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THIS MY SON

A Novel :: By John Freeman

Author of "Fan of Belsey's." :: :: :: ::

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NOTE

THE people who figure in this story—as those in "Fan of Belsey's"—I have met in real life. The scenes amid which they move are familiar to me. I owe something to both of them. There is a gracious ministry of forest and of stream. The one imposes a hush upon the spirit—the other imparts an urge. I am more deeply in debt to the characters depicted here—especially to Father O'Leary and Slade Lamond. They have helped me to know life, to taste its essence and assess its values. They have breathed cheer and mirthfulness into my heart and have helped me to think well of humankind.

It is my hope that readers of this story may not only while away some pleasant hours with it, but, on closing the book, find themselves a little stronger and braver for the daily round and common task.

J. F.

THIS MY SON

I

With his back against a cushioned rest and his long legs sprawled across a thwart, Doug Durston, aged twenty, and fat enough for forty, lay dozing in the boat which he had anchored on the broad current of the St. John. He was dressed for comfort—with a thought to elegance—in white flannels, panama hat and canvas shoes. The butt-end of a fishing rod was wedged between his knees, while its slender tip dangled in the stream.

It was a lazy afternoon. The air was languid with a load of fragrance, drugged into drowsiness by breaths of clover mingled with rich scents steaming up from banks covered with dog-rose and honeysuckle. Brown dots scattered over the adjacent intervales told where full fed cattle crushed lush grass beneath their weighty bodies as they stretched themselves out in dull content. The elms, standing like tall sentinels to guard the scene, had forgotten their duty and gone to sleep. The birds were silent. Aloft, masses of fleecy clouds hung motionless, aerial Alps, snow-crowned and cleft by passes of vivid blue. The river itself was dropping into slumber on the undulating bosom of the up-creeping tide. The boat, in sympathy with its owner and its surroundings, nodded dreamily at its painter.

Doug had slept but a few minutes when he was startled awake by a heavy splash in the vicinity of the boat. He sat up, rubbing his eyes and looking about him in a dazed sort of way.

"What the blazes! . . . But there's no fish about here big enough to make all that racket. We don't get whales in the St. John."

He watched the circle of swirling water until it subsided

and the stream flowed smooth again. He was casting about in his mind for some clue to the mystery when a curly brown head suddenly bobbed up within a few yards of the boat. It had no visible connection with a body. The chin was resting on the water.

He peered at the apparition, and presently found himself looking into a pair of merry eyes. They seemed to be enjoying his perplexity. Then the lips parted in an engaging smile. Before Doug could speak a word, the head disappeared from view, and in place of it a pair of heels flashed into the air. Now the body was floating lightly on the water, hands clasped behind the neck and toes twinkling in the sunlight. Next, the body doubled itself into the shape of a hoop, churning the water into foam by a series of backward revolutions. At length it came drifting up to the side of the boat and a pleasing voice enquired :

" Any luck, neighbour? "

Doug smiled in his cool whimsical way.

" Not a lot. Only one trout so far. It's a little early in the day for the best fishing."

" Smart looking craft you're navigating."

" Well, yes, I suppose so. It's a decent boat. Won't you come aboard and take a rest? "

" Thanks ! I'm resting here. But I don't mind joining you for a bit."

With but the slightest rocking of the boat he swung himself aboard. He went in over the bow with a smooth glide like a flicked-up wavelet. Then he stretched himself out to enjoy a sun bath. His only covering consisted of the abbreviated trunk of an old pair of balbriggan drawers tied about his waist with a string.

Doug viewed his unceremonious visitor with undisguised admiration. He was an attractive looking young man, with handsome face and finely moulded frame. His white skin gleamed like ivory. His shapely body rippled all over with eager muscle. The soles of his feet were calloused. His hands bore evidence of acquaintance with rough work.

" Where do you hail from? " asked Doug.

" From all over and up and down. I'm a rolling stone."

"You certainly don't seem to have gathered much moss," laughed Doug.

"That's so. There isn't much sticking to me just now, is there? Like as not you wouldn't take me for a millionaire."

"There's no telling. You may be one in disguise, for all I know."

"Well, I'm not. Not yet. But you never know your luck. We may both be millionaires before we die."

"Not a numerous breed in this part of the country, my friend. But how have you been faring for luck?"

"Guess I've had my share. Between good luck and bad luck, mostly the latter, I've had as much luck as most fellows."

"Do you belong to this part of the country? I don't remember seeing you before."

"For the last few days I've been trying to make up my mind whether I belong to this part of the country or this part of the country belongs to me. I suppose it depends on how one looks at it."

"Quite so. I see you're something of a philosopher."

"Only in a very small way, neighbour. I didn't get as far as the study of philosophy. My school days ended too soon for that. But I like this part of the country so much that I've been annexing it these last few days. Great river this!"

"Yes. A famous American has said it combines the beauties of the Rhine and Hudson. But that must be extravagant praise."

"I doubt it. Of course it hasn't the cities or the traffic of those rivers, but in natural beauty I can quite believe it equals them. It has wonderful wooded heights, broad intervales, great falls and a flow as clear as crystal. Its tributary streams are marvellously beautiful, too. That's a lovely little river over there."

He pointed to where the Wassis glided gently in to join the current of the St. John.

"Runs clear as silver between the pine groves for half a mile. Charming old mill and dam further up," he continued.

"Yes," said Doug, "it's a favourite resort for canoe

parties. We often go up there from town for little picnics. Sometimes we build a fire and roast corn on the cob. I've had many a jolly time up there."

The stranger looked across the river.

"Bigger stream over yonder. Emenetta, isn't it? They say it's a dream. Haven't been across yet. Looks to be a funny little village there."

"That's Otnaby. They're mostly half breeds and Indians. Father O'Leary, the priest, is monarch of that little kingdom. That's the spire of his little church you see glistening in the sun. Tremendous man. Body big as a house; heart big as all out doors. Irish, of course."

Nothing more was said for some little time. Then Doug asked: "Are you staying with friends in the neighbourhood?"

"Well, no, I wouldn't exactly call them friends. They're recent acquaintances but none too friendly. I'm staying up there with the people in Everett's grove.'

Doug stared at him in amazement.

"But the gipsies are there; the black Pete gang; worst bunch in the country. Don't tell me you're with them!"

"That's what I'm bound to tell you if I tell the truth. I've been with them for ten days."

"For heaven's sake! What got you in with them?"

"Convenience and necessity. A pair that pull well together. Hard pair to pull against."

Doug decided not to push his enquiries further. He did not wish to appear inquisitive. But presently his visitor said:

"I got out of a job last winter when they closed the branch railway line I was working on, and my money soon went. When spring opened I took the road looking for work. Not much success. A few odd days here and there. I was travelling across country to strike the St. John. Wanted to get among the logs and mills. The gipsies overtook me. They were having trouble with some of their horses, and I helped them out a bit. So they suggested I should come along with them. It meant something to eat, such as it was, and a place to sleep. But I've found them up to a lot of shady tricks, so I'm

cutting away now. Only waiting to get my belongings together. I've been missing some of my goods and chattels. A pair of shoes disappeared a few days ago and now my suit of clothes seems to have got misplaced. At the present moment I'm only in command of a pair of overalls. I'm wanting to get hold of my duds and put something over black Pete's eyebrow before I leave. The trouble is to catch him alone when he hasn't got his sheath-knife with him. Those chaps are handy with their cutlery."

"By Jove, you have been up against it rough. How old are you?"

"About twenty, I think," replied the visitor.

"You're evidently well educated."

"Fairly well. I learned quickly at school, and I've always been fond of reading. I've read quite a lot of history and fiction. One can pick up good reading stuff at second hand book stores for half nothing. The last book I read was the most delightful thing I've struck yet. Lorna Doone. Have you read it?"

"Yes, and I admire your taste."

"Well, I'd like to live a thousand years to read that book once a year. Jan Ridd was a corker, wasn't he? And Lorna . . . oh my!"

"Yes, both fine people. But isn't it most time we introduced ourselves? My name is Doug Durston. I live down there in Beddington. My father is a doctor."

"And my name is Mark Woodburn. I haven't any relatives living that I know of."

Mark turned his head away.

Presently he said. "I must be getting ashore now. I've enjoyed your company. Seems good to speak with someone who is somebody. Much obliged to you for being so friendly with me."

"That's all right. But don't be in a hurry! Wouldn't you like to try your luck with the rod?"

"Why, yes. Got any bait?"

Doug handed over a box of bait. Mark turned over the contents, remarking: "Some fat juicy fellows here. Guess this one will do."

He baited the hook and threw it overboard. Scarcely

had it sunk to the proper depth when the float disappeared and the line went taut. The rod bent double.

"You've got something worth while there," said Doug. "Yes, he's a hefty chap. Look at that!"

The line had darted up the stream.

"Plenty of fight in him, but he's too well hooked to make anything of it. Here he comes home to rest."

"Jove! He's a beauty!" said Doug. "Two pounds, eh?"

"Hardly," said Mark. "It takes a big trout to weigh two pounds. I think he's about a half short."

The line was soon overboard again. Whish! went the float. "Ah, this is a still bulkier chap, if I'm any judge." The line darted toward the shore. "Oh, hang!"

Mark dropped to the bottom of the boat as if he had been shot. At the same time he handed the rod to Doug. A canoe had just come out of the Wassis. It was but a few lengths away. A be-flannelled youth was paddling in the stern, with a be-muslined maiden facing him in the bow. In one hand she held a small parasol. The other hand was trailing in the water. Mark rolled over on his face.

The canoe slowed down, its occupants evincing lively interest in Doug's proceedings.

"I say, Len, move on as fast as you can!" cried Doug. "You'll be getting in my way. I don't want to lose this trout. Get off the campus!"

"I'm not in your way. There! You've got him all right now. But where's your partner? Saw someone with you a minute ago."

"You're drunk. You're seeing double. Get on about your business and don't stay fooling around here!"

"Something fishy about this, Douglas D.! I'll just take a peep into the boat. Grace, you're the nearest, can you see anything in the bottom of the boat that looks like a human being?"

What Grace saw was something white flashing over the side of the boat. The canoe was now alongside.

"By heavens, Len Kendall, you've done it now!" roared Doug, as he sprang to his feet and looked about him with well simulated anxiousness. Len smiled.

"Too hot for unnecessary excitement, Douglas! Take it easy! I'm up to your little tricks."

Doug made no reply but continued to peer into the water. He balanced himself as if about to dive. The occupants of the canoe also scanned the stream. Presently Len grew restless and his companion became agitated. A full minute passed. The river continued to flow smooth as glass. Not a sign of life appeared.

"My God, Doug, where is he?" groaned Len. Grace screamed hysterically, shrieking at them to do something quick. Doug and Len looked right and left, up the stream and down the stream. Then Doug descried a head just above the water and close under the stern of Len's canoe. The eyes were full of merriment. Doug turned his gaze in the opposite direction.

"How . . . how long can a m-man live under water?" stuttered Len, who was now white with terror.

"Not more than half an hour," relied Doug coldly. Grace, by her frantic movements, was now threatening to overturn the canoe. Len was lashing about with his paddle and shouting to her to sit still. He was on the verge of collapse.

"Doug," he whispered hoarsely, "he's drowned! He's been down two minutes! It's all over! who was he?"

"Never mind who he was! You forced him overboard with your cursed prying. He was naked. What are you going to do about it?"

"I . . . I don't know. I'm no good at diving. I wouldn't know where to dive anyhow. Too late now, in any case. He's dead! Oh, my God!"

Doug sank down into the stern of his boat and put his head between his hands. Len could see that his body was shaking convulsively. He knew what a tender hearted fellow Doug Durston was.

"Doug! Doug! Brace up! Try to think of something!"

"I am thinking of something . . . something down there!" replied Doug in a wailing tone. "But . . . but isn't there any hope for him, Len?"

"No, Doug, not now," whispered Len solemnly.

"He's been down four or five minutes. But couldn't he swim?"

"Yes, he was a good swimmer. He swam out here to me."

"Then it must have been a case of heart failure. I've heard of strong swimmers diving and never appearing again alive. We must hurry home and get out boats to grapple for the body."

"I suppose that's the only thing to be done now," replied Doug sadly. "But I don't like to think about the inquest. Jove, I'm glad I'm not in your shoes, Len!"

"It's a terrible affair, Doug! I know it will look bad, especially for me. I guess I . . . I . . . practically murdered him."

"Of course you didn't intend to do him in," replied Doug. "The law will recognise that. They won't hang you. I don't suppose it's even a case for prison. But, oh heavens! To carry the weight of it on your mind all the rest of your life!"

At that moment Grace caught sight of a curly brown head resting on the water about a yard from the point of Len's paddle. She threw her hands over her face and shrieked.

"Better take Grace into your boat, Doug! She's all gone to pieces. I can't keep the canoe afloat much longer. It's enough to drive a girl stark raving mad."

She was staring now with wild eyes and pointing with her finger.

"There! There! I saw it there just now!"

"Saw what?" asked Len, as he glanced quickly in the direction she was indicating.

"His head! The drowned man's head! It had floated up!"

There was nothing to be seen. Len was certain she had gone mad. Just then a shower of water smote him from behind. He looked around but could discover nothing to account for it. Before he could speak, a musical voice sounding beside him said:

"Lovely afternoon, isn't it?"

Grace shrieked again. Mark touched a finger to his

curls. Len wiped the perspiration from his forehead and tried to smile. The effort produced but a sickly grin.

"I say, you fellows, what the devil do you mean? Between the two of you, you've just about scared us to death."

"Perhaps I did play it a bit low down," said Mark, "but it was cool down there."

"Jove, you're a cool customer, that's certain! And you seem to keep your humour dry even under humid conditions. I . . . I guess we'd better be moving on."

Doug, who was convulsed with laughter, intervened.

"Better get acquainted all round, first. Mr. Leonard Kendall and Miss Grace Hatfield, permit me to introduce my friend, Mr. Mark Woodburn! He's taking a short holiday in these parts."

"I can honestly say I'm glad to meet him," replied Len. "And I think I can say the same for Grace, whose conversational powers are somewhat held in abeyance, as it were, for the moment."

Her lips moved as though she would speak. The effort ended in sobs.

"Perhaps I may be permitted to inform Mr. Woodburn," said Len, "that Miss Hatfield is trying to assure him that his pleasant face makes a welcome break upon what, a few moments since, was a somewhat distressing outlook."

"You are both very kind, I'm sure. I thank you."

With that he turned a forward somersault in the water and promptly came to his former upright position.

"You will be good enough to excuse the awkwardness of my bow, but it is the best I can do under the circumstances."

"Goodness gracious!" cried Grace. "Come Len, let's get away!"

Len drove his paddle into the water and the canoe passed on.

Regaining his place in the boat, Mark resumed his fishing.

"Nice pleasant people, Doug. Was that his best girl?"

"No, she's his half-sister."

"Good looker, isn't she?"

"Yes. Fine girl, too."

Two more trout were caught and then the luck ran out. For half an hour they chatted together like old friends. Mark related some of his experiences and asked a number of questions about lumbering operations on the St. John.

At length he said:

"Time's up. I must go. I've had a great afternoon. Many thanks."

"Well, I'm sorry to have you go. I hope to see you again. Look me up in Beddington! I'm away from home to-morrow, but come the day after! Doctor Durston's, The Elms. Anyone can tell you where it is. I mean this. I want you to come. You will, won't you?"

"Thanks, I'd like to, very much. And I will, as soon as I can manage it."

He was about to dive from the boat when Doug said: "Hold on, I'm going to put you ashore!"

"No need for that."

"I know it, but I'm going to do it all the same."

While Doug was rowing to the shore, Mark strung the fish and dipped them into the stream to freshen up their colours. He stroked their speckled sides and placed them carefully under a thwart. As the boat grazed the bank he leaped ashore. Turning for a parting word, he saw Doug holding out the string of fish.

"Here! You're forgetting the trout!"

"But they're not mine."

"Sure they are!"

Doug flung the trout on the bank and rowed swiftly away.

II

HAVING donned his overalls, Mark stood and watched the receding boat till it became but a speck on the surface of the shining stream. His gaze wandered on to Beddington. He could count four graceful spires, towering slim and straight above the elm-embowered little city. The twin bridges which spanned the river, connecting Beddington with Margaretsville, gleamed in the sun like threads of gossamer. A thousand plumes of blue wood smoke, lifted into the torpid golden air, told where busy housekeepers were already beginning preparations for the evening meal. The whole region was wrapped in brooding stillness only broken by the asthmatic panting of a tug-boat out in mid stream, where it was patiently towing a raft of logs from the boom above to the mills below.

