

"Well, we're not running Dargan on the score of his ancestry, of course; but Dargan is a loyal man—Dargan is not under the observation of the police," said the agent in low, significant tones.

"If half they say of him be true, I'd think more of the police if he was."

"Eh?" stammered the agent, growing pale with anger or with doubt or with both.

"I'm not going to discuss Mr. Dargan's virtues," said the Guardsman, haughtily. "But you force me to tell you this much, Mr. Harman—that, so far as experience goes, I am prouder of my own friends in Drumsloughlin than I should be of yours."

There was something about this blunt, downright young Englishman which cowed Hans Harman grievously. "That's right; pitch into us," he said, with an affectation of good-humoured banter. "We're doing England's business, and meet the usual fate of men on foreign service—get criticised and thrown over at home. But it is not for the sake of us poor devils of loyalists alone I spoke to you—it was for your own sake, too, as well. You, I dare say, have not heard how these people abuse your confidence—how were you to know that there is serious disaffection in the Bantry barracks—that drunken soldiers have been actually making free with your name?"

"So this is where the stories that reached the Horse Guards came from!" was the thought that flashed on Neville's angry brain. He looked straight into the agent's eyes, as he said deliberately: "If you can find me anybody making free with my name who is not disposed to shelter himself behind drunken soldiers, I will be thankful to you if you will let me know his address; and, in the meantime, Mr. Harman, being a mere Englishman, I intend to treat all the rest of your reports about Ireland as of equal authority with this," and he jerked his horse's head aside with a gesture of open disgust and contempt. Horace Westropp and the Horse Guards and Mr. Haus Harman had, in fact, all unconsciously conspired to complete the charm which Reggy's residence in the Glen had been weaving around him by such divers aids as grouse moors, other streams, bright eyes, and the indefinable sense of expanding beyond his own stifling shell.

His sisters, it must be admitted, by no means shared his fanaticism. They were growing dreadfully tired of Clanlaurance Castle. They might have made the round of a dozen of the best houses in Britain, while they were incarcerated in this dreary, draughty old barrack of a castle, oscillating uncomfortably between Mabel's little society and a little society in which they were forced to hear Mabel venomously spoken of, and not very much more enamoured of Frank Harman's bows and arrows than of the American Captain's gift of fortune-telling and outlandish metaphors. They were thoroughly good girls—as blooming and natural as if they had not all the effulgence of seven centuries of Winspurleighs to turn their heads on one side of the house, and all Joshua Neville's forges roaring in full blast around them on the other. It was no fault of theirs if they were bred to tastes which did not find satisfaction among the simple scenes and strange people around them. It was only what all girls in all ages would have done in the like circumstances, if they frequently put their heads together at bed-time to moan over an affectionate little note from Lady Asphodel pressing them to be of the party in Primroseshire—if they devoutly recited the litany of all the pleasant people that were staying at Aunt Asphodel's—(I dare say I have mentioned that the Marchioness was a younger sister of Lady Margery)—and if they timidly questioned one another why, if Reggy wanted Mabel, he did not ask her, and get done with it? Besides their pre-occupation about losing the party at the Meads, the girls were also vaguely conscious of apprehensions which they rather looked than spoke on a subject into which Georgey O'Meagher's bright black eyes and saucy curls largely entered. The Neville girls were as kind to Georgey as they were to everybody else; but it is perhaps needless to say that the innocent rompish ways of the Irish rustic beauty did not impress Aunt Asphodel's nieces with the same unmingled delight wherewith they too plainly impressed their brother. The elder girl, especially, noticed so many indescribable nothings that, in urging upon papa the desirability of making a movement towards England

before the Primroseshire party should break up, she thought it her duty delicately to shadow forth her apprehensions of a possible O'Meagher quartering on the Winspurleigh shield.

"Nonesense, my dear child!" exclaimed Joshua Neville, who, if he knew anything, claimed to know men and women. "That's an uncommonly pretty little girl; but the notion of a man with eyes in his head thinking of anybody else in the presence of Mabel!—I say you have no right to think your brother a born idiot, child." And he selfishly stifled discussion as to fitting into Primroseshire, by intimating that Aunt Asphodel always made his head ache, whereas he had never once felt his temples throb in the bracing air of Glengariff. Papa's health and happiness were the last words with Joshua Neville's daughters. Ida and her sisters, like the dear girls that they were, dismissed Primroseshire with a sigh (and possibly with a little cry), and set themselves resolutely to like Lord Clanlaurance's rookery. Wicked, wicked Joshua Neville! and all too-confiding Ida! I do verily believe that what the ironmaster was thinking of above all else was his own delicious readings from the German poets, and his own conviction, rapturously whispered to himself a hundred times a day in the inmost, inmost shrine of his simple, rugged hidden heart, that he would be the happiest ironmaster who ever lit a furnace if he had Mabel Westropp for his daughter-in-law.

And this young lady was all the time an observer how Reggy Neville was beginning to lie in wait for the comings and goings of Miss Georgey, and never once frowned—if she did not actually smile. She found herself degenerating into a shameless match-maker also in the matter of poor Harry's unspoken love. With Harry unrequited love at the Mill meant prolonged visits to Moll Carthy's. Whisky was the only mistress to whom he could declare his passion without the terror of making a speech or getting laughed at. Mabel saw with misery that poor little Katie Rohan's too evident terror of his attentions was driving him more and more to the feet of his more compliant goddess. She courted little Katie so assiduously for Harry's sake that she ended by doating on her for her own sake; for, once the timid shrinking from a great lady evaporated under Mabel's soft sunshiny smiles, Katie put forth all the pure sweetness of her nature as confidently as a violet in a safe woodland nook, and the elder girl wound her arms round her with the fondness of a mother thrilling under the artless caresses of a winsome baby. Katie was a curious study to her. In household matters she left Mabel a thousand miles behind. In the making of a lemon-pudding, or in prescribing for a sore throat, or managing the pillows of a sick bed, she was as practical as a certificated nurse, and as confident of her own strength as a navy. But of the great world beyond the Mill at Greenane, she knew no more than the robin-redbreast knows of the atmosphere of the sun. All she was aware of was that Myles Rohan was the wisest of men, her mother the noblest of women, and Ken the bravest of heroes; and, for the rest, the great universe an enlarged chapel with the gold-fretted firmament for a roof, and the everlasting angels for a choir; with wicked spirits, also, doubtless hovering somewhere in exterior darkness, but kept in subjection by Mother Rosalie's prayers, and fleeing in terror under the all-subduing eye of Father Phil. If it ever occurred to her to think what could be her own part among the rolling world, it was doubtless in the spirit in which the mouse of the fable might have dreamed the night the lion did it the honor of allowing the creature to nibble his high and mighty chains away. Miss Westropp, looking down from the heights of her own wide experience of half a London season and (in very truth) much anxious thought and reading of her own, watched this miracle of simplicity with the protecting tenderness with which a Guardian Angel overshadows a child on its knees at evening prayer. In the beautiful book of Tobias, the Guardian Angel helps the young Tobias to a wife; but when the Guardian Angel commenced to hint never so dimly of Harry as a husband, Katie's little soul shrank and trembled with pain as though it was one of the wicked spirits that had evaded Father Phil's vigilance and was whispering to her.

"Oh, don't! don't! never—never again!" she cried in an agony of tears, and Mabel, who was scarcely less fright-

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