there was a dainty breakfast and a warm bath prepared, and the tired traveller afterwards went to sleep in a room all roses on a green background, and slept nearly through the twenty-four hours, to be awakened only by the songs of the thrushes and blackbirds just outside her window.

She was a fascinating girl, despite her lack of absolute beauty. No belle of the day had more admirers, and would-be-lovers; but Betty would have none of them in that capacity, though she had plenty of smiles and gay words for them. Some said she was cold and some exacting, but she was neither, as after events proved; only unable to love a man who had displayed mere social qualities. She was now getting on for twenty-six years of age and her name had been associated with no man's. She gave none of her admirers cause to complain. Her favours, were impartially distributed, and there was no duelling on her account. She was unconventional in an age when what we nowadays would call fastness was almost a convention. She thought her own thoughts and put them into speech, and she chose her own friends. Also, now and then, she made her own enemies. She could be curiously bitter at times, and had a way of flashing out at pretence, at scandal-mongering, or anything else that earned her disdain, with a dilation of her yellow eyes, which occasionally made for her implacable enemies; but she was well loved, too, and went on her way unheeding. She took part in all the town's gaieties, dancing at the Rotunda, and

driving to take the water at Lixlip surrounded by a posse of her admirers on horseback, and altogether led a very gay existence.

The high tide of gaiety which the Rutland Administration had inaugurated had not yet fallen to its ebb. Lord Buckingham was followed by Lord Fitzwilliam, and under this beloved Viceroy the Irish capital was a gay and pleasant place indeed. It was the day of the United Irish Society (when the noblest in the land belonged to its ranks, and the proudest dames displayed its favours, and as yet its strength and power and the boldness of its pretensions had not seemed to inspire with anxiety the ruling authorities. But this happy state of things was not for long. In March, 1797, Lord Fitzwilliam was recalled, and left Ireland amid the deepest national mourning, his kind rule being replaced by the savage despotism of Lord Camden's viceroyalty. It came like a thunder-clap on the country, when some of the noblest and most beloved among the United Irishmen were seized and imprisoned in Newgate, in the old prison of Kilmainham, in Carrickfergus, and the other strongholds throughout the country, the most active agent in the new policy of repression being the newly-appointed Chief Secretary, Robert Stewart, Lord Castlereagh, who had been one of the foremost among the United Irishmen in his native northern province.

Under the new rule the gaieties went on with less heart, but little outward expression of the gloom that had fallen upon the city in common with the country. The fairest and noblest faces were missing perhaps, but society agreed, as it always does, to bury its dead as decently as possible. So martial law not yet proclaimed, coaches rumbled through the city by night, and link-boys ran shouting with their lights, and the sedan chairmen had not to complain of much diminution of custom. Some, indeed were too generous to accept the existing state of things; many a gentleman laid aside his ruffles and velvet, and went no more to Court; many a lady folded her brocades sprinkled with shamrocks in dusky drawers strewn with lavender, and put by her gaieties for a better day. But, contrary to all expectations, Betty La Touche went with the tide.

She had made one hot little protest at first. One night she had overruled all her adoring aunt's objections to appearing at one of the Viceroy's balls. She had come down muffled in her white silk cloak, and while they were waiting for the coach the gentle old lady had time to notice the feverish excitement in the girl's face. Her own heart was sad enough. She could not see why they should be junketing off to the Castle, with all this misery going on and some of their dearest and most honoured friends lying in prison. Betty must have guessed her thoughts, for turning to her suddenly she bent and kissed the sweet withered face.

"Bear with me, my dearest," she said, "O, what are you thinking of me? That I am my mother's daughter, perhaps light and hard like her. Bear with me a little, and you will soon understand."

And the tears brimmed over her two bright eyes. So they went off, the old lady's kind heart comforted through all sense of mystification.

However, Betty's appearance at the ball created considerable commotion. Her white velvet was embroidered thickly with silver shamrocks, and her underskirt was of the rebel green. The shamrock was in her hair, on her breast—everywhere. Miss La Touche was a little dismayed at this madcap freak, and yet in her brave heart a little proud of it. On the Chief Secretary, whose first appearance this was under the new regime, the effect was far from what Betty had anticipated. As she swept by him and the Viceroy, her haughty head in the air, her long train gathered over her arm, her eyes quite golden with anger and excitement, his Lordship swore he had never seen so charming an apparition. "A dangerous little rebel, and one worth knowing, by Heaven," was his comment, which was chronicled and repeated to Betty herself next day.

After this her fire seemed to have died out, and to all the world she looked well in process of taming. On the very first opportunity my Lord Castlereagh had obtained an introduction, and a friendship seemed to grow between the two, to the scandal of many and the wonder of all. His Lordship found time between the cares of the State to lavish the *petite soins* on this one charming woman. Not that there was anything to give scandal; scarcely anything even in the way of flirtation. Betty La Touche was far too haughtily careful of her good name for that. All the world might hear her shower of gay witticisms as she sat smoothing her yellow silk and opening and shutting her great fan, while the Secretary's handsome and sinister face leaned delightfully over her. Hear the talk of the dowagers.

"Really," says one, a little acrimoniously, "that girl grows more like her mother every day. What can Priscilla La Touche be about to permit it? And her friendship with Lady Edward, and those poor Bonaynes! Dear, dear! 'tis the way of the world."

"Yet, they say," says her kinder-looking neighbour, "that Lady Edward has much affection for her, and repels with anger those who would carry tales to her. And poor Mrs Bonayne; they say this girl travels every day to her country house at Drumcondra, to be with her and comfort her for the loss of her son in Kilmainham. And they say also that, by my Lord Castlereagh, she has procured for him in many ways a mitigation of the hardships of his prison."