When nothing more could be seen of his late companion, he lifted his string of trout and made for the gipsy camp.

He found Black Pete stretched under the big wagon, smoking a short clay pipe. He was in a sullen mood. Business had been dull. The farmers of this neighbourhood were disinclined to horse-trading and little given to the purchase of flimsy wares. One of his nags had gone badly lame. Another showed signs of distemper. The day had been hot and the flies bothersome. His food had been poor and none too abundant. The "Missus" had been ill-tempered. The kids had been squawking. There had been "words" between him and Joe Dell and Dick Stort. He was also feeling stringy from the recent consumption of a bottle of bad whisky. But he knew a delicacy when he saw it, and his restless eyes glowed greedily as he noted the trout. He rose, and without a word, snatched them from Mark's hand.

Mark glared at him angrily.

"Pete Judd, you're a pig!"

As if to confirm the words, Pete grunted. Then he drew his sheath-knife and felt its edge. He cut the string and began to split the fish.

"Water!" he growled, pointing to the buckets. Mark seized them and vanished, glad of the opportunity to cool his anger. He went to the river and filled the pails. In a few minutes he returned whistling the air of a merry tune. Pete scowled.

"Shut up! Here! Take the bag and fill it with taters!" He flung a filthy potato bag into Mark's face, sending a cloud of dust into his eyes, nostrils and mouth.

For a moment Mark stood there rubbing his eyes and spitting the dust from his lips. Then in a quiet voice that had a suggestion of tremolo in it he said:

"Didn't know we had any taters. Where are they?"

"Plenty of 'em round. Nighest ones is in the root-house back of Everett's barn."

Mark straightened himself and viewed the gipsy scornfully.

"Be you deef?" snarled Pete.

"No. I hear. But I don't like what I hear. Are you asking me to steal for you?"

"Nah! I'm just tellin' yer where to go and fill that bag."

"Look here, Pete! You're barking up the wrong tree. I haven't started to steal for myself yet, and it's not likely I'm going to begin for you. I'm not fond enough of you for that. I don't like you very well. In fact, I'm sick of you."

Pete leaped at him, choking with rage.

"I'll slit your throat! Fetch them taters or you'll git this straight through your gullet!"

Mark surveyed him coolly. Then he remarked, quietly: "I've been wanting the chance to fight you, Pete. I guess it's come. Put down that knife, and put up your dukes! Ah! *Would* you? You *coward!* You *thief!* Oh, very well!"

Pete had leapt at him, lunging with his knife. A woman screamed. The knife cut air. He wheeled and struck out again. Another miss. Once more he attacked with savage spring and stroke. He might as well be trying to

stab a fly on the wing. His foot caught in a root and he fell heavily to the ground.

Mark ran to the water buckets. As Pete was rising to his feet he got the full contents of one of the buckets smack in the face. Down he went, snorting and spluttering. Before he could regain his feet, he was caught by a second bucketful. Down he went again. As he was struggling up, roaring now like a mad bull, he got the bucket, bang in the forehead. The murderous bully measured his length on the ground, where he lay still and stiff with blood streaming from a deep gash over his right eyebrow.

Mark turned upon his heel and went whistling from the camp. He sauntered down to the river and sat for a while on the bank to turn things over in his mind. Dell and Stort would soon be back. Perhaps his wisest course now would be to put the river between himself and these cutthroats. It galled him to think of leaving his belongings behind, but he saw nothing else for it. It was only half a mile across to Otnaby and the village looked inviting.

He tied his overalls to his back and slid into the stream. He took his time, swimming slowly on his left side, then on his right. Then breast forward. Then on his back. Sometimes he swam under water. He turned a few somersaults. The temperature of the water was delightful. He had no definite plans. He was not conscious of immediate pressing needs, except the demands of hunger. He reflected regretfully on the loss of the trout.

As he drew near to Otnaby he noticed that someone was standing by the shore as though waiting for him. Soon he could see that it was a man of immense proportions. Presently he observed that it was a priest in shabby clerical attire. He was wearing a loose black cloak and a rusty black silk skull cap. The face was unmistakably Irish. It beamed with kindliness and good humour.

Mark swam slowly toward the shore, feeling for shallow water in which he might rest and draw on his overalls. As he sat in the rippling stream, making his scanty toilet, he looked up and smiled into the smiling eyes of the priest.

"Come on out with ye! Shure, and it's a long paddle ye've been after havin'! Ye seem as much at home in

the water as a fish. But ye're not a fish. It's legs not fins ye're showin'!"

Mark touched a finger to his forehead.

The priest looked him over carefully.

"I don't know who your tailor is, me son; shure, he hasn't strained himself producin' this outfit. It's no more than is demanded by the strict letter of the law. Where are ye headin' for, may I ask?"

"I haven't quite decided about that, Your Reverence. I'm what you might call foot free. I'm a tourist. Just taking a look at the country for the sake of improving my mind. I like to travel light."

"Faith, and that's a good idea. Ye're wise not to be wastin' your money on unnecessary transportation, seein' ye've a proper pair of arms for the water and a useful pair of feet for the road. But couldn't ye be doin' with just a trifle more in the way of coverin'? It must be sore trampin' these roads in bare feet. It's a lot of flint goes into the makin' of 'em. Tell me, me son, how do ye come to be like this? It's grievous to see a fine young man like you so near to the edge of nothin'."

He laid his hand gently on Mark's shoulder.

"Well, Your Reverence, it's this way. I've made rather a mistake in selecting my travelling companions of late. We haven't just quite agreed. We don't see things in exactly the same way. That makes it a bit awkward. So I'm parting company with them and striking out on my own. I . . . I came away from them in a slight hurry and left most of my wardrobe behind."

"And will ye be returnin' to 'em to collect that same?"

"No, I won't bother. I'd rather take my chances on gathering the necessary elsewhere."

"Now, begorra, what does all this mean? Ye'll just be tellin' me the truth about it; the truth, the whole truth and nothin' but the truth! What sort of a scrape have ye been gettin' into?"

Mark felt instinctively that the priest was a man to be trusted and . . . obeyed.

"I . . . I've been with the gipsies over there for the last ten days. I don't want anything more to do with them. They've got some clothes of mine, but . . . they can keep them."

"Mother of God! Do ye mean to tell me that the likes of ye has been consortin' with them varmints?"

Mark flushed and looked down at his feet.

"I . . . I just fell in with them accidentally. I was out of work and money. I helped with their horses . . . and other things."

"Why did ye leave your wardrobe behind?"

The priest's tone was kind but peremptory. Evidently he was not a man to be trifled with.

"Had a row with Black Pete and he tried to knife me."

"Are ye a quarrelsome young man? By the look of ye I'd be takin' ye for a good natured person. I'm not fond of brawlers or violent people. Blessed are the peace-makers. What was the row about?"

"A bag of potatoes."

"A bag of praties, indeed? Well, what did ye go messin' about with his praties for? Did ye spill 'em?"

"No, Father!"

"What did ye do to 'em?"

"Nothing. He didn't have any."

"Shure, and ye must have Irish blood in ye to talk like that! How could ye be havin' a row over somethin' that had no existence?"

"They existed over in Everett's root-house. He wanted me to shift them."

"Steal 'em, do ye mean?"

"Yes, Your Reverence. He wanted them to go with some trout."

"Been fishin', had he?"

"No. I took him the trout. Lovely string of them."

The priest's face shone with interest. His eyes were sparkling.

"Where did ye catch 'em?"

"Over there by the mouth of the Wassis."

"Correct spot. What tackle was ye usin'?"

"It belonged to a friend of mine. We caught them from his boat."

"So, so! Then ye've friends in these parts! Begorra, it strikes me ye're a bit of a mystery. Is it some prank ye've been up to, in consortin' with the gipsies?"

"No. I've only one friend in these parts and I've only had him since . . . this afternoon."

"Who is he? Be pleased to tell me his name!"

"Doug Durston of Beddington."

The priest's eyes opened wide. A pleased smile played about the corners of his lips.

"Shure, and ye're to be complimented on the choice of your friends. The Durstons are well known to me. They're familiar friends. They're almost like me own blood relations. How did ye make Doug's acquaintance?"

"I saw him out there in his boat. I felt like talking with someone and swam out to him. He treated me white. He's a thoroughbred. I've promised to see him day after to-morrow."

"Where are ye to see him?"

"At his house in Beddington."

"In your overalls?"

"Well, when I made the promise I was expecting to have my other clothes. Guess I'll have to wait a while now before I make my call on him."

The priest consulted his watch.

"It's drawin' near to the time when I should be sayin' the Vespers. But we'll let 'em wait for once. We'll just be crossin' over now and takin' a look at Black Pete. We may happen upon some of your belongins. Me boat's just around here. Come along!"

"Please no, Your Reverence, you mustn't think of anything like that. It wouldn't do at all. They're a rough lot. They have no respect for anybody. They'd make trouble for you."

"Faith, and they won't make anny trouble for me at all at all. If anny trouble's comin' it'll be to them and not to me. Shure, and I've met their sort before to-day. Come on! The evenin's burnin' low. We mustn't be wastin' time."

With surprising speed for a man of his bulk the priest made off in the direction of his boat. Mark insisted on taking the oars. Seated in the stern of the boat and bearing it down to the water line, the priest looked the picture of happy anticipation. He rubbed his hands together and moistened his lips. He hummed a tune, beating time with his fingers on the gunwale of the boat.

"And ye say he tried to knife ye?"

"Yes, Your Reverence, but I kept my eye on him. I dodged him for a while and then gave him a bucket in the face."

"I hope ye laid him out."

"Yes, he was on his back when I saw him last."

"The bloody divil!"

After a short silence the priest said:

"Mebbe ye'll now be for tellin' me who ye are and where ye hail from. I'm not so much as knowin' your name yet."

"My name is Mark Woodburn. I'm from all over. I haven't got any people that I know of."

"Shure, and that's a big misfortune. Are your parents dead?"

"I'm not so sure about my father, but I know my mother is . . . is . . . in heaven."

The priest's face beamed with a benevolent sweetness as he remarked:

"It's good to know that! Is it long since she passed away?"

"I . . . I couldn't say. I . . . I never saw her here that I remember."

"I see. Ye just have the knowledge of her death by report."

Mark hung his head. Then, hesitatingly, he said:

"I've had no reports at all."

"Then how do ye know she's dead and in heaven?"

"Because when I see her face I always think about heaven. And when I think about heaven I see her face."

"But how can all these things be? Ye seem to be contradictin' yourself. In one breath ye say ye never saw her and then ye speak of seein' her face as though it was a habit."

"I . . . I've got a picture of her."

"Good! Some of your relatives kept it for you. But you say they're all gone too. Faith, and ye've had bad luck."

"I've never met any of my relatives."

"Then what in the name of heaven are ye talkin' about? Where did ye get the picture? Who gave it to you?"

"I . . . I don't know, unless . . . unless it was *God!*"

The priest cleared his throat. He looked up over Mark's head, and over the hills beyond, and over the clouds that were banked against the blue. In a gentle voice that was little more than a whisper, he asked:

"How could God give you her picture?"

Mark's face flushed and a tremble came into his voice as he said:

"It came to me in my dreams. She was very beautiful."

After a little the priest replied:

"I'm not doubtin' that, me son."

"She was good, too," affirmed Mark stoutly. "No one could be better than she was."

A slight mist now blurred the eyes of the priest.

"Ye speak in quite the proper way, me son. Ye view the matter in the right light. I hope ye sometimes pray for your beautiful mother in heaven."

"Why should I do that? What need has she of my prayers? They'd be poor stuff, anyway."

"'Twould add to her happiness . . . and yours, me son."

"I heard them say at the Institution that it was wrong to pray for the dead."

"What Institution was that?"

"The Orphanage where I was brought up."

"The Orphanage? What Orphanage?"

"At Woodburn. That's where my name comes from. It was on St. Mark's day when I was taken in there. They named me Mark Woodburn."

The priest lowered his head.

"Och, me son, it's pitiful to contemplate! But the past is past. I'm just thinkin' I'd like ye to feel right about offerin' a little prayer now and then for the sweet mother of ye in heaven. I'll just be remindin' ye that our Blessed Redeemer prayed for the dead."

Mark looked up with surprise.

"Did he? I didn't know about that. Is it in the Bible?"

"Yes, I think so. It's certainly there by implication.

The Bible says he went and *preached* to the spirits in prison, that is, to the dead. They had been dead a long time; ever since the days of Noah."

"But preaching isn't praying," said Mark.

"Listen, me son! Who ever heard of anny one that would preach to people and not pray for 'em? Wouldn't he be a cold and mockin' preacher? Wouldn't he be a fraud?"

Mark looked with wide eyes into the face of his new-found clerical friend.

"I . . . I guess there's no getting away from that, Your Reverence."

"Why should anyone want to get away from it, me son?"

"I . . . I don't know."

"Well, make the most of the hint!

"And now, ye're not to call me Your Reverence anny more. Me name is Michael O'Leary. I'm the priest of Otnaby. That's me little church over there. Me flock is only a small one, but it's enough to keep me busy and concerned. Some of 'em are wild and most of 'em are stupid. None of 'em are very white. They all run a bit coarse in the wool. But I've been given the care of 'em, and in carin' for 'em, I'm hopin' to save me own soul. It's hard sleddin' for me, me son, to gain salvation. There's so much bodily bulk to me that I expose a big surface to temptation. The flesh and bone of me make a big target for the devil. But I'm hopin' to win through at last. So, it's Father O'Leary ye're to be callin' me, or just Father, for short. And now that we're introduced, I'm hopin' we may become fast friends. But here we are! Begorra, and I'll just be after gettin' the feel of Black Pete's pulse and mebbe puttin' a little of the fear of God into his heart."

III

From their place of landing it was but a short distance to the camp. O'Leary strode off at a rapid pace. As the gipsies caught sight of them a commotion arose. Two men who had been hobbling horses came running to the van on the steps of which Black Pete was sitting and nursing his bandaged head. Near by, a woman with sallow brown-freckled face, rusty yellow hair and enormous silver earrings, was engaged in kindling a fire. Noting the approach of the visitors she hastily disappeared into the van. A flock of begrimed and frightened children crowded in after her. Pete rose from the steps of the vehicle and leaned against a wheel. Dick Stort and Joe Dell stood scowling beside him.

"Och, it's the murderous lookin' divils ye are, all of ye!" said Father O'Leary, as he strode forward. "It's the whole lot of ye I'll be landin' in Beddington jail before midnight, ye thievin' varmints! Shure, it's every mother's son of ye should be after havin' his head in a sling!"

A vicious looking dog, hair standing on end all over his back, came snarling from under the van, skinning his upper lip over a set of savage teeth. At a word from Mark he dropped his threatening attitude and slunk under the wagon. The gipsies watched the priest with fierce eyes, while their fingers fidgeted in the region of their belts.

"Ye'd best keep your hands away from your cutlery, ye cowardly blackguards, or I'll tie the three of ye up by the thumbs and flog the black souls out of ye! I've come for the lad's belongins and to give ye warnin' to be out of this by daybreak! Here, ye skunk! Where's his clothes?"

He seized Black Pete by the shoulder and shook him.

"Do ye hear me? Where's his clothes?"

"Where he left 'em," grunted Pete.

O'Leary turned to Mark.

"If ye know where they are, me son, ye can fetch 'em. I'll take care of these beauties while you're gatherin' up your possessions."

Michael O'Leary's face beamed with joy.

Mark went to the small covered wagon and proceeded to put his effects together into a bundle.

The priest turned again to the gipsies.

"Faith, and it's itchin' me fingers are to knock the three of your lousy pates together! I'm told the lad has lost a pair of shoes. If ye know where to lay hands on 'em, Pete, ye'd best be stirrin' your stumps and git after 'em!"

"Don't know nuthin' 'bout 'em," growled the gipsy.

"Ye can tell that to the marines, ye lyin' spalpeen! It's tradin' 'em off for whisky ye've been doin'. If ye ain't got 'em ye can just pay for 'em! Two dollars is the price, and be quick about it!"

Joe Dell made a sudden move to pull his knife, but before he could extricate it from the sheath a blow from O'Leary's fist sent him on his back. He struck heavily. Dell quivered for a moment and then lay still. The Reverend Father in God turned smilingly to Dick Stort.

"Would ye like one of them little taps yourself, me lad? Shure, and there's lots more where that one came from."

Dick showed no desire to receive the suggested favour. O'Leary's hand now went again to Black Pete's shoulder. To be quite accurate it went to the middle of his back and in such a manner that the gipsy felt cold chills running down his spine.

"*Two dollars*, I said! Ye'd best be hearin' me while I leave ye with ears on your head!"

