

request, for a rooted prejudice is a terribly hard thing to get rid of.

'I shall think it all over, Dan, and let you know about it in my next letter,' was the utmost concession Dan found it possible to extort.

'And, sure enough, in Mrs. O'Connor's next letter she did let Dan 'know about it,' and a very humiliating revelation the letter contained.

'I have something most painful—to me at least—to tell you, Dan. Your Aunt Alice got a bad turn last night, and she believed she was dying—though she is much better to-day—and she confessed to me that she herself had written that anonymous letter to Robert O'Connor, who was afterwards your father, eight-and-twenty years ago—the letter which I had blamed Kate O'Meara for writing!

"I was secretly in love with Robert myself" Alice confided to me last night. "And I was furiously jealous of you, Lucy. I really do not think I was quite responsible for my act. I must have been off my head for the time being. And when you suspected Kate O'Meara of having written the letter I had not the courage to confess the truth."

'How am I ever to obtain dear Kate's forgiveness, Dan, for having so cruelly wronged her all these years? I intend to fall down on my knees at her feet, when I see her, and tell her how truly remorseful I am.'

Dan took his mother's letter over to the cottage that day, and placed it in Mrs. McCarthy's hands.

'This is no surprise to me, Dan,' Delia's mother said. 'I knew—or at least strongly suspected at the time, that Alice had written that letter; but knowing that Lucy was so attached to her sister, I kept my suspicion to myself in order to spare Lucy the pain and humiliation of knowing the truth. "Better that she should believe me to be her secret enemy," I decided, "than to be forced to lose faith in the sister she loves so much."

'So I've held my tongue, Dan, from that day to this. But now I shall at once write to your dear mother, for whom my affection has never altered for a moment!'

Dan gave a dinner party on St. Patrick's Night, to which he invited Mrs. McCarthy and Delia.

Frank Lynam was again staying at Droumgarri.

And when Mrs. McCarthy entered the drawing-room Dan's mother came rapidly forward—she and Elsie Graham had arrived from Dublin that day—and a moment later the two old friends were sobbing in each other's arms.

And while the attention of their elders was thus diverted, the four young people were by no means idle, you may rest assured.

They had rapidly divided into twos, and were exchanging confidences in agitated whispers as to their approaching marriage-day—for the four were to be wedded on the same day and in the same church—that very day week, indeed, should they all live to see it.—*Weekly Freeman.*

JERRY'S INVESTMENT

Jerry Dodson took a buck-skin purse from the pocket of his overalls, and carefully counted its contents into his horny hand. Ten golden twenties shone brightly in the sunlight.

Jerry looked at them with a hard, bitter feeling at his young heart. Those twenties meant six years of hard work; six years of getting up at four o'clock in the morning, of driving mule-teams, walking behind a harrow over rough clods, and sweltering long days on a harvester.

The money for his work ever since he was sixteen, and less than what one year's wages should have come to.

He had tried to be so saving, never drawing a cent, save for clothes or going to town Saturday night with the rest of the boys, for a good time.

He had built such hopes on that accumulating money; he meant to buy a team and rent a piece of land, and this fall he had planned to do it. 'There was the Webster place—grain-land and pasture, with a bit of alfalfa; everything for a hard-working man to succeed, and he had the first chance for it, too, but now he must go on being nothing but a hired man after all.'

Colonel McClatchy had failed—his colonel, whom he believed to be as good as a bank.

It was hard to believe it, looking over the fine fields of the great ranch and the almost palatial home. Yet, it was all gone for mortgages and debts, and the three hundred dollars was Jerry's share of the wreck. There was a bitterness in his heart as he looked at the great house, with its beautiful lawns, flowers, and orchards looking as bright in the sunlight as if no blighting ruin had come.

'They always had everything,' thought Jerry resentfully; 'money, clothes, horses, carriages, and company, and plenty to travel round every place. What business had they going on spending other folks' money they'd worked hard for? They never worked—just went along having a good time, though,' he added, 'I won't say but what the old man's acted square; he's turned over everything. What's the use of trying to save anything? Why shouldn't I have a good time?—and I will! I'll go to the city and trot it high until every red cent of this money is gone; that I will.'

He thrust the bag back into his pocket and looked over the pasture, his young face set in lines of determination.

Suddenly a quick, alert look came into his eyes; he gazed intently for a few minutes.

