she left home, but, you see, Madge, it was to follow the man she loved.

"Oh, yes," Madge sighed, "but you, you—you will not like leaving home?"

"I will not," he returned, with vehemence. "There is only one thing that could make me go. Madge, oh, Madge—say you will miss me a little bit."

He had stopped and faced her, his hands on her shoulders as they stood in the deserted road, a world of love and longing in his eyes. "Madge, dear, tell me that my going will make some difference to you. I—I—could not bear to think that you did not care."

Madge lifted her eyes—wet now, and gazed into his as she answered instantly:

"Care? Of course I care, Owen. I shall miss you—oh, dreadfully. I—I do not know what I shall do without you."

"Dear," he said, "I know I have not the smallest right to speak to you now and I do not ask you for anything—remember that. But just want you to know that I am going away to try to get on, so that some day I may have the right to speak to you. Oh, Madge, dearest," the passionate, eager words pouring out as if he was moved by some force outside of himself; "I know what people would say to me if I tried to bind you now by any promise to me, and I should deserve all that they could say. But at least I may tell you what you are to me. That can do you no hurt. Madge, I love you, I love you! I think I have loved you since the first day I played with you on the sands down there. Dear, I did not mean to betray myself. I did not intend to say anything of this to you, but somehow when I saw your face just now, and your dear eyes wet——"

He stopped, mightily moved and shaken by the force of his emotions, while she said gently:

"Why should you not tell me, Owen? Do you think," very softly, "that I do not care to hear it?"

"God bless you, Madge. It has been such a comfort to me to tell you that I love you, and I do not think I have done you any wrong, since I have not asked you for anything. I have not asked you to give me any promise. Stop, dear," as she was about to speak. "I know, perhaps, what your dear, generous heart would say, but I will not let you say it. I will not let you promise me anything."

"Why?" she asked him, brave in the knowledge that she loved him, too.

"Because it may be years before I can come back to you with anything to offer you except"—with a slight laugh—"my love. And, dear," pressing closely the two little hands now taken into his close clasp. "I am not going to bind you down to anything indefinite. Other men," with a sharp, short sigh, as if the very thought of his own suggestion were agony to him, "will love you, better men than I, and though none of them," with passionate assurance, "can ever love you more than I do, yet they may be able to give you more in the way of position and wealth."

"As if," said Madge, proudly, "I should care about that."

"God bless you, dear. I know you wouldn't. But your parents, Madge. They might, very naturally, have something to say about it. No, dear; I absolutely refuse to bind you now, but if I do get on well, when I have got something to offer you, may I come back then, Madge, and ask you for what I dare not ask you now?"

"Whenever you come," she said, steadily, though the tears stood thick in her sad eyes, "I will be waiting for you."

"And you will not forget me, dear?"

"I will never forget you, Owen."

For one long minute the brown eyes held the blue, and then—for there was no one to see—his arms went round her and folded her close.

"Kiss me, dear," he whispered, "just once, so that I may have something to remember." And as she raised her face to his, it seemed to them as if the world stood still for that first lover's kiss.

"There," he said, as he released her, "no one can ever take that from me in all the years to be. Madge, give me something to keep, something in remembrance of to-day. Give me a piece of that shamrock you are wearing."

It was St. Patrick's Day, and Madge had pinned in the front of her dress a huge spray of the national emblem, "the green, immortal shamrock." She unpinned the brooch which kept it in place, and held out the spray to Owen.

"There," she said, "take it all. It is a nice piece. I gathered it myself this morning, and"—with a little unsteady laugh—"I hope it will bring you the very best of luck."

Owen took the shamrock almost reverently from her, and raised it to his lips.

"It will be my charm," he said, "for it will speak to me of Ireland and of you. I shall always keep it, Madge, always. And see," detaching the piece he wore in his coat, "I will give you mine. Will you keep it dear? And, perhaps it will sometimes remind you of the boy who is working and thinking of you far away. And, oh, Madge, if ever you should want me, if ever you should need a friend, then send me that piece of shamrock, dear, and I will come to you from the ends of the earth.

"I will remember," she said softly; I will always remember Owen."

Ten days later Owen bade adieu to his native land, and to Madge. The parting was a trial to both of them, for in the hearts of both was the thought that it "might be for years and it might be for ever," but they bade each other a brave farewell, with the simple blessing which comes so readily to the lips of the Gael, and the hope was a prayer for their speedy reunion.

CHAPTER II.

Madge Bartley stood before the mirror and surveyed her dainty reflection with satisfaction which comes from the knowledge that one is perfectly and becomingly gowned. The soft sheen of the pearl-tinted satin showed off to perfection the fresh tintings of her flower-like face, with its soft crown of gold-brown hair.

"Money certainly is a satisfaction," thought Madge, with a little smile at the dazzling image in the glass, but the next instant the smile faded, and the blue eyes grew sombre as she reflected that there are some things in the world that money cannot buy, the things best worth having, such as love and joy and great abiding happiness.

Some months after Owen's departure a great and unexpected change of fortune had come to the Bartley's. A great uncle of Mrs. Bartley's had died leaving to her the whole of his immense fortune. Consequently Madge had the delightful experience of possessing as much money for her gloves as she had previously been obliged to make cover her whole yearly expenditure. Her parents moved into a better neighborhood and society took them up, and when it realised that Madge was an heiress it discovered also that she was a beauty, and she was in a fair way to have her head turned. But through all her change of fortune and position Madge's heart remained loyal to the boy who had kissed her and gone away, taking with him her love and constant prayers. No one knew why she remained so deaf to all the suitors—young and old—who came a-wooing; no one even guessed why there was sometimes a wistful look in her flower blue eyes, or why her smiling face was sometimes clouded with a shadow, as if pain and she were not unacquainted. Only the stars could have told of the restless, sleepless hours when Madge lay wide-eyed and miserable, wondering why Owen had given up writing to her, if he had forgotten her, if his passionate love-words had been but the outcome of a boy's passing fancy, if absence had taught him that he had not really cared.

"If I might know that he had forgotten me I could bear it easier than this suspense, this eternal wondering why," she thought.

But the days grew into weeks, and the weeks lengthened into months, and no word came from him after one brief note in which he had congratulated her on their unexpected good fortune.

"It could not be the money that has come between us," she thought, sick at heart with wondering why the chill of silence had fallen between them, and why her last letter remained unanswered.

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