"Got no money," grunted Pete.

"Then that's a bad job for ye. I'll just be takin' ye along with me and handin' ye over for the lock-up."

O'Leary tightened his grip and Pete winced. Something was mumbled in a language the priest could not understand. Presently Dick Stort produced a greasy looking purse and fished out a couple of one dollar bills.

"That's a lucky find, me lad! And now what's this over by the fire? Trout, begorra! And beauties, too! Five of 'em! I'm thinkin' it's the boy that caught 'em! Faith, and he'll help to eat 'em, too! I'll just be after takin' 'em out of your way for the good of your souls. It's fastin' for your sins, you're needin' and not feastin'! Me son, can ye find me a clean bit of wrappin' paper? Shure, that'll do fine!"

With infinite gusto the priest lifted the trout and carefully rolled them in the paper.

"Got everything belongin' to ye, me son?"

"Yes, Father."

"Then we'll be movin'."

He turned upon the gipsies a face that was like a thundercloud.

"Listen now, ye thievin' cut-throats! It's not a minute beyond daybreak ye'll have for gettin' out of here. If I find hide or hair of ye by sun up, it'll be jail for the gang!"

Not a gipsy of them grunted or so much as lifted his gaze from the ground.

Taking Mark by the arm, O'Leary walked away.

When they reached the shore he began looking here and there as though searching for some hidden treasure.

"It's a rock I'm wantin', to put in the bow of the boat. It was pointin' at an angle of forty-five degrees when we made our former voyage. I'm thinkin' this'll do."

It was a rock that would weigh two hundred pounds and it was firmly embedded in the ground.

"Begorra, it would come out easier if we had a pick-axe, but mebbe it can be managed."

He went down on his knees and worked his fingers in around the rock. He gave one mighty pull. Out rolled the rock.

"Father O'Leary, you're a giant," cried Mark.

"Shure, and I've had experience with rollin' out rocks. There's a bit of a trick about it. I only wish I could roll out of me soul the heavy and deep-sunk sins as easy as I rolled out that rock. I'd be a light-hearted man. No, no, me son, ye mustn't try to lift it. Ye've not got your full strength yet. I'll put it aboard."

But Mark had already lifted the rock.

"Begorra, you're a young giant yourself! But ye must just be droppin' it. It's one thing to lift a weight like that and another thing to walk off with it. Let it go!"

With legs well apart and feet firmly planted at each step, Mark was making his way to the boat.

"Drop it, me son! It's one thing to carry it and another thing to deposit it in the boat. Shure, and ye'll smash the bottom out of me ould punt."

Steadily and gently Mark stepped into the boat and cautiously lowered his burden.

O'Leary's face beamed with admiration.

"Ye come of a strong stock, me son. There's good blood in ye and there's been some right clean livin' back of ye. I hope ye'll be always rememberin' that the gift of strength is a big responsibility. May it never prove to be your snare!"

While they were re-crossing the river, O'Leary's face wore a look of rapt delight. He indulged in a series of fat chuckles as he affectionately patted the parcel containing the trout. Each time he looked at Mark expansive smiles puffed his ruddy cheeks into humorous creases and playful dimples.

"I haven't had such enjoyment for years, me son. It's both entertainment and refreshment you're providin' me. Mebbe it might have been a trifle more divertin' if the spalpeens had shown a little spirit. Shure, and they're a craven lot of degenerates."

It was sunset when they landed.

"We'll not be after lettin' anny grass grow under our feet now, me son. It's the famishin' pair of mortals we are, but it won't take the little mother long to retrieve the situation. Faith, and I don't know how we can be endurin' the smell of the trout while they're fryin'. It's waterin' now me mouth is, and I'm thinkin' that presently me eyes will be dissolved in tears. Come on! Let's leg it lively!"

"But, Father, I . . . I didn't know I was to go home with you."

"Begorra, listen to that now! You—lookin' like an

intelligent lad—and not knowin' so much as that simple truth! And where would ye be goin', pray?"

"It's a fine warm evening. I could manage all right. I've often done it when the night was not so favourable."

"Is it that ye begrudge me a taste of the trout, ye young tyrant? Faith, and me heart is set on 'em. I'd even be willin' to fight ye for 'em. It isn't anny man on the St. John can get this little parcel from Michael O'Leary to-night. It's Mistress Janet O'Leary, and no other, that's to have the care of it."

The priest's house was a comfortable and commodious building adjoining the little church. As they made their way up the gravelled walk, a fierce looking animal suddenly sprang at O'Leary. Mark was startled and drew back. O'Leary roared with laughter. It was an immense Persian cat, with a tail like the brush of a fox. It alighted on O'Leary's shoulder and began purring with its nose thrust contentedly under the priest's right ear.

"She's me sweetheart, Mark. She's always got the lovin' welcome for me. She's been wonderin' why I missed the Vespers. Never mind, Bonita! I'll be for sayin' an extra Ave to-night. One can't be always prayin', me lass. I've been after havin' other fish to fry this evenin'. Och, ye jade, ye smell 'em, do ye?"

Mistress O'Leary met them at the door. She was a fresh-faced bonnie woman about sixty-five years of age. She had a beautiful head of thick white wavy hair. She was dressed in simple black.

"Darlin' dear, it's me young friend, Mark Woodburn. He'll be makin' a little visit with us. We've been havin' a bit of a jambouree together."

"It's welcome he is wid his bright face lookin' as if he'd just come over the rim of the mornin!" she said, as she extended both her hands to Mark. "Come on in! And what's the lark ye've been up to, the two mischiefs of ye?"

"We've been havin' a spree with the gipsies, Darlin' dear, over forninst the Everett place. They took such a likin' to us they gave us a handsome present. There's no doubt we made an excellent impression on 'em. Shure, and there was one of 'em seemed quite upset when we parted."

Mistress Janet's eyes glowed with admiration of her massive son and twinkled with intelligent comprehension. She lifted an admonitory forefinger.

"Ah, Michael, me son, it's well I'm knowin' the fetchin' way ye have wid ye. Sure, it's manny the rough wild crathur has felt sore at partin' from ye. But what's the love token ye've brought from the gipsies? It's said a gift from the gipsies brings good luck."

O'Leary opened the parcel and displayed the trout.

"Now what do ye think of that lot! Wouldn't they warm the cockles of the heart of a Benedictine monk? Ye'll find they're the fish with a flavour. And they're fish with a history, too, though they're only a couple of hours out of the water. They're worthy to be enshrined in song and story."

She threw up her hands in delight.

"Och, the darlints! And shall we have 'em for supper, or keep 'em for breakfast?"

"Darlin' dear, didn't ye always teach me never to put off till to-morrow what can be done as well to-day? And shure, it's a solemn fact that life is brief and uncertain. Who can tell what a night may bring forth? Manny a man as big and strong as me has been suddenly called away."

"Shure, then, ye'll just be showin' our young friend to the guest chamber and makin' him comfortable, whilst I take care of these beauties. The fire is hot and I won't be long."

Bonita stirred slightly and then thrust her nose down under the priest's ear again.

"Darlin' dear, I hope you won't be long . . . for Bonita's sake."

"Och, ye silly, she doesn't eat fish."

"I know, but . . . but if I'm after waitin' very long, I'll eat her alive."

"Shure, Mark, he's a terrible man to have about a house," declared Janet.

Beckoning Mark to follow him up the stairs, O'Leary led the way to a room overlooking the garden at the rear. He opened the window wide and leaned out, his arm around Mark's waist. The garden had been planted and tended

by his own hands and every stalk and leaf was dear to him.

"Glory to God, the praties is fairly jumpin' out of the ground! The radishes is swellin' like the Jordan, and the lettuce is spreadin' like a green bay tree! See! There's me roses over forninst the wall. They're blossomin' like the sky at sunrise! Och, but look there, me son!"

He pointed to the sky. Then he bowed his head and made the sign of the Cross.

It was a memorable sight. Upon a foundation of smoky grey rested a block of mauve, surmounted by a spread of gold splashed with streamers dyed deep orange and crossed by bars of vivid blue.

"It's the splendour of the Holy City burnin' through the sky!" reverently whispered the priest. His arm tightened its clasp around Mark and his great body quivered. For a considerable time they watched the sunset in silence. At length the priest withdrew from the window.

"Ye'll just be givin' me a peep at your wardrobe now, me son."

Mark opened his bundle, and laid out its contents on the bed. O'Leary submitted them to careful inspection.

"Not so bad! It's only a pair of shoes you're needin'."

He left the room for a moment and then returned with the articles mentioned.

"They're number eleven and may be a bit loose for ye; but ye've got a fair sized foot of your own."

"Number nine, Father."

"Good! And after goin' barefoot so long ye'll feel all the more comfortable for a little space to spare. Faith, and you're goin' to be a big man yourself. Ye must be near six foot a'ready."

"Within half an inch of it and weigh a hundred and sixty five."

"Splendid! And what age do ye call yourself?"

"About twenty."

"It's a desirable age, me son. It's the time when flowers smell their sweetest and landscapes look their

loveliest. It's the period of your life when ye get the purest music from the birds and feel the keenest thrill at dawn and evenin'-tide. It's then ye can be touched to awe, and held in wonder and made to harken in a hush. Ye know enough to make ye happy and not enough to make ye cynical. Twenty is dream time. It's then your ideals begin to break into bloom. There's a halo round all things when one is twenty years of age. Later on the halo may fade and leave the outlook dull. Life may grow drab and stale. But it's great and fine to be alive at twenty, me son."

O'Leary's handsome face was glowing like the morning as he uttered his rhapsody. Mark was caught in the swell of the priest's enthusiasm.

"You'll never grow old, Father," he cried. "You'll always be young."

"Two score and five, me son, a'ready. If I've kept a bit of the mornin' in me, it's partly because I'm Irish. We're a race that takes life lightly. In my case the location and the callin' has something to do with it. I have time to dream and grow roses and watch the stars. Ah, but that's a maddenin' smell arisin' from below!"

A bell tinkled.

"Glory to God, the trout is on the table! It's a race."

"Darlin' dear," he was saying a moment later, "I'm thinkin' this one will about suit ye. It ain't quite so big as the others. Now, me son, get yourself outside of that one! Ye can cut and come again with him. Saints preserve us, but they smell good!"

He lifted the largest trout on to his own plate. Then he carefully covered it with a white cloth, and rose from his seat.

"Excuse me just a minute! Old Jacques Levigne has got a bad foot but there isn't annything wrong with his appetite except that he don't get anny too much to satisfy it."

He disappeared through the door.

In three minutes he was back. Mistress Janet had another hot plate ready for him.

"Mother Lamond?" she asked, with uplifted eyebrows.

"Yes. Shure, and it won't do her a bit of harm."

He was promptly away on his second errand.

"They both live near," said Mother O'Leary. "One on each side. He can't ever enjoy the like of this unless he shares it. Och but he's the tinder-hearted lad entoirely!"

On his return O'Leary squared himself to the remaining trout.

"Begorra, it's a lordly dish. This chap is fit to look a king in the face. What do ye say, me son?"

"I say, he's doing that now."

"Shure, it's a ready tongue ye've got in your head and a pleasant one. It's plain to be seen there's a drop of Irish in ye."

For the benefit of his mother, O'Leary then related the encounter with the gipsies. Her expressive face alternately reflected indignation and approval.

On the conclusion of the narrative she turned to Mark and said:

"I'm glad you're well away from them mutherin' divils. They was no fit company for the loikes of ye. Yes, and begorra, I'm glad ye downed that dirty divil wid your bucket."

IV

MARK possessed a faculty for sleep which approximated genius. He would laughingly say that he could sleep on the soft side of a plank or a rock as soundly as many another could do on a feather bed. Youth, health, outdoor life and an easy mind are nature's favourite and unfailing opiates and these had been supplied to him abundantly. But it was long before sleep visited him that night.

The room reeked with religious suggestiveness. It was crowded with symbols of the Roman Catholic faith. On the wall above the bed hung a crucifix with the figure of Christ affixed to it. Facing this was a print of the Madonna and Child. Another wall held pictures representing Christ wearing the crown of thorns and sinking beneath the cross on the way to Calvary. Still another represented the descent from the cross. Here and there were photographs of churches, some showing the entire buildings, others giving interior views of choirs and altars.

These things invested the room with an air of sanctity. They induced a feeling of solemnity and awe. The place seemed like an oratory or a side chapel. He was unaccustomed to that sort of bedchamber. He felt out of place and ill at ease. It seemed to him almost a sacrilege to bring his mind with its mundane thoughts into the sacred atmosphere of this hallowed spot. It was evidently a prophet's chamber, a room intended mainly for the accommodation of brother priests who might be visiting O'Leary. It was not for the like of him.

Candle in hand he made a tour of the room, carefully inspecting its impressive decorations. His mind became active and critical. No doubt it was well to remember the sufferings of the Redeemer, but why should the sad and poignant tragicalness of the crucifixion be made to mon-

opolise one's thoughts as they approached the border-land of sleep to the exclusion of everything else? To him the realm of dreams had been a sunshine country. These things were calculated to cast shadows over it. They would make one's dreams dark, heavy, mournful. He had liked to think most of Christ as the joy giver; the living, radiant, enterprising, optimistic lord of men. This agonizing, dying and dead Christ chilled and oppressed him. He liked better the pictures he had seen of Jesus feeding the multitude, blessing the little children, sitting at table with his disciples, walking on the stormy waters of the lake, raising the daughter of Jairus and ascending to heaven in a cloud of glory. The pictures in this room tended to concentrate one's thoughts on Golgotha. Agony, darkness, death! Not good stuff to sleep or dream on.

Presently his attention was claimed by a photograph on the little table beside the bed. It was the picture of a young man bearing a striking resemblance to the priest. Could it be Father O'Leary in his early life? No. The forehead was broader than that of the priest; the eyes, equally kindly, were more serious; the face was more reflective. It was the face of a determined thinker. Perhaps he was a brother of the priest. It was, in fact, a photograph of the priest's twin brother David, dead these many years.

And now as his thoughts reverted to his new-found friend, he remembered how, as he lately stood in this room, he had bubbled with poetic enthusiasm and glowed with fervent friendliness. He recalled his rapturous exclamations over the garden growths and his joyous announcement that supper was ready. The tragic air of the room had no depressing effect upon Michael O'Leary. Well, he would let that man Michael, that warm-blooded, happy-hearted creature—he would let that man Michael humanise the place for him. Had he not breathed into it an air of genial hospitality? Had he not suggested that here were peace and love and joy and home?

He undressed and got into bed. It was a luxury with its sheets as white as snow and cool and smooth as silk. The pillows were Janet's handiwork, stuffed with down

which her own fingers had plucked. He thought those pillows the most exquisite things his head had ever touched.

A gentle shower had been falling. Delightful scents now floated in through the open window. There was a waft of honeysuckle, a breath of clover and the strong smell of good moist earth. He lay there inhaling the fragrance and watching the pale moonlight as it struggled through the window. He reflected upon what the priest had said about praying for his mother. He should like to do that if he only knew how to go about it. For some time he pondered the matter. At length he whispered: "Lord, be pleased to give her my love."

From far down the river came the shriek of a tug-boat. From the adjacent room issued a rhythmic murmur like that of wind blowing over the tops of trees. Father O'Leary had temporarily left this world. His Doughty Valiance was reaping the reward of the just in deep untroubled slumber. He, also, must try to sleep.

But instead of sleeping, his mind went travelling back over the past, reviewing all the path by which he had come to the present hour. While memory found no brilliant spots on which to dwell with special delight, neither did it recall experiences of a particularly distressing nature. He had no quarrel with life. In the main it had been kind to him.

His years at the orphanage had flowed along in a smooth and uneventful course. He had received no unkindness there. It was a comparatively small institution, conscientiously managed by a returned missionary and his wife. He had received good schooling and careful religious training.

He could vividly recall the day—he must have been very young at the time—when it first dawned upon him that all children were not circumstanced like those in the Institution. It was on a Sunday in church when he noticed children by ones and twos sitting with older people with whom they made themselves extraordinarily free. Sometimes they leaned against the shoulders of those older people. Sometimes they lay asleep across their laps. It looked queer. He questioned the Head about it. Did

those older people provide the children with food and clothes? He thought some of those children must be lonesome. He wouldn't like to live in a home where he was the only child. It would be deadly dull. No one to romp with! No other boys to mix with! He felt a sort of pity for those lonely children. Later on—not much later—he ceased to pity them. He came to think it must be a fine thing to have a father and a mother. True, in that case, it would be well if one could choose his parents.