'I wonder what's the matter with that black cow over by the pond,' he thought; 'she's acting queer, away off that way from the others. Like as not that calf of hers is in trouble, pesky thing. I'll have to go and see,' and Jerry started with his long swinging stride across the grassy slough-land, for an animal never appealed to him in vain.

As he walked along, the Colonel's favorite mare lifted her head with a whinny. Jerry patted her, and wondered who would buy the horse; then almost unconsciously a feeling of pity stole into his heart for the Colonel himself. What must this ruin be to the old man! He thought how generous and good he had always been, with his purse ever open to those who needed his aid, and now to lose everything.

'I declare 'tis rough,' thought Jerry, 'plaguey rough! But the old man's been too careless,' he continued, his resentment still stirring; 'but, then, he's old. If he were twenty years younger I'll bet he'd get it all back. There's the women folks, too. I guess, after all, there's a good many in a worse boat than me.'

Jerry found that the little calf had gone along a sheep track on the edge of the pond until the bank rose steeply. Here it stopped and lowed while the cow-mother lowed above him. Jerry turned the small animal, thinking at the same time that it was the biggest fool-calf he had ever seen.

As he turned leisurely to walk back, he heard a strange sound, and paused to listen, then he walked quickly toward a clump of willows not far from the pond. He pushed in among them, then stopped in embarrassment.

'Why—why—Miss Jeannie,' he stammered, 'what's the—matter?'

A young girl was lying on the soft salt grass, sobbing as if her heart would break. She looked up, startled; 'Oh, Jerry!' she cried.

'Anybody been a misusing you, Miss Jeannie?' he cried, his hard hands involuntarily clenching. 'If they have, it's me that will have a settling.'

He looked so fierce that Jeannie McClatchy smiled a wan smile.

'No,' she said, 'it's only my foolishness. There, I'm better now. It's only that papa has to sell my piano, and oh, it's so hard to give it up.'

Her chin quivered again, while Jerry looked as if some fresh calamity had come to him.

'Oh, come now,' he said, 'it can't be so bad as that; your papa'll fix it somehow.'

The girl shook her head. 'No,' she said, 'he's going to sell everything that will bring money. I'd been thinking I might give music lessons and help him. He's going to rent the Webster place, and begin over right here.'

Jerry could hardly speak for astonishment. The Colonel living where he had planned to live! Miss Jeannie, too!

'Well, well,' he said, for want of something better, 'that's all-fired rough!'

'If you only knew how badly papa feels. It has nearly killed him. You see, Jerry, in the beginning he signed some notes for a friend and had to pay them, then some speculations failed, and hard years came, and now it's this.'

'Yes,' said Jerry, 'it's harder on the Colonel than anybody else. Now cheer up, Miss Jeannie, do cheer up.'

'I'm better now. I shan't make a baby of myself again. I've had my little weep, and now I'm going to be brave like papa's daughter ought to.'

It was the day of the McClatchy auction. The great house was full to overflowing. People felt the velvet carpets and tried the springs of the satin chairs. Jerry was out in the hall talking crops. He had stood over the sale of every colt and calf on the place for two days, and now his keen ears caught every word the auctioneer said in the parlor. 'I offer you now this piano, ladies and gentlemen. Look at it well, note the make, see the polish, listen to the tone,' and he ran his fingers rapidly over the keyboard, where so often Miss Jeannie played.

'Let me tell you, the chance to get a piano like this cheap comes not twice in a lifetime. Do I hear a bid?'

'Fifty dollars,' said a stout farmer.

'Seventy-five,' called a voice from the doorway nervously.

Then it went up by fives and tens to one hundred and forty.

The auctioneer used more eloquence. The stout farmer had invested too largely outside; he would go no higher to please the women folks; the little woman had long been silent.

'Going—going. A seven hundred dollar piano selling for a song. Do I hear more? Going, going—gone! Sold to the gentleman in the hall.'

Jerry had bought the piano. He came forward and paid for his purchase, then slipped away from the jokes and merriment of his friends.

'Oh, Jerry,' said Jeannie when she met him on the porch, 'I had rather you had it than anybody else. It was so good of you.'

'I don't want it,' answered Jerry stoutly. 'It's yours. I'm thinking the Colonel and I will want a little music, when we come in tired of evenings from working on the Webster place. I've got the mare, too, Miss Jeannie, and the best of the young cattle, and your pa will just start over again, with this pair of stout hands to help him.'