The time came when he had the opportunity to provide himself with parents, or with those who would permit him to call them father and mother. And then he declined the privilege. A worthy couple had wished to adopt him, but he couldn't bear the thought of it. When the idea was proposed to him it made him feel ill. They seemed pleasant and benevolent people, but the thought of living with them as their son made him homesick. He had always felt a bit ashamed of the way he behaved that day. He had never been much given to crying, but on that occasion he could neither keep back his tears nor suppress his sobs. The good lady had tried to comfort and to win him. It was without avail.

"But you're not my real mother," he sobbed. "I've got a mother of my own and she wants me to stick to her." They were all amazed at this, and no one was more amazed than himself. In that instant the vague impression that he had a mother in heaven crystallized into conviction, a conviction that had never left him since. The idea of putting anyone else in that mother's place became henceforth intolerable.

True, though he was now a man, and able, he believed, to fight his own battles, he had not resented O'Leary's fatherly attitude. But somehow that seemed different. From the first moment of their meeting the priest had assumed a relationship of parental responsibility and authority. It was extraordinary, yet he liked it. In fact he liked it immensely; liked it more than anything he had ever experienced. He tried to find some theory to explain the mystery, but without success. It was inexplicable. Of all men in the world to be calling him "me son," to be fighting and fending and finding for him, an Irish

Roman Catholic priest was about the last to be imagined. But there it was, and already the word Father was tasting sweet upon his lips.

His mind ran over the years which had passed since leaving the Institution. He recalled his life on the farm. He enjoyed the summers, for then the world around him was alive. But when the winters came the world appeared to die. Then the weeks were dull, flat and slow. He could keep his spirits up while there were oats or barley to be threshed out with a flail, for that work yielded some excitement. He liked the mornings and the evenings with the cattle and the occasional visits to the market town. But for the rest, the winter life was a stretch of white cold desert.

Perhaps the least pleasant of his memories were those of the time he spent as assistant in a livery stable. He got along all right with the horses and the customers, but the hostlers were not to his taste. He put on no airs with them, yet they accused him of being proud and "stuck up," and advised him to look for a different sort of job. He took their advice.

His most enjoyable time was the summer when he served as deck-hand on a river steamboat. He met many pleasant people then. He revelled in the river scenery. He loved to fall asleep at night on the lower deck, listening to the rippling of the stream as it laved the sides of the boat. The work of brakeman on a branch line freight train proved too mechanical to be interesting. It ran through an inferno of burnt lands, with miles of naked boulders, stretches of swamp, and wildernesses of alders and thistles.

And now, when his fortunes seemed to be at the lowest ebb, he had been flung into the very arms of this rollicking, romantic, big-hearted priest and his dear old mother. He also thought of Doug Durston and the lucky chance which brought him out on the river that afternoon. Doug and Father O'Leary in one and the self-same day! He must now . . . but now nature interposed to say that for the present he must sleep.

* * * * * *

O'Leary's first concern on the following morning was to learn if the gipsies had followed his intructions. Before the sun was up he made his way to the river and scanned the opposite bank. No sign of the miscreants appeared. Doubtless, by this time they were miles away.

Returning from the river he met Mark in the road.

"The top of the mornin' to ye, me son! I hope ye slept well through the night and heard the rustlin' of the angels' wings."

"Yes, thank you, I slept well."

"If ye're lookin' for the gipsies now, they're gone. Shure and it hurts me conscience to think Dick Stort got away without a mark on his hide. I'm thinkin' I fell short of me full duty by him. I'm always leavin' undone the things I ought to have done. But och, it's a sly chap ye are for shure. 'Twas Pears' soap I put into your room, but it's Sunlight soap ye've been after usin'."

"No, Father, I used what was there."

"Ye needn't be after tellin' me no fairy tale like that! I can see for meself. Ye changed it entirely. Shure, and ye smiled the sunlight into it. There's no denyin'. It's all stickin' to your face this blessed minute. But what are ye doin' out in them overalls when ye've got a decent suit of clothes to your back? Here's me, raidin' gipsies' camps to recover your goods and chattels and ye treatin' 'em with contempt. I'd better been sayin' me prayers and tryin' to save me soul."

"I thought mebbe there'd be time for a dip before breakfast. It's less trouble to go in these."

"Shure, they'll serve well enough for a bathin' suit; but I can see it's trouble ye'll be makin' for me. Wanst ye get into the water, ye'll be forgettin' about the time. It's the hungry man I am this mornin'."

"How long may I have?"

"Ye can have half an hour and not another tick of the clock. Be off with ye and strain the St. John through the gills of ye! But if ye stay a second beyond the prescribed limit of time, it's divil a bite of breakfast ye'll get."

Mark touched a finger to his forehead and bounded away.

The priest went on and entered the little church. He ran rapidly over the customary morning prayers, and then

knelt for a while in silent meditation before the image of the Virgin. At length he whispered:

"Be pleased to have a care for the motherless lad!"

He rose, lit a candle and placed it in the socket.

"For Mark Woodburn," he murmured, and went softly out.

Entering his own house he found his mother between smiles and tears. It was evident that something unusual and exciting had happened.

He put a hand on her shoulder and with the other gently raised her chin. Then he kissed her.

"What's the matter, darlin' dear? Ye seem agitated this mornin'. Has anything gone wrong?"

Janet O'Leary sank into a chair, threw her apron over her face and broke into tears.

"Faith, and this is strange. Is it a bad night ye've had with rheumatics and troublin' dreams?"

It was some little time before she could gain control of herself. Then she lowered her apron and looked up into O'Leary's face.

"*He . . . He . . . kissed me!*"

Again the apron went up over her face, but it was soon removed to reveal a look of rapture such as Michael O'Leary had not seen upon it for many a long day.

"Och, the cheeky young rascal! No wonder you're feelin' shocked and grieved! To be insulted like that, and at your time of life! Shure, and I'll just be sendin' him packin'! But it's a sad disappointment. I was quite takin' him to be one of nature's gentlemen. Ye wouldn't be after givin' him anny provocation, would ye?"

"Michael, I'm not feelin' iike havin' it made light of. He was standin' there in the door, lookin' for all the world as if he'd just rolled out of a bed of roses. Faith, and it wasn't much sleep I had last night for thinkin' about him. When I looked at his face this mornin' me ould heart swelled wid love and pity till it was fit to burst. When he gave me the morn's greetin' his voice was like a caress. So I asked:

"Laddie, would ye like to have a granny? Wid that he sprang to me and threw his arms around me and kissed me. It's granny it shall be, he said, and thank God for

it! The tears was standin' in his eyes. Before I could say another word he was gone."

"Faith, and you're the sweetest mother and the dearest granny in all the world! Ye've done a fine mornin's work."

With that he passed into the garden.

A few minutes later Mark returned glowing from his bath and bounded up the stairs.

"I'll be with you in two ticks, granny," he called.

Janet touched her apron to her eyes.

O'Leary came in from the garden bringing three red dewy roses. One he pinned upon his mother's dress, another he thrust into his frock and the third he laid beside Mark's plate.

To his mother he said:

"It's the heart of the mornin' to ye, Dearie, with God's dew on it."

She looked up at him with quivering face.

"'Twas a flower of his heart he gave me with the gift of ye, me son."

V

SEATED at the table O'Leary said:

"Now Mark, me son, ye're not to go by me. I've got me growth. At least, I'm hopin' so. No need to build anny more frame. But ye've not quite come to your full bulk yet. In these days I seldom take more than four eggs to me bacon of a mornin', but there's no call for ye to stop at that figure. There's only ten here but Granny can soon crack a few more of 'em into the pan. Me fowls is layin' well just now."

Mark saw no necessity for supplementing the number.

"Shure, and I'm not one to advocate sumptuous feedin', but it's incumbent upon us to nourish well the body God has given. Now it's just a taste of this honey ye'll be havin'," he said, as he ladled out a saucerful of the glowing nectar.

"It's food fit for angels. It's got the love ferment of every flower of the Springtime in it. It's from me own bees. They're the intelligent and useful little creatures. They was wise before Solomon was born. They've been teachin' mankind for ages. Shure, they build up a shinin' palace, pack it with honey from crypt to dome and divil a one of 'em will leave it till it's a finished job. Then they take their departure and leave it for others to enjoy, while they set themselves to do the same thing over again. It's a big lesson they're after teachin' us humans. They'd be for havin' us learn that the joy of life isn't the gettin' and the keepin' but in doin' and goin' on to do."

Mark's susceptible nature was responding strongly to the impact of the priest's exuberant vitality, and overflowing kindliness. Presently O'Leary enquired:

"Is it annything more ye'd be likin' now?"

"Yes, Father, I'd like a day's work."

"Then it's that same ye can be havin'. It's waitin' for

us in the garden. Shure, and it's a big family of needy children I've got out there. They're always cryin' out for some attention. There's me lettuce wantin' their faces washed and me praties wantin' their beds made up. Can ye hoe praties, me son? "

" Yes, I've hoed miles of 'em."

" Where did ye do that? "

" On a farm up at Currie's Mountain. I was bound over by the Institution to a farmer there."

" Did ye serve out your full time? "

" No. I ran away a couple of years before my time was up."

" Was that necessary? "

" Perhaps not; but I didn't like the lonesomeness. People are better company than stumps."

" It depends upon the people, me son . . . and upon the stumps. There's stumps as can be teachin' us wisdom and settin' us a good example by the way they take grip of the ground, or mebbe by providin' a nest where livin' creatures can round out their existence and fulfil their hopes. And there's people that's only a curse to everything and everybody about 'em. But I'm glad ye didn't run away from the farm through dislike of work. Ye look to me as if ye was full of days' work."

" I am that."

" Well, me praties'll be thankful to ye. It's a bit of bolsterin' up they're needin' just now . . . to keep 'em straight. It's something that most young things may be needin' now and then."

Mark shot him a swift look.

" Meaning me, Father O'Leary? "

" Shure, and I wouldn't like to except ye from the broad and general application of me words. But speakin' of praties, they're *worth* bolsterin' up. They yield a fine reward to the bolsterin' hand. Ye see, they've got healthy active roots to 'em."

A thoughtful look crept into Mark's face.

" Do you mean that they're always trying to help themselves? "

" Listen, me son! They're pushin' things, praties is. They're ambitious to rise in the world. There's mine now,

fairly wearin' out the stalks of 'em with pushin' up out of the ground. But they also work in and through the soil. They work with patience. They work in the damp and the dry. They work in the dark. They're feelin' deep for their proper nourishment. Props have their uses, but it's the workin' of the roots tells the story in the end. And now I'll just be puttin' the gist of that into a sentence for ye. *It's principles not circumstances make the man.* But come on out! We'll just be takin' a look about while I smoke me pipe."

They passed through the garden gate into a wired enclosure when, with loud cluckings and a furious flapping of wings, the fowls came flying to meet him.

"There now, ye sillies, keep cool! Shure, you're all fuss and feathers this mornin'. I know what you're wantin'."

Uncovering a box he dipped out a portion of white powdery stuff and flung it abroad. The fowls flew to it in a clamouring crowd.

"'Twas a taste of cut bone they was after, to go with their clover. They look a greedy lot, don't they?"

"They certainly know how to look out for Number One," replied Mark.

"Well, that's a right and proper thing for us all to do, me son, but we mustn't stop at that. Now take me fowls. Sometimes one might think these fine-feathered creatures was all selfishness and high-steppin' pride. But they're not. They strut about a lot till they find their responsibilities; then they settle down with commendable faithfulness and devotion.

"Now there's a little hen that's got a family of thirteen chicks to care for. She'll scratch gravel for 'em all day long. And here's one that's bringin' up a family of ducks. Think of the disappointment and humiliation it must be for her. She's got eight ducklings there. Hatched 'em herself and is as kind to 'em as if they was made in her own image and likeness. Last year one of me hens brought up a brood of turkeys. She had a strenuous time of it. The youngsters liked the soft feel of her and the warmth of her so much they persisted in gettin' under her wings when they was about as big as

herself. 'Twas amazin' how that bit of a hen would stretch her wings and strain herself tryin' to shelter and comfort 'em all. It's wonderful the sense of responsibility there is in a little mother bird."

It was still an early hour of the morning. The air was sweet with the scent of clover and pear blossom. Dewdrops like diamonds were clinging to the petals of the roses that bloomed along the borders of the garden. A light breeze was stirring the branches of the elms.

"Mebbe ye'd like to take a look at me pony. It's Dolly I call her. In here!"

"Gee! She's a dandy!" cried Mark with admiration. He went to her head and patted it. He looked at her teeth. He ran his hand over her back and down her legs.

"Seven years old and without a blemish," he said.

"Yes, begorra, and able to show a clean pair of heels to annything on the road. But she's got a fault."

"What fault? Bad temper? She doesn't look it."

"Impatience. That's her fault. It's a bad fault, in man or beast. Once she's harnessed and in the buggy she won't stand. And when she goes she must go her own gait. She must take her own head for it. I sometimes think I know what pace is best for her. I'm supposed to be her owner and master. I bought and paid for her. But she's hasty and conceited. She'd be worth a lot more to me if she could learn patience. Och, but it's a hard lesson to learn, as I know right well. Now ye wouldn't mebbe take me for an impatient man, seein' how gentle and forbearin' I was with the gipsies. But I *am* impatient. So mebbe it's well for me that I have an impatient pony to keep the fault ever glarin' before me eyes."

Mark was not in the dark as to the aim of all this homely talk. He could feel that the priest had been reading his character and that he was touching upon his faults with a shrewd and kindly indirectness. He could feel that he was being handled by a tender but masterful teacher. It was a joy that he could address the priest as "Father." He found himself putting more than the technical meaning into the term. His heart, which had thus far been doomed to orphanhood and isolation, seemed

like a bird fluttering to nest in the enveloping warmth of O'Leary's welcome.

"And there's the cow," the priest was saying. "She's an important item in me wealth. I'm a rich man, ye must know. There's two acres of hay and the garden. It's 'Crumpy' we call her. She's not the biggest of milkers but her milk is half cream. She's worth a lot more than her keep beyond what she puts into the pail. She's a constant warnin' to me and sometimes a rebuke. I'm just a blatherin' Irishman, pourin' out a steady stream of talk, and too often it's thin and frothy, with no cream comin' to the top. But now we'll just start in and tickle the praties before it gets too hot."

He rummaged about in his implement shed looking for a hoe. At length he found one, a rusty and dull affair. He scanned it ruefully.

"Do ye think ye can manage with it? I don't like to have ye tackle a tough job with a dull tool. It's a hard row that we all have to hoe in this world, if we're goin' to have annything in the bin at the end, and I'm hopin' ye'll be one that'll gather well when Autumn comes."

"Oh, I can manage with it all right."

"It's well to be a bit particular in the matter of equipment, me son. Now, I'm exactin' about the way me praties is hilled. I want the clods mashed fine, and pulled up gently around the stalks. What's worth doin' at all is worth doin' well."

They started hoeing on parallel rows, with the priest in advance to set the pace and the standard required for the work. It was in O'Leary's mind to give his young friend a lively run. He struck in vigorously, gradually quickening his movements. Half way down the row he turned and said:

"Och, ye young divil, mind your manners! Keep a respectful distance! It's me heels ye'll be for diggin' into in a minute."

At the beginning of the next rows he put Mark in front. Away he went at a terrific pace. O'Leary followed, puffing and perspiring. He scrutinised Mark's work but could find nothing to complain of. The hills were well and truly made. He gathered himself together for a mighty

effort. But instead of gaining ground he fell steadily behind. When he reached the end of the row the sweat was pouring in torrents down his cheeks. Mark was leaning against the fence looking cool and comfortable and smiling.

"It's a young demon ye are, and a mockin' demon, at that. I'm just goin' to eliminate ye from me horizon entirely. Ye can go your own gait. Another spurt like that would be the end of me, and I don't feel fit to die. I'm a sociable bein' and it's not to me taste to be left alone in a wide wilderness like this. But better a period of loneliness than to court swift destruction."

Mark adjusted his pace to keep in company with the priest. They worked for three hours with frequent pauses as O'Leary stopped to straighten out his back and to call attention now to the plumage of one bird or the song of another, and now to the butterflies that were flitting to and fro.

At the end of each row there was conversation, and sometimes side trips for the inspection of other growing plants. At ten o'clock Janet tinkled a bell which gave the signal for bowls of bread and milk.

They had finished their refreshments and returned to the porch, when O'Leary uttered a cry of delight.

"Hark! D'ye hear it? Shure, it's the sweetest music in the world."

Above the branch of a pear tree, white with blossoms, floated a dense mass of bees, undulating and swaying.

"It's a swarm, me son, and it's drunk they are with joy. They're forgettin' all their troubles and their cares. It's no man in the world they'll be fearin' or fightin' now. It's just the glad good time they're after. Shure, it's all the spirits of the flowers that's singin' and dancin' in their hearts. Don't ye hear the blended music? It's the waltz of the roses and the pibroch of the clover! It's the tinklin' of the honeysuckle and the ringin' of the bluebells! Glory to God, it's the canticle of June!"

O'Leary covered his head with a big straw hat. He bared his mighty arms to the elbows and held them for a time in a basin of cold water.

" Now we'll just be after shepherdin' 'em to their new home. While they're hummin' their madrigal, we'll put an empty hive under the pear tree and shake 'em in."

O'Leary shook the tree and down they dropped in solid bunches. Not one of all that multitude gave the slightest sign of resentment, or showed the least desire to escape. They fell into the hive as contentedly as full-uddered kine go to their milking-byres. After successive clusters had been shaken in, he called for a spoon. This he plunged into the midst of the remaining mass and ladled them out like peas. Then he laughingly threw the spoon away and shook the rest of the swarm down into their new abode.

" It's the fervour of their devotions makes 'em like that, me son. It's a holiday for 'em and a holy day. They're worshippin' their Queen. Their little hearts is full of faith and hope and love. They're hearin' the whisper of God in their hearts. They live in the spirit. And that's why there's a hive full of honey for us over yonder. And now they'll be after fillin' this one too."

VI

THE fresh-filled hive was placed in an angle of the garden wall.

"Shure now, it's the great captain of industry I am. I've got all them busy and skillful little creatures workin' for me. It isn't anny wages I'll be payin' 'em at all at all. Nor is it anny orders I'll be givin' 'em. They'll be managin' their own affairs entirely. They'll just be followin' the instincts of their natures and yet all the while be doin' me will, increasin' me wealth and enhancin' me joy. It's paradise for them, with the sunshine and the balm of the air and the sweet hearts of the flowers, while it's prosperity and luxury for me. Faith, and I can just be sittin' back now, takin' me ease and livin' on the fat of the land. It isn't anny more work that Michael O'Leary'll be doin' to-day. It's a great day in June, me son, and sure it's a beautiful world entirely. We'll just be restin' a spell in the cool of the porch now till Darlin' dear calls to the mid-day feast."

Stretching out his vast bulk in a stout reclining chair and resting his heels on the railing of the porch, the priest lit a pipe and sighed with satisfaction. Mark sat near him quivering with delight in his new surroundings. He felt that he had been given the freedom of two gardens, a sweet garden of nature and the garden of O'Leary's heart. These two gardens seemed to reflect and at the same time to give new meaning to one another. Each was a gathering place of sunshine and warmth, of sweetness and beauty. Each existed for ends beyond itself, to cheer and comfort and nourish.

"Now, me son, mebbe ye'll be tellin' me something of your dreams and desires for the future. It's shure I am ye'll be wantin' to get on in the world and to make a man of yourself. It's a beautiful world, as I've said, but it has to be faced in a strong way and treated right or it

will do nothin' but sting and poison and destroy ye. So mebbe ye'll open your mind to me a bit."

"Well Father, what I should like to do is to make a fortune."

"Whew! We talk big. Ye're after hitchin' your wagon to a star. And then, I take it, ye'll be after careerin' through the Milky Way. But I hope ye won't set your heart on riches. The love of money is a leech to the soul. It sucks all the warm and generous feelins out of it. The soul of the money lover is no more than a dried up pea rattlin' round in a yellow pod."

"But, Father, can't one want to have a lot of money and work hard to get it without being a money lover?"

The priest looked at him with a tender and amused expression.

"There's two ways of lovin' money, me son. One is to desire it just for havin' and hoardin' and gloatin' over it! Never, by anny chance, to part with it, but just to see it pilin' up till it shuts out the sun and moon and stars and all the blue of heaven. It don't take a big pile to do that. It depends upon your attitude. If ye get behind it and lay down on your face and hold it before your eyes, a mite may blind ye as effectively as a million. That's one way of lovin' money; the miser's way. It's the worst way. It spells degradation and damnation. It's the great apostasy. But there's another way of loving money, which ye need to avoid. It's lovin' it for its power to serve your pride and your lusts. It means love of excitements and luxuries; the love of distinction and flattery; the love of supremacy and the power to command. That means death to humility. It's the fattenin' of the carnal and the starvin' of the spiritual. It isn't manny can afford to get rich. It isn't manny can carry a big load of corn over a single plank across a chasm. Better go light, unless ye happen to be a giant in the region of the soul."

A shadow passed over Mark's face. He looked at the priest thoughtfully.

"I haven't thought much about the matter except to get the notion that it must be fine to do big things, and you must certainly have money for that. I want to break into something where I can swing my arms."

"It's a laudable ambition. But it will need watchin' and controllin'. Have ye got your next move in mind, may I ask?"

"I was thinking of trying to get a job with the Kingsclear Boom Company. I'd like to work on the river for the summer and then get to the logging camps for the winter."

"It will be no trouble about gettin' to the camps. It's a bit late to get in with the Boom Company for this season, but mebbe it can be arranged. I happen to know the President, Jim Charlton, otherwise known as Senator Charlton. A good business man and a decent fellow in his way. I'll be just after havin' a word with him."

Mother O'Leary now appeared in the doorway to announce the dinner. She cast a keen look over the garden.

"Begorra, the rows is three parts done! It's the smart scratchin' ye've been doin' wid your hoes, I'm thinkin'. The dinner is waitin'. It isn't much for the two hungry mouths of ye, but ye'll just be havin' to make the best of it. Divil a thing but a chicken wid a bit of bacon and the praties to it. It's lucky the bird has its growth and was never knowin' the lack of nourishin' food."

When the meal was over O'Leary led Mark into his den, the little room that answered for a study. It contained a desk, a dozen shelves of books, a little altar and a promiscuous collection of fur rugs, snow-shoes, old clothes, pipes, guns and fishing gear.

"Ye see, me son, I'm a man of two worlds. I'm for the life that now is and for the life that is to come. There's them that think one world at a time is good enough. I don't agree. Shure, me relations to the heavenly world don't keep me from gettin' hungry and thirsty and cold at times. Nor do they deaden me desire to fish and hunt and go slitherin' over the snow on a bright frosty day to the music of Dolly's sleigh bells. On the other hand me carnal comforts and pleasures can't silence the clamourin's of me immortal soul. So I'm as ye find me. I'm lately readin' of one who writes of wanderin' betwixt two worlds, one dead, the other powerless to be born. Glory to God, it isn't like that with me. Both me

worlds is alive and allurin'. Sometimes it's one of 'em that has the biggest pull on me, and again it's the other. But they both belong to the same God, and I'm hopin' He won't let me be crushed between the two. Faith, and I'm thinkin' they wasn't meant to fight each other entirely. There's a poet who claims that flesh can help soul now, as much as soul helps flesh. Let's be hopin' he's right. But shure, the flesh must be obedient and the soul be kept on top. Now, I'll just have forty winks and ye can do as ye like for a little."

Within ten seconds the priest was sound asleep. Mark stole quietly from the room.

"Let me help you, granny! I'll wash while you wipe. I'm a dabster at washing dishes."

"Shure, it's the conceited young thing ye are entirely! As if the loikes of ye could wash dishes to me satisfaction! No, ye can just sit down and watch me."

Mark made a dive at her and kissed her on the back of the neck. Then he seized a towel and began wiping the dripping dishes that granny had set out from the pan of hot suds.

"Och, it's the masterful way ye have wid ye, me dear, and it's glad me ould eyes is to be lookin' on ye. And it's plain I'm seein' how Michael's heart is swellin' wid love for ye. We're just plain poor Irish folk and it's big joy you're bringin' us."

"But granny, what are you bringing to me? I don't know what to say about it, except that it seems like heaven here."

"Heaven is where love is, me dear. Love is everything, I'm thinkin'."

Silence fell between them for a time. Then a deep murmurous sound pervaded the kitchen. Mark looked up questioningly.

"Is it another swarm, granny?"

"Faith no, it's just me little Michael gettin' his beauty winks. He's a good sleeper as becomes a man wid a good conscience."

"But won't you be having a little rest now granny, seeing the work is done?"

"Begorra, a woman's work is never done, but I'll rest for a little all the same. Can ye amuse yourself?"

"You bet. It's a treat just to sit in the garden."

Half an hour later granny was awakened by the sound of the priest's footstep.

He smiled and pointed to the garden.

"Look there, Darlin' dear! Isn't he a terror? Begorra, he's done three more rows. It's a young steam engine on legs he is."

Lifting up his voice he called:

"Hi there, ye young rascal! I'm wantin' ye. It's no more praties ye'll be doin' now, me son. I'm not wantin' to have the death of ye on me hands. All work and no play isn't good for priest or people. Ye can rest now. Mebbe ye'd like to take a ramble around the village for an hour or two, for a view of the neighbourhood and to get your bearins. Do annything ye like! I've got some people to visit and after that I'll mebbe be meetin' ye down by the shore somewhere by the ould punt."

Mark made his way to the Emenetta and strolled for some distance up the river bank. It was an eager stream, its swift current running a deep blue, flecked with patches of white swirling foam. At the head of the village the river path led into a little grove of pines. He decided to linger for a while in the cooling shade. Finding a spot soft with moss where he could lean against a rock and look out upon the stream, he gave himself to reflection upon the events of the day.

He sat for some minutes thinking tender thoughts, thoughts shot through with gratitude and brightened with new-born hopes. At length he was aroused from his reverie by the sound of a cautious footfall. Looking up he saw beside him a handsome dusky maiden of the half-breed type. She had evidently seen him and was embarrassed by his presence. She looked this way and that as though uncertain in which direction to make her flight. Mark sprang to his feet, and waited for her to speak. She remained silent. He noticed her eyes were big with terror, as though she had startled and aroused some dangerous beast.

"Don't be frightened, my girl! I was just resting here. I'll go right away."

She glanced at him timidly and smiled. Her lips were blood red. The teeth were like pearls and bewitching dimples twinkled in her cheeks. Then, without answering him a word, she lowered her eyes and drooped her head. She put out a foot and moved it as if tracing letters on the ground. Then she suddenly flashed him another look and smile. He wondered if she was a mute. But even as she smiled her lips quivered and her eyes filled with tears. Big drops poured out over her long black lashes and splashed upon her cheeks. She turned and moved away.

The girl could not be more than seventeen, since her skirt was short and she wore her hair in a thick braid that reached to her waist. Mark was perplexed about the proper deportment for an occasion like this, but seeing the girl was evidently distressed, he hastened after her and said:

"What's your trouble, my girl? Can I help you at all?"

She stopped and faced him. And now the tears were raining down her cheeks.

"All time de beeg trouble! Me bes' jump on reever!"

"No, no, don't say that! It's foolish and crazy."

"What good for live?" she sobbed. "All time same like hell."

"Tell me what's wrong! You should be enjoying life. You're young and strong and . . ."

He was about to say "attractive," but checked himself.

"You be stranger, ain't it, das so? Me no see you before. Mebbe you haf plenty frien'. Me, no. Only me poor mudder. She haf de hard time."

"In what way?"

"Joe Laramie, he vaire bad man. He no want me be good."

"Who is Joe Laramie?"

"Me fadder. He want me act like one dam fool."

"That's strange."

"Me mudder, she be good. Get de stiff back and plenty wrinkle workin' so hard all de time for Joe. He no work.

She want me be good. Joe, he say, go court on Fred Reynolds! Mak' de marry wit' heem! He be reech feller in Beddington. Den haf de beeg house an' wear de silks. Bah! Fred Reynolds, he no want marry me. He no marry half-injun gal what live in cabin. Joe want me take hees money now. Me say no."

"You stick to that, my girl, and you'll come out all right. But Joe must be a beast."

"Knock me poor mudder on de head dis mornin'. She all time stiff when me bathe her on de face. Mon Dieu! *Me want keel heem!*"

She had clenched her fists and her voice rose to a scream.

Mark felt the delicacy and difficulty of the situation which had so suddenly developed. This simple-hearted ignorant half-breed girl had told him her troubles. She had disclosed all the skeletons in the family closet. She was trusting him and perhaps looking to him for help. Till now he had scarcely spoken to any girl. He was totally inexperienced in the school of femininity. He was at sea. Then he remembered the priest.

"Tell you what we'll do! We'll go to Father O'Leary. He'll soon straighten things out for us . . . for you, I mean."

Her face brightened.

"Oui, das so! Heem be de kind Curé! Mebbe he do some ting!"

"Come on, then, we'll go to him straight away! I know him well. I'm visiting at his house. He's a great friend of mine."

"Non, non! Me no go wit' you. Mak' plenty tongue wag in village, dey see me wit' you. You'm not like me. You'm fine young feller. You'm not like Fred Reynolds. Bah! Heem got de bad eye an' oil on de tongue. Non, me go alone!"

"All right, mebbe that's best."

It was a bright and hopeful face she now turned to him as she said:

"Me tank you vaire mooch! Florine Laramie tank you vaire mooch on de heart!"

With that she left him and hastened away.

VII

Joe Laramie was mongrel French. His wife was MicMac. Joe thought, mistakenly, that he had married beneath himself. He was now desirous that Florine should retrieve the Laramie social status by marrying above herself. Had he not been a fool he would have known that marriage could not eventuate from the direction of his present ambitions. More than one simple and trustful half-breed girl of Otnaby had been duped by sleek and scoundrelly young bloods from Beddington who visited the village with their smiles and guiles, only to leave behind them a harvest of disgrace and misery.

Of late, Fred Reynolds had developed the habit of leaving a bottle of whisky at Joe's cabin once a week. Occasionally he slipped money into Joe's welcoming hand. These kindly attentions made a strong appeal to Joe's gross nature and tended to smooth the young reprobate's way.

Kate Laramie, the Indian mother, took an entirely different attitude to the situation. There was a fundamental cleanness to her mind, a sense of honour in her soul, and a passionate love for Florine in her heart.

Hers was a brooding nature, one that pondered deeply the riddle of existence. By patient persistent thinking she had come to behold two meanings for life.

One was—Work. She had been born with a capacity for endless ungrudging toil. The Great Spirit—whose whispers she heard in the breeze—had spoken her into being that she might cook and wash and do the weaving of the baskets. He had given her a strong body, skilful fingers and a silent tongue.

Work was kind and generous. It yielded peace, and sometimes joy. Chiefly, in her case, it gave its benedictions in the basket-making. There was the gathering of the materials, which meant the ranging of the neighbouring woods. This called her forth in the days of early

Spring, when the sap in the maples was running wild and the sweet-scented Trailing Arbutus was pushing up its tiny bells of pink and white from beneath the lingering snows. Then there were days of later Spring, when the plush was on the alders and the tassels on the birches and the swallows were building beneath the cabin eaves. It was then that the Emenetta sang its sweetest, and the trout—in the pride of their silken dress, sprinkled with gold dust and dotted with vermilion—leaped their liveliest and fought their fiercest against the angler's art. It was then, too, they gave forth their finest flavours and aromas when lifted hot from the cabin fire.

There was the weaving. To her it was ever an allurement. After some vague fashion she felt that it was her means of self-expression. She could put her ideas and desires into it. It made her a painter of pictures, a writer of stories, a composer of songs. She could create new designs, weave new patterns, blend the colours after an endlessly varying style. And she could put her conscience into her work. She could make it speak of truth and reliability. No basket had ever left her hands with a flaw in it. The people of Beddington had always bought them readily, often contributing something above the price she asked.

And so it happened that in the years gone by, young Joe Laramie, noting her skill and thrift, as well as her good looks—for she was accounted well-favoured as the women of the MicMacs go, Joe Laramie had said: "Kate, us mak' de marry, eh?"

Her other explanation of life was . . . *Florine*. It had long since come to pass that these two reasons for existence were braided into one. She worked for Florine. Florine made work a sacrament.

Time was when she had hoped that her child might be the means of awakening a soul in Joe. But that had long since passed. He had grown ever more selfish, lazy, gross and brutal.

And now, of late, a dark and chilling shadow had been cast upon the cabin. Joe would wink at the humiliation of Florine, if only it might bring him the means of self-indulgence. He had been brute enough to hint to her

that marriage with Reynolds could be most surely and speedily attained by way of the sacrifice of chastity. Kate Laramie's soul was now sweating blood.

For her encouragement she knew that the nature of Florine was morally sound and that she revolted from the hideous suggestions of her father. She determined, at any cost, to intervene for her salvation.

Hence, it was that while O'Leary was pointing the gipsies to the path of safety, Kate had visited the home of the priest and communicated to Janet the dread which haunted her mind. And it so happened that while Mark was advising Florine, O'Leary was making a pastoral call at the Laramie cabin.

He found Kate in the midst of her basket-making. The tiny home was spotlessly clean and fragrant with the odours of stripped birch, ash and maple.

She was alone in the cabin. She bent toward him in respectful salute and prepared to rise.

" Don't put yourself about, Kate woman ! Just sit still while I ask ye some questions ! "

As she looked up at him he noted that one eye was swollen shut. It was encircled by a ring of purple.

" Mebbe ye'll be tellin' me first of all how ye came by that black eye."

Kate's work dropped from her fingers. She put her elbows on her knees and her chin between her hands. Her body swayed slowly from side to side. Save for a half-stifled sigh, no sound escaped her.

" 'Twas a cruel blow, Kate woman ! Ye must be after tellin' me about it."

After a long silence she said :

" Me feel bad dis mornin' and fall on floor."

" Faith, and I don't doubt that. Anny one would be feelin' bad and ready to fall after gettin' a blow like that same. But tell me, why did he strike ye? "

Again silence and the swaying movements.

" Come, come, Kate, woman, it's commandin' ye I am. Ye must just tell me the whole truth."

" Florine, she be good gal. Me want keep her good. Me no want Fred Reynolds comin' here wit' his rum and money and de sly look."

"I see. And it's right ye are. Where's Joe?"

"Don't know. He be round somewhere. Florine she be mos' crazy. She say, 'Go jump on reever.'"

O'Leary heard an imperious summons to the prompt performance of a sacred duty.

"Begorra, she won't do that. But I'll just be after takin' a look for Joe."

The priest, being well acquainted with the habits of his people, soon found the miscreant lounging at the back of a neighbouring cabin. He beckoned to him. With great reluctance Joe came slouching up.

"I'm wantin' a little talk with ye, Joe. Mebbe we'd best get out of hearin'."

"Bah! Me no want talk. Go starve on talk," growled Joe.

"Mebbe it's more than talk ye'll be gettin' before I'm done with ye. Something more substantial and better suited to your needs. Shure, and I want ye to be tellin' me how Kate got that black eye."

Joe kept his gaze fixed on the ground.

"Ye heard me question, Joe. I'm a busy man and have no time to waste."

"Kate my squaw, ain't it? Me no hurt her mooch. W'y she no find more ting for eat?"

"Ye lazy lout, why don't ye go to work in the lime quarry and earn your food? Ye should be providin' for her and Florine. Shure, and you're a disgrace to me parish."

"Me no feel vaire good. Bad back, me, an' buzz on de head."

"Shure, and it'll give me pleasure to cure your back for ye. There'll be no charge for it at all at all. At the same time I'll be after shakin' the buzz out of your head. I'll work the double cure and that without money and without price. Come here, ye spalpeen!"

O'Leary seized him and shook him as he had never shaken a man before. Laramie made sure his last moment had come. When the priest at length let go of him, Joe lay quietly on the ground. Presently he began to grovel.

"You'm goin' keel me? You'm no geev me one chance?"

"Begorra, I'm not goin' to kill ye. I'm just goin' to take ye down to the post office and horsewhip ye. Then I'm goin' to get all the village lads to come and foot-kick ye for five miles."

"Mon Dieu! Me be dead man!"

"It's worse than dead ye are. You're dead and damned."

"You'm no geev me one chance? Be good man, me. Not heet Kate no more. Go on de Church and mak' confess. Me go work. Be good man, me."

He was choking and moaning.

"Ye slobberin' worm," roared O'Leary, "why should I be givin' ye a chance? Ye've had no mercy on your wife that's slaved for ye all her days. And ye've been tryin' to ruin the soul of your child, ye rotten skunk! Hell is too good for the likes of ye. Shure, and the divil himself would be sick at the sight of ye. Get up!"

O'Leary stirred him with his foot.

Slowly Joe arose and looked about him in a terrified way.

"Into the cabin with ye!" commanded the priest.

He pushed the creature in front of him.

"Now then, Kate," said O'Leary. "Ye'll just be givin' heed to the promises Joe is about to make. If ever he breaks one of 'em, ye'll be tellin' me, and that'll be the end of him. I'm after givin' him one more chance. It's the last he'll ever get."

He turned to Joe.

"Am I understandin' ye now to say that this cabin belongs to Kate, and that ye've no claim on it at all at all?"

"Oui, das so."

"And are ye now tellin' her that ye've been a lazy brute all your black life?"

"Yas, das so."

"Am I right in believin' ye think ye've been a disgrace and a curse to her, and that ye ain't fit to lick her shoes?"

"Oui! Me say dat."

"And are ye makin' her a solemn promise now that ye'll never lift a finger against her again so long as you live?"

"Oui, all time spik soft. Be good man, me."

"Mebbe now ye'll be after tellin' us how ye feel in the back?"

"Vaire good. Plenty strong."

"And that buzz in the head ye was complainin' of?"

"Heem all gone now."

"And not likely to come back?"

"Oui, das so."

"Is it so that to-morrow mornin' ye'll be goin' to work in the quarry if the boss will have ye?"

"Yas. Me work lak hell. Mak' de big rock come down lak tonder."

"If I'm right in me readin' of your mind ye tell Kate now in me presence that it's a dollar a week and no more of the money ye'll be keepin' for yourself, the rest to be paid over to her to do as she likes with it."

Joe's face brightened a little.

"Oui. Mebbe us be reech some day."

"And now, about Florine. She'll just be comin' and livin' with us for a while as a help for me old mother. Mistress Janet will be teachin' her all the things she ought to know, and puttin' her in the way of earnin' an honest livin', or becomin' a proper wife for some suitable man when the right time comes round. She'll be gettin' a small wage which she's to have for herself. Ye agree to that?"

"Yas. Dat be fine ting for Florine."

"Well, I'll just have a word with the boss about takin' ye on for the quarry. Ye can be there sharp in the mornin' and ready for work."

On the conclusion of this interview, O'Leary walked down to the river where he was presently sighted and joined by Mark. The priest's face beamed as Mark told him of the meeting with Florine and how it had ended.

"Shure, she's just an ignorant young creature, but she's got a white soul in her, and by the help of God we'll keep it white."

Then he told of the doings at the cabin.

"There's some whose souls ye can reach through their intelligence and conscience, and there's others ye can get at through their affections. But in the case of your Joe Laramies ye must just work from the skin in, makin' the

flesh good and mellow on the way. It's the only treatment they can understand and respect. It's the royal road to the salvation of their souls."

They sauntered down the bank of the Emenetta to the point of its junction with the St. John.

"I'm thinkin', me son, there'll be big changes in me little parish before long. The New Brunswick Lumberin' and Millin' Company is thinkin' of buildin' big mills and mebbe factories here. They've lately acquired huge areas of Crown lands at the headwaters of the Emenetta. I'm told it stands thick with the finest pine in the Province. It's the same company as has the Kingsclear booms. If we get ye started with that concern, ye'll have a chance to work up to somethin'. And then mebbe I won't be losin' sight of ye."

"It's the life I'm longing for, Father; the life of the woods and the streams."

"It's a great life for shure. I've had me own high days of trampin' in the bush. Perhaps the happiest days of me life. Shure, and the woods are like a temple to me."

Mark looked at him wonderingly.

"You say strange things, Father."

"Nothin' strange at all at all. The forest is just one vast and solemn cathedral, with hills for altars, streams and cataracts for choirs, silver pools for fonts, trees for worshippers, the smoke of camp-fires for incense, and the sky for its glorious dome. Mebbe what haunts me most is the smell of it all. The scents, me son! The pungent aromas! The enlivenin' emanations, exhalations and essences of it! It's grand bouquet! Glory to God, it sets every drop of blood in your body a' dancin' and every nerve a' tinglin'! Then there's all the shy and furtive life —creatures keen of smell, fleet of foot, sudden of wing! Creatures all fur and fury! Creatures all flash and flutter! Shure, and it's no one has ever lived a man's full life who hasn't stroked the streams, and threaded the thickets, and paddled the lakes, and taken his evenin' meal by the warmth and light of blazin' fire-logs! And then to roll yourself in a blanket and give yourself to happy dreams beneath the watchin' stars—but och! it's the silly old blatherin' Irishman I am!"

On their homeward way they sighted a young dandy swaggering along the shore with walking-stick and cigar. He was dressed in the height of fashion.

O'Leary hailed him.

"Just a word with ye, me young friend! Mebbe ye'll be good enough to tell me if I'm right in thinkin' your name is Reynolds."

Reynolds frowned.

"Yes, that's my name. What's your interest in knowing it?"

"Ye'll pardon me for sayin' that I hope it may always be a name that people can respect."

The youth bridled and flushed.

"I don't know that it's any affair of yours," he replied, with a toss of his head.

O'Leary's voice sounded a warning note as he said:

"I take an interest in the well-bein' of me fellow men, and I take a special interest in the people of me parish."

"That's all right, mebbe, but I don't belong to your miserable little parish."

"No, but Florine Laramie does."

"What's that got to do with me? You'd better mind your own business and not be meddling with mine."

O'Leary's hand was now resting on Reynolds' shoulder.

"Look ye here, young man! I know something of your visits and the purpose of 'em. I'm after tellin' ye now, both for the good of your body and your soul, they're at an end. Ye'll just be after takin' the road straight back to Beddington and never be lettin' your face appear in this village again."

O'Leary's grasp tightened on Reynolds' shoulder.

"You let go of me, you damned Irish papist, or I'll have the law of you!"

"Och, ye filthy little fool! It's chastisin' ye want, and mebbe a bit of a bath!"

O'Leary shook him till his eyes seemed to loosen in their sockets. Away went hat, walking-stick and cigar. For a little the youth struggled, then caved in and began to whimper. When the priest considered that this process had gone far enough, he lifted the young blackguard bodily and flung him into the river. It was a sorry looking dandy

that emerged from the stream. He was also crest-fallen and conquered.

"Mebbe ye'll be willin' to promise me now that ye'll forget the road that leads to Otnaby?"

Reynolds made no reply.

"And ye'll remember that I'm Father in God to Florine Laramie, and that she's a member of me flock and family? Now be off with ye!"

O'Leary strode toward home with the air of a man who found the world a pleasant place to live in, and who had not a care in his heart. A mischievous light was dancing in his fine blue eyes as he turned to Mark and said:

"I'm hopin' that makes it safe for Florine, so far as Reynolds is concerned. But, och, me son, it's sad work bein' a Curé of souls!"

They found Florine awaiting their return. Under Janet's soothing influence, and with youth's happy faculty for swift rebounds of feeling, she had dismissed her fears and was now resting in the assurance of safety under the priest's protection. O'Leary called his mother aside for a few whispered words, and then addressing the girl, he said:

"Florine, me lass, ye've been a good girl, and I'm pleased with ye. It isn't anny more trouble ye'll be havin' now from Reynolds. He's all made over new. He's been baptised and confirmed, and now he's travellin' the right road. He's taken the path of duty and the way of safety."

She stared at him uncomprehendingly. O'Leary's eyes twinkled. He continued.

"It's a real revival I'm seein' in me parish. Joe has had a change of heart. He's been converted from the error of his ways."

It was all Greek to Florine. She shook her head.

"Me no savvy," she said.

"I'm tellin' ye Joe is to be a good man now. He's promised not to trouble ye and not to beat Kate anny more."

"Das be good job if heem no tell beeg lie. Bah! Heem bad devil! Me want choke heem on de troat!"

"I'm thinkin' he means what he says this time. He's got a godly fear in his heart. It's the beginnin' of

wisdom. It's hearin' to the deaf and sight to the blind and strength to the weak. Ye'll be glad to know that his back is better and the buzz has gone out of his head. He seems quite well and strong now."

Again Florine was mystified.

"Das be funny ting what happen heem. How heem be like dat?"

"Faith, and I gave him a treatment for his ailments; the Apostolic Blessin' through the layin' on of hands."

She shook her head. "Me no savvy."

"There's wonderful virtue in a priest's hands, me lass, when they're laid on in the proper fashion. They communicate healin' power and renewin' grace."

Florine gazed at him with puzzled eyes.

"Joe will be goin' to work in the quarry to-morrow," he continued.

"Das be good ting."

"And how would ye like to stay here with us and help Darlin' dear in the work?"

A joyous light broke over her face.

"You'm no mean all time live here? For eat and sleep?"

"Yes, Florine."

"Das be what you call one bully ting. Me work vaire hard. Me learn plenty soon. Feed de chick, milk de cow, churn de cream. Me do dat. Oui, das so! Fetch de wood, mak' de fire, hot de water, wash de pot. Oui, das so! Mebbe dig on gardenne too. Me plenty strong, Florine Laramie, me."

"Shure, 'twill be a big help to Darlin' dear, if ye do all them things."

"Mebbe me soon do some more."

She was looking beyond him now to where Mark stood somewhat shyly in the background. O'Leary glanced in the same direction.

"Yes, this is your young friend. He's been tellin' me of meetin' with ye. His name is Mark Woodburn, as mebbe Darlin' dear has told ye. He'll be often here. This is to be his home. He's a member of me family now. Ye won't be against that, I'm hopin'?"

A faint flush spread over her face and her eyes shone with a new lustre.

"Mon Dieu, non! Me be vaire please. Heem good feller. Me shine de shoe and mend de sock for heem, Mebbe me knit de mitt for warm hees hand when Jack Frost come out."

"Very well, that's settled. And now I'll be after sayin' the Vespers."

He proceeded to the little church. It contained a single worshipper. Kate Laramie was kneeling before the image of the Virgin. He stepped softly to his robing room. When he emerged a few minutes later, Kate had disappeared.

"Faith," he murmured, "some might be sayin' the place is empty; but to me it seems full this sweet summer evenin', yes . . . *full of God!*"

Kate took a little parcel to the priest's house, exchanged a few words with Janet and Florine; then, with a more peaceful heart than she had known for months, trudged home to her cabin.

VIII

They sat long on the back verandah in the cooling evening air. O'Leary was mapping out a programme for the following day.

"'Twill be fine again to-morrow, me son. We'll do a good forenoon's work in the garden, transplantin' the lettuce and thinnin' out the onions. Ye'd best work in your overalls and leave your suit for Darlin' dear to sponge and press. She's the clever hand at renewin' the youth of old clothes. She can work wonders at obliteratin' the marks of friction and the traces of time. She knows how to smooth out wrinkles and remove the look of age. Shure, and it's a sore trouble to her I am with me careless way of treatin' me wearin' apparel. She's always wantin' me to keep meself unspotted from the world. It's impossible with my bulk. The case is hopeless. If it's anny mud about I'm the one that's bound to be splashin' into it and spatterin' meself all over. She can walk for miles along the filthiest road and divil a stain on her shoes. It's because of the spirit of purity that animates her even to the dainty feet of her.

"I'm thinkin' we'll get away from here early after dinner. There's your bit of shoppin' to be done before we go up to The Elms."

"*My* shopping?"

"Shure, and ye'll look none the worse for a decent straw hat to your head. And mebbe ye'll be thinkin' of a collar and a tie. Young bloods like ye is apt to have a weakness for that style of decoration."

Mark shifted uncomfortably in his seat.

"I'm not thinking of getting those things just yet, Father. A little later on, after I've been earning."

O'Leary blew out his cheeks.

"Why should ye be hoardin' your money away from your prime necessities? Ye've got three dollars. That's enough for the purpose."

"Three dollars?"

"Shure. There's two I got for your shoes. Ye didn't know about that. And it's another dollar ye've earned besides your board. What more can ye be wantin' at the present moment?"

"But I'm wearing your shoes. They take the place of the two dollars."

"Shure, and ye're doin' me a service by wearin' 'em. It keeps 'em from hardenin' and breakin'. In this weather they soon dry up and crack if they're not worn. Ye're addin' to their life and usefulness. But I'm thinkin' ye'll not be needin' 'em in the garden to-morrow, since the ground is soft and warm. Ye'll just be leavin' 'em off for Florine to put the polish to 'em."

"What? Polish shoes for *me?* That's the funniest thing I ever heard of."

O'Leary threw his head back and laughed.

"Ye'll soon be hearin' of funnier things than that, me son. Ye're not to make anny objection. Ye must understand that ye're the son of the house. It's me wish for Florine to do the brogues."

* * * * * *

The Durston home wore an imposing appearance to Mark as he approached it with Father O'Leary the following afternoon. It was a big white two storied building, standing well back from the street, and reached by a driveway bordered with lofty elms. At the rear were a croquet lawn and tennis court, backed by two immense wide-spreading cedars. A gate admitted to an adjacent vegetable garden, beyond which stood the barn and stables.

Doctor Charles Durston and O'Leary had been school boys together. They were life-long friends. Durston was a thoughtful man, with a scientific turn of mind. He stood close to the top of his profession in the Province. He was tall and well built, with a close-cropped beard, now beginning to show white. Brusque of manner, he had an emphatic way of asserting his opinions and theories. It pleased his humour to assume the rôle of a cynic, though everybody who knew him saw through the thin disguise.

He never wearied of declaring that ill-born infants should be done away with, and that all the miserable and suffering old folks should be chloroformed. Yet he would stay all night with a case of "blue baby," carrying the tiny creature in his arms, blowing into its mouth, warming it at his heart, and departing crest-fallen and disconsolate if his efforts failed. As for the old folks—they wanted to stay alive for the sake of having a few more visits from their beloved friend.

As O'Leary and Mark proceeded up the avenue, sounds were heard indicating the progress of a game: the dull thud of feet running upon the turf; the sharp whing of rackets as tennis balls were struck to and fro; exclamations; laughter; little cries of exultation; ejaculations of impatience or disappointment; the calling out of scores. Mark slackened his pace and looked about him uneasily.

"Come on, me son," said O'Leary, as he continued to stride forward. "There's no cause for hesitation."

"Couldn't you ask Doug to come and meet me down by the gate? I . . . I'd rather not go there."

"Begorra, I'll not be after doin' anny such thing! Ye're not to be showin' the white feather like this! Come on!"

As they turned the corner of the house and the tennis court came into view, Mark stopped stock still. He had seen nothing like this before. The spotless white flannels and muslins of the players contrasted vividly with the surrounding green. The sun flashing on the yellow rims of the tennis rackets made them look like hoops of gold. The movements of the two young couples engaged in the game were as graceful as those of a group of fauns. On a bench at the side of the court, well shaded by a drooping willow, sat Mrs. Durston, busy with fancy work. Near by, in a reclining chair, the Doctor lounged at ease with magazine and pipe.

"I can't go there!" said Mark, timidly.

"Shure, and if it's anny help ye're needin' to cross the intervenin' space, I'll supply that same!" O'Leary seized him by the arm and well nigh lifted him from his feet.

Doug was the first to observe their approach. He

immediately broke away from his game and hurried to meet them, racket in hand. He had recognised O'Leary, but not Mark. With an eager hand stretched out to the priest, he said:

"Good afternoon! Good heavens! . . . Mark! . . ."

"Faith, now, and ye're not to get excited, Doug! It's much too warm a day for anny unnecessary heat."

"But how do you happen to come here together? You two! What's the meaning of it?"

"Shure, and that's a little story for ye later on. To give ye the gist of it now, we've been adoptin' each other for the last day or two. We're findin' it a pleasant occupation. We're gettin' on fine."

Doug laid hold of Mark by the arm. Mark hung back bashfully. He looked over his shoulder and down the driveway toward the gate.

"Can't we sneak out of this, Doug, and get away somewhere by ourselves?"

He was too late with his suggestion. The elder Durstons had risen and were coming forward. They greeted O'Leary cordially and looked at Mark with interested and kindly faces.

"It's Mark Woodburn," said Doug. "And these are my father and mother."

Mark plucked the hat from his head and made an embarrassed attempt at a bow.

"Oh, it's the young man you met on the river! How jolly! But . . . with Father O'Leary! . . . How's this?" said the Doctor.

"Shure, and there's more than Doug can be meetin' with a young gentleman that's tourin' the country for his health. Mr. Woodburn has been honourin' me with his company for a day or two, and vastly contributin' to the joy of life. I'm hopin' he may decide to settle down in these parts and give us the pleasure of seein' much more of him."

Doctor Durston had cordially shaken hands with Mark. Mrs. Durston detained his hand and patted it for a moment.

"Do make yourself at home!" she said: "Doug's friends are always welcome here. Perhaps you'd like to

join the other young people while Father O'Leary sits and chats with us for a while. Doug, you'll look after Mr. Woodburn, of course."

Len Kendall now came sauntering up.

"Shades of the Cæsars! It's the aquatic acrobat! The performer of the marvellous disappearing act! Gad, Woodburn! I'm glad to see you again."

"Thanks! Glad to see you!"

Two girls were standing at a little distance with arms around each other. Doug beckoned to them.

"Mark, you'll remember Miss Hatfield. And this is my sister Lena."

Grace flushed scarlet. Mark lifted his eyes to hers for a moment and smiled. Then he turned to Lena. He had never seen a girl like her before. She met him with a frank and friendly look.

"We've been ever so interested in what Doug told us about you. We all hope you'll have the best of luck now and get on well."

Lena was nearing her eighteenth birthday. She was tall, strong bodied and clear skinned. Her hair, blue black, was wound in a graceful coil about her shapely head. Her dark brown eyes suggested depths of thought and feeling. The colour in her cheeks was like the first flush of a peach. She was a highly animated girl. This was suggested by the very poise of her head and the sudden way she had of flashing her eyes upon you. It was like turning on the electric light. Her mouth was a notable feature, the lips delicately and sensitively moulded, indicating sympathy and humour. They had a habit of slightly trembling when she spoke, the result of pleasant thoughts rippling into words.

Lena bore a strong resemblance to her father both in face and cast of mind. She had her father's sense of humour, his drollery, his mental independence and his strength of will. In her religious emotions and love of the beautiful she was like her mother. She was something of a contradiction—practical; yet often dreamy; emotional, yet thoughtful; impetuous, yet reflective.

"Thank you," said Mark, in answer to her greeting.

"I suppose Father O'Leary is a friend of yours by

the look of things. If so, you're to be congratulated. He's one of the dearest creatures in the world."

With this she cast an affectionate glance toward the priest.

"Yes, he has been wonderfully kind to me the last few days. I can't understand it. Kindness just seems to ooze out of him like balsam out of a pine tree."

She threw her head back and laughed:

"Begorra, and it's right ye are in that! Ye'll be for findin' the balsam there in summer and in winter, and faith, it'll stick to ye."

He looked at her with undisguised admiration. The mimicry, the warm emotion, the mental sprightliness were irresistible in their charm. Doug now intervened.

"If you folks will excuse us, Mark and I will leave you for a while. We want a little private chat."

Doug took him to his room, Mark's eyes expanding with wonder at what he saw on the way. The room overlooked the lawn. It occurred to Mark that no one could possibly find use for half the things the room contained. They must often get in Doug's way and make a lot of trouble for him.

Doug drew a couple of chairs up to the window.

"Now then, let's have the story!"

Mark plunged with enthusiasm into a recital of the events of the last two days.

"Good old O'Leary!" said Doug, as Mark concluded. "He's the real goods! All wool and a yard wide!"

He rose and walked a couple of times around the room. Then he went to a bureau and pulled out a drawer.

"I say, Mark, would you mind doing me a favour? There's a suit of clothes here that I don't know what to do with. If you'd be good enough to take it, I'd be ever so much obliged. It isn't a bad sort, but I've no use for it and it keeps getting in my way."

He laid out upon the bed a suit of navy blue serge, good as new.

"Fact is, I'm crowded out with stuff like this. Look here! Shirts! Collars! Ties! And that cupboard simply crammed with shoes! Do take pity on me!"

Mark's face flushed.

"Nothing doing, Duggie, boy, nothing like that!"

Doug's face fell. He gathered the stuff in his arms and hastily thrust it from sight.

"Hang it all! I suppose I've dished myself now! You'll be insulted!"

"Not at all! It's more than kind of you. But I've got everything I need."

* * * * * *

Meanwhile, out on the lawn an earnest conversation was in progress between O'Leary and Doctor Durston.

The priest had told the story of the last two days. He had also indicated his plans for the future. Though secretly delighted, Durston adopted an attitude of fierce hostility.

"Michael, you're as big a fool as ever! You're nothing but a soft-hearted, muddle-headed blunderer! You'll never be anything else! You don't seem to use the little brains the Almighty gave you. You don't think. You don't look ahead. You have no clear cut or orderly views of life. You're purely a creature of impulse. Now, this is a perfectly crazy thing you've done. You know nothing about this youngster, except that he's a waif, and has been knocking about with the riff-raff of the country since he was a kid. And yet, in less than two days, you practically adopt him. It's the silliest piece of scatter-brain stuff I ever heard of. It's all right to do a charitable act now and then, but to put yourself in for the like of this is nothing less than outrageous folly."

To this outburst O'Leary made no immediate reply. The Doctor puffed at his pipe for a time in silence. Then he continued:

"I don't want to distress you unnecessarily, Michael, but I do wish you would act more along the lines of intelligence."

"Shure, and ye was always a person of large intelligence, Charles. But mebbe ye never heard of the faculty that goes by the name of intuition. I'm thinkin' there's somethin' in it."

"Yes, possibly, for women."

O'Leary glanced at Mrs. Durston. She lifted her eyes from her work and smiled.

"I guess you can handle him without my help, Father O'Leary. But I'm on your side, if you need me."

"And I was just thinkin'," continued O'Leary, "that it might be permitted to a humble parish priest to walk by faith where he cannot walk by sight."

"Sight!" snorted Durston. "Sight! The sight is there for you if you will only open your eyes to it. You make me weary. You talk and act like a simpleton. Here you are saddling yourself with a responsibility that doesn't belong to you and one that may cause you no end of trouble."

"I don't quite follow you, Charles. What trouble do you anticipate?"

"You know nothing of his ancestry. He may have a vicious, even a criminal streak in him. It's more than likely. Now, assuming that, trouble is bound to follow. You know my theory. Everything is in the cradle. Heredity is invincible. Criminal proclivities are ineradicable."

O'Leary's face was now aflame.

"Charles Durston, ye've been guilty of makin' a wicked assumption and a blasphemous assertion. It's a sinful man ye are to be assumin' criminal tendencies in me poor lad. Shure and didn't me heart go out to him in the first instance because he'd let himself be stripped nigh naked to the world just because he wouldn't steal? And then what right have ye to say that criminal proclivities can never be overcome? Are ye denyin' the grace and power of God? Begorra, ye just prate away like a prosecutin' lawyer that's got no case and rave like a blasphemin' atheist that's got no God. Och, I'm ashamed of ye entirely!"

"I say, Michael, you don't need to blow me off the face of the earth. When you go on like that I do exceedingly fear and quake. Give me half a chance! I'm not against the lad. I hope he will turn out all right. If there's anything I can do to help in getting a proper job for him, just let me know."

"Faith, and I've got a job for him. He's startin' on

the boom on Monday. I had only to mention the matter to Charlton and he consented to it straight away."

"Of course, Michael! He'd do anything for you. So would all of us. Who could help it?"

"And why so? If I'm makin' such a big mistake in lettin' me heart run away with me head, why should I be encouraged on me blind and dangerous road?"

Durston withdrew his pipe and made a sudden gesture with it.

"Michael, if you didn't let your heart do the running, you'd never move at all."

"Oh Charles," cried the doctor's wife, "that's much too bad of you!"

O'Leary glanced at her and smiled. "He hasn't answered me simple question yet. *Why* should I be encouraged when I'm actin' contrary to reason and sound sense? I'm wantin' the answer."

"Just because we can't help liking a man of heart even when we think he's acting foolishly."

"Shure, and that's an admission that goes far to undermine your argument. I'm thinkin' ye've got more regard for heart than ye have for head after all. Ye may be a clever man in your way, Charles, but you're weak when it comes to a matter of subtle and thorough analysis."

The doctor laughed. "Have another cigar, Michael!"

IX

The boom was situated five miles up the St. John above Otnaby. It consisted of a vast enclosure of logs now resting quietly after long and exciting journeys from the head-waters and down the tributaries of the mighty river. They lay huddled close together like sleepy sheep within a shepherd's fold.

At times, indeed, they would become agitated and distressed. If a heavy storm smote down upon the stream —ridging it into angry waves which rose with increasing violence and volume as they encountered the obstruction offered by the massive boom—there would be a vast tossing and straining of the logs, swinging now this way and now that, with sullen grumblings and fierce grindings at their chains as they strove for freedom. At such times something of their ancient spirit seemed to be re-born within them. It was as if they had been inspired by one last wild hope of breaking loose from the bonds of their captivity. For the greater part of the time, however, they lay quiescent, subdued to passive servitude, submissive to their fate.

In truth, taking the long view of their life and destiny, these conquered monarchs of the forest had nothing to regret. If they had not been smitten by the woodman's axe, felled and borne away in iron chains from the soil into which they had struck their roots and the scenes amid which they were reared, they had never known the thrill of the dash down the swirling foaming waters of the Tobiatic ; they had never known the excitement of the race past Clutch Point and Black Rock, or the jolly pushing and crowding in the swift run through The Guzzle ; they had never known the rollicking glee of the " jam," when the logs leap and roll and tumble over one another, piling up sky high, to challenge the stream-driver's venturous skill.

And now, what if they must be subjected to further trials, indignities and pains? When they are sawn asunder; when they are slashed and sliced; when they are rolled through shrieking exultant planers and reduced to half their original bulk; is it not all for the manifestation of their inward grace and for their devotement to finer issues?

No more may they stand erect in insolated pride, tossing their purple plumes in air; no more may they bestir themselves to greet the dawn as it flushes up the sky, or stand at attention to salute the stars; yet they call for no man's pity. Better the uses to which they shall be devoted now —than to remain unscathed in primitive security, to spread beneath their leafy roofs a couch whereon the bear may batten or the lynx may lie, growing old in time, and feeble and rotten, and falling at length in crumbling decrepitude to mix with forest mould.

> "For what is it to die,
> Be it a man, or tree, or any other thing,
> So that in death is service, and the world
> Be thrust one hair's breadth nearer to the dawn?"

The rafting out of logs from the great holding boom is one of the pleasantest and lightest departments of the lumberman's work. Floating down the main river from cuttings in various regions and by the way of different tributary streams, the logs pour into the upper portion of the boom in a promiscuous mass. Thence they are sorted, according to their markings, into the pens allotted to the individual owners. In the case of the Kingsclear boom, where many millions of feet of timber were annually collected, this involved a run of several miles before all the stuff could be identified and poled into the proper places. Thence, again, the logs must in turn be drawn forth, ranged in ranks and files and roped together into rafts to be towed down the river to mills awaiting them at Beddington, Margaretsville and Clinton.

They worked ten hours a day with the exception of Saturday, when they knocked off at 4 p.m. Meals, substantial and well cooked, were served in a long low building near the river bank. Half a dozen spacious huts

provided sleeping accommodation. There was also a cook-house and a building where supplies were stored.

It was agreed that Mark should spend his Sundays at Otnaby. On the first Saturday afternoon, as he was about to set forth upon his walk to the village, two canoes appeared upon the scene. Doug and Grace Hatfield occupied the one, Len Kendall and Lena being in the other.

Doug waved his paddle in the air as he greeted Mark.

"The nick of time, it seems! I was beginning to fear we might miss you."

Mark held the bows of the canoes while their occupants scrambled ashore.

"We'd like you to show us over the place," said Doug, "and then perhaps you'll come for a little paddle with us."

"Sure! You can land me at Otnaby, if you like."

The visitors looked about them with admiration. The log boom, which filled half the width of the river, stretched away up stream as far as one could see. The buildings clustered on the bank, with the pike-poles and canthooks stacked here and there, and long lines of masculine attire hung up for drying, gave the place the appearance of a village. From the river bank the ground rose gently to wooded heights behind, with a road leading down to the shore. Two team loads of supplies were now approaching, while another was unloading at the storehouse. The opposite side of the river presented a pleasing view of cultivated farms and comfortable looking houses.

"What a lovely place!" ejaculated Lena. "How do you like it here?"

"I like it very much. It's the most pleasant sort of work I've ever done." Then in an aside to Doug: "I like the money too. Six dollars a week clear is pretty good, isn't it?"

"I should say so. You'll soon be a millionaire."

After Mark had pointed out the various objects of interest, he asked if they would like a cup of tea. They pronounced the suggestion a most excellent one.

"I'm hungry enough to bite a wire nail in two," said Len, "but I didn't know they catered for visitors."

"Oh, they'll make you welcome. The cooks are pleasant fellows. The men haven't finished yet. They

can do you well. Give you a dish of hot baked beans, bread and butter, cheese and jam."

"Call that a tea? It's a meal for giants," said Doug.

"We never have anything less than that."

Mark led the way to the eating house.

"Certainly!" said the head steward, "bring them right along! The upper end of that table! Would they like tea or coffee? Do them a special coffee if they'd like it."

Mark consulted his friends.

"Yes, coffee, please!"

"Mebbe they could do with a little ham along with the beans?" suggested Mark. "How would it do to give 'em the whole lay out?"

"By gum, I will. There's cake and raisins. Be a surprise for 'em, eh?"

A clean white cloth was spread across one section of a long table, and in a few minutes the meal was served. They had a jolly time of it. The girls made themselves agreeable. Len Kendall was in high feather.

"It's a red letter day! An oasis in the desert of life! I'd like a job here. Woodburn, do you think you could induce the Curé to put in a word for me? O for a life on the shining stream and amid the rolling timbers and in the freshening breeze! I'd sign a bond never to be late for meals."

"From the way you're stacking up the grub there, I reckon you'll be late for bed," laughed Doug.

"Eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow ye die," retorted Len.

"Leonard," said Doug solemnly, "if you eat all that you'll die before to-morrow."

"Then I die happy, as said the conquering Wolf."

"You're not a wolf, Leonard. You're a boa constrictor."

As they were leaving the room Doug slipped a dollar bill into the steward's hand.

On their way to the shore Lena suddenly exclaimed:

"O, those lovely logs! I'm going to have a run on them." She bounded away with the fleetness of a deer. Mark looked inquiringly at Doug.

"Better go after the mad-cap, if you don't mind.

She's always doing some crazy stunt. A regular tomboy!" declared Doug.

Mark darted after her. He was amazed by the speed she made. She seemed like some creature skimming along on wings. She ran out on the broad boom-bind, a chained and anchored affair, solid as a floor. Half way out to the open water she left the bind and went flying over the logs.

It is an easy matter to traverse a mass of logs crosswise when they are packed close and tight together. It is another thing to run them lengthwise. You may alight upon a slender and ticklish one with a tapering end that suddenly sinks beneath your weight. That was what Lena attempted. She made an excellent run of it. Several times the water rose to her ankles and once to her knees before she could re-establish her footing. Still she flew on swift and undaunted. At length she reached a part of the boom where the logs lay loose, with open spaces between them. Mark shouted for her to halt. But the spirit of adventure and bravado was now in full control.

She leaped upon a log which proved to be a treacherous one, slender, slimy, cantankerous. It sank deep beneath her weight, rolling and plunging with vicious lurching movements. For a brief moment she kept her footing, swiftly treading the wicked thing as it surged and darted, flinging wide her arms. Then, in a desperate effort to balance herself, fell head foremost into the stream. There was but a small space of open water and the current ran strong. Before she could come to the surface again the current swept her down beneath the boom.

The logs under which she disappeared were packed closely together. For hundreds of yards there was not a gleam of open water; hardly enough room for the thrusting up of an appealing hand, much less for the emergence of a human body. Her fate seemed sealed. Pinned down beneath that solid motionless mass of timber what was left for her but a brief gasping struggle in the darkness to be followed by oblivion! That far-stretching log boom seemed to be suddenly transformed into a huge coffin lid.

On the instant of her plunge Lena realised her peril. She could swim but had never practised swimming under

water. And now—with the horror of a closed tomb about her and with nothing to guide her movements in that dark underworld—she knew that she had plunged into the jaws of death. Yet life was too sweet to be abandoned without a struggle. She knew that she must try to swim against the stream. But where was she now and how could she hope to make straight for that one clear space which alone could serve as exit into air and light and life? She struck out fiercely but blindly. Now she was bumping the logs with her head! Now desparately but vainly clutching at them with her hands! Her lungs seemed bursting. An intolerable pain hammered at her temples. Presently will power failed and all hope fled. As hope departed the desire for life followed in its train. A drowsy feeling stole over her. As she was sinking to slumber the panorama of her life passed before her mind. She would just say good-bye. "Good-bye, all!"

She woke to find herself lying on the bank of the river surrounded by anxious kindly faces. Doug was there, and Grace, and Len, and a group of the boom workers. She closed her eyes for a moment, opened them again and smiled. She lifted her head and made as though she would rise. Should there not be another face showing somewhere in this company? She passed a hand over her forehead. Surely there was someone missing. But no, here he came, dripping and perspiring, and thrusting a flask of brandy into Doug's hand. She swallowed a mouthful of the liquor and presently felt better.

"You'll be all right now in a few minutes," said Doug. "Just lie still for a little!"

She shivered and tears gathered in her eyes.

"Tell me about it! How did I get here? I . . . I went to sleep under the logs. I . . . said good-bye."

Doug pointed to Mark. "He did it, of course. Who else? He dived in after you and . . . and God only knows how he managed to hunt you out and bring you back from that hell-hole. He was gone a long time. We never expected to see either one of you again. Evidently he had no intention of coming back without you. I . . . I guess it's something most like a miracle that's been done here to-day."

She looked for a moment at Mark very gravely. Then she held out a hand. "Thank you, my friend! I'm sorry to have been such a . . . trouble!"

"Oh, no trouble at all! I was wanting a swim."

* * * * * *

Late that evening, after the affair had been fully discussed by the Durston household, Lena found opportunity for a moment with her father alone. She was sitting on his knee with an arm around his neck.

"I think life never tasted so sweet as it does to-night, Father dear. I . . . I should like to make some sort of a thank offering for it."

"Certainly, my darling! I've been thinking about that myself. Jove! Mark Woodburn will never know what I feel . . . what we all feel toward him. He's a first class hero and nothing less. I'm going to give him a gold watch, the best that money can buy. It's nothing at all as a reward for what he did, but just a little token of our gratitude."

"I hope you won't do that! Somehow I don't think he would like it. I wasn't thinking of giving him anything, but of making some offering to . . . to God."

"Well, why not make the offering to God through the means God used in giving you back your life? That seems to me the most sensible and appropriate thing to do."

"Father, you don't understand. I want to do some service and make some sacrifice of my very own; something that will be costly."

"Well, what have you in mind?"

"I should like to go into the Convent for a week of fasting and prayer."

Doctor Durston snorted his dissent. "No, I won't consent to any such crazy idea! You pray enough, I'm certain. If you go in for any more devotions you'll be getting housemaid's knee. I don't want a cripple on my hands. As for fasting, that's stupid nonsense. You need your food and plenty of it; all the more, perhaps, after this shock to your nerves."

"But don't you think God wants me to do something just now in the way of self-denial and sacrifice?"

"No, I don't think any such tommyrot. He wants you to stay here with us, smiling and happy and to give us the joy of you. Child, when I think of the desolation that might have been reigning in this home to-night, I feel as if I could never let you out of my sight again."

She put her lips to his and kissed him.

"You're the dearest and best father in the world, but I fear you're not a very reliable authority on God."

Tenderly he stroked her glossy blue black hair and her smooth cheeks with their colour now happily restored.

"Listen, my darling! I have little religion and less theology. I'm not much of an authority on God, as you say. But I'm right about this. It is because I am a father. That counts. You may bank on what I've said."

X

THE people of Beddington are justly proud of their pretty town of seven thousand inhabitants. They smile complaisantly when outsiders refer to it as "The Celestial City." The place has indisputable qualifications for the honour. Not that it is built upon any height of land. It is no city set upon a hill, but on a level river bank. Perhaps it won its lofty designation from that noble stream which flows beside it, clear as crystal, and from the stately elms whose roots drink of its waters. If the buildings of Beddington should be blotted out the place would remain a beautiful park.

If you are curious about this matter and pursue inquiry, you may be told that the term Celestial was chosen as a compliment to the Beddington climate. True, bad weather is not unknown there, but it invades the town from surrounding regions. It is an importation. It is not generated in Beddington; nor is it long tolerated. In sympathy with the country at large, and just to show that Beddington is ready to share misfortune with its neighbours, the early Spring may sometimes be a boisterous and broken season. Summer may bring a few weeks of steaming heat. But in the main its skies are clear and its "blue air winks with life like beaded wine." September and October, with their days of ardent sunshine and their nights of increasing cold, put a splendour on the trees and a fragrance in the air that may well be termed celestial. Midwinter, frosty but kindly, snow sparkling with myriads of diamonds by day and gleaming like pearl in the light of the moon—midwinter in Beddington enlivens you with the merry music of countless sleigh-bells and shows you nights so clear and keen that the spires of the churches seem to knock against the stars.

A comfortable self-contained community is Beddington on the right bank of the St. John. Here you will find many of the institutions necessary to minister to the higher

life of a people. The town can boast excellent primary and secondary schools, a Normal School and a University. It can point you to a hospital, a cathedral and a parliament building. Only its cemetery is unattractive. But then—why should any inhabitant of Beddington ever wish to die?

Beddington is kind to its young. It has a genius for promoting the pleasure and well-being of childhood and youth. The most is made of its unrivalled facilities for outdoor delights. In the summer there is a constant revel of park-picnics, bicycle rambles, canoe trips and campings-out. The glorious river with its exquisitely beautiful tributary streams discloses innumerable spots of inviting loveliness. In the winter outdoor life is equally delightful and even more invigorating. What with skating, sleighing, curling, tobogganing and snow-shoeing, the young people may pursue an endless round of healthful sport and pleasant intercourse. When the Legislature is in session the little city swells with importance and blossoms out in social gaiety. The aristocracy of the Province comes to town for " the season," and all goes merry as a marriage bell.

Here, surrounded by every comfort, enjoying the best educational advantages, welcomed everywhere both for the name she bore and for her kindly and sparkling personality, Lena Durston had grown to womanhood. Even as a young girl she led a busy life with her studies and sports and social engagements. Having lately completed her course at the Convent, she was now making her influence widely felt throughout the community. It was a marvel to her friends how she could do so many things and do them well. Though she was much at the Church, she found time to serve on various committees and to take a leading part in organising social functions. She was a keen tennis player and a good canoeist. She kept up her music. Withal she shared with her mother the administration of the home, and assisted her father with the keeping of his books.

But Beddington is not entirely of one piece. Beneath the surface the fabric of its life is stitched together, somewhat roughly, with rusty needles left here and there in the

unfinished work. While one in Lena's position might seldom come in contact with this coarse underneathness of Beddington life, it was different for one like Mark. He was likely to find himself chafing against its seamy side, or even to get his fingers pricked and torn by the embedded needles. He must take life as he found it on his own level of work and experience.

He worked four weeks on the boom before making his second visit to the town. It was a Saturday afternoon and he went down in one of the company's tug-boats that was running light. He arrived at five o'clock. He had twenty-four dollars in his pocket.

He had decided how the money was to be laid out. Fourteen dollars for a suit of clothes ; four dollars for a pair of shoes ; shaving outfit, a dollar and a half. He could then buy a pair of gloves for Darlin' dear and a pound of tobacco for O'Leary. He had all his money in one dollar bills and it made a goodly looking pile. It felt good to his fingers. The crackle of the crisp notes made pleasant music as he handled them. He liked the smell of them. They had the aroma of ripe fruit, he thought.

Leaving the tug-boat, which landed him at the little wharf behind the town hall, his attention was immediately attracted by the declamations of a loud-voiced individual holding forth from an elevation on a soap box.

" Invest ! Invest ! If you never invest you'll never win ! " Mark paused on the outskirts of the little crowd that had gathered.

" It's all a matter of good judgment, gentlemen, good judgment and quick decision. I'm not asking you to trust me. I'm not to be trusted. I'm to be bested, if you can do it. I'm here to get the best of the game if I can. Sometimes I win, sometimes I lose. But I always come up smiling. I'm a dead game sport. Now, I suppose you can trust your own powers of observation. You've got your wits about you. I'll have you, if I can, that's sure. You'll do the same with me. It's man to man. If you invest, you may lose or you may win. I put the matter straight."

Mark was interested. This seemed a frank sort of rogue. He wondered if any of the crowd would be foolish

enough to part with his money. He drew nearer to the orator. Observing this, a serious and benevolent looking young man turned to him and whispered :

" Don't get trapped ! It's sleight of hand. A skin game. He'll fleece you every time. I think I've seen that scamp before."

Mark smiled and tossed his head.

" Oh, I know his sort. I'm up to the tricks. You may be sure I've got no money to throw away. I've worked for my bit."

The orator continued :

" Now, gentlemen, I hold in my hand a crisp new five dollar bill. Would any gentleman like to examine it to see that it's genuine? Would you, sir? " This to the serious looking young man who stood beside Mark.

" No, thank you ! I'm not interested."

The bill was extended to Mark. " Will you look at it, please? " Mark examined it carefully. He gave it as his opinion that the bill was genuine. He would like to have a hundred of them. The bill was then passed from hand to hand in the crowd and carefully scrutinised.

" Of course you know it's a good bill. If I was found with counterfeit money on me, I'd be liable to a long term in prison. There's a catch in this business, mebbe ; at least, you think so. But it has nothing to do with the genuineness of the money I show you. Now, I'm going to give somebody a chance to get in on the ground floor. Even the superior looking young gentleman who says he isn't interested will want to come in, I guess. Isn't that so, Your Highness? "

" No. I reckon it's a skin game and that you're a fraud. Nobody here will get anything out of you."

" You hear him, gentlemen. Well, I guess it's worth five dollars to me to prove him a liar. Now, observe ! I fold this bill up so. I place it in this little cardboard box. And now I stand well away, with my hands behind my back. I'm going to auction off that five dollar bill."

He of the serious countenance whispered to Mark.

" There's no bill in that box now, you may be sure. He flicked it up his sleeve."

" What's that you're saying, Mister? "

"I say there's no five dollar bill in that box."

"Well, just open it and see!"

"Not I! I'll have nothing to do with you."

Then the crowd spoke up.

"Fair play! Fair play! Open the box! Prove your statement!"

Pressed by the crowd he reluctantly and slowly opened the box. There lay the five dollar bill.

The entertainer was jubilant.

"How now, Smarty? What have you got to say for yourself?"

"I was mistaken."

"Well, put the bill back! Ah! I don't wonder you sneak away. Let him pass, gentlemen! He's a mully-grub. If I come across him after I've finished this entertainment, I'll spoil his face. Now then, gentlemen, you've noticed that I haven't been near that little box since the money was put into it. How much am I offered for it? Who says two dollars?"

"Here!" A man shouldered forward.

"Any advance on two dollars?"

"Three!" said Mark.

"Three dollars! Three! Three! I'm offered three! Who says three fifty?"

"Fifty!" shouted the competitor. "Four!" said Mark.

"All done at four dollars? Going, once! Going, twice! Three times, and *sold!*"

Mark counted out four dollars and handed them over. Then he took the box and opened it. It contained a worthless piece of brown paper.

The entertainer leaned forward and looked.

"Well, I'm damned! That son of a gun who sneaked away has tricked the lot of us."

Boiling with fury Mark pushed his way through the crowd and hurried off. Striking into Queen Street, he had proceeded half a block when he espied his neighbour of the thoughtful mien. He leaped forward and seized him by the shoulder.

"Here, you skunk! Hand me over four dollars, or I'll choke the life out of you!"

For answer he got a stinging blow in the face. The next instant they were fighting furiously. They clinched and rolled over each other on the ground. A crowd rushed to the scene. There were shouts for the police. Presently an officer strode through the crowd.

"Here, nail this chap! He asaulted the other man and tried to pinch his money!"

The officer laid hold of Mark. Meanwhile the other party to the altercation slipped through the crowd and vanished from view.

A second burly policeman now shouldered his way forward, pushing the by-standers to right and left. He also laid hold of Mark.

"Guess we've got a proper crook this time," said his brother constable. "Assault and attempted robbery! Watch him! He may have a gun."

"Look here, you fool coppers," cried Mark in exasperation. "You've got the wrong man! I've been tricked and robbed. Get after that thimble-rigger! Hi! Stop twisting my wrists! O, you . . . !"

He drove out a foot and tripped one of the policemen, bringing him to the ground. With a mighty wrench he tore himself free from the clutch of the other and struck him a smashing blow that sent his helmet flying and raised a ridge over his eye. For some minutes he fought like a tiger, but the officers were both able bodied men and Mark was at length overpowered. Bruised and bleeding he was led away to the lock-up.

XI

For an hour or more Janet had been endeavouring, with but indifferent success, to conceal the uneasiness of her mind. She could now no longer endure the strain of silence.

"Isn't he very late, Michael? It's past ten."

"Shure, and ye don't need to worry, Darlin' dear; he'll be comin' along presently. No doubt he's spendin' the evenin' with Doug, and the two of 'em will have a lot to talk about. Time flies fast when two lively young people get together. Begorra, it's the handsome lad he'll be lookin' to-night with his new togs on. I'm hopin' Charles Durston gets a view of him in his brave array. He'll be here now in a few minutes."

Half-an-hour later Janet placed on the table a dish of strawberries and a jug of cream. Following these, buttered bread and cake.

"Faith, and he'll be hungry by the time he gets here. I'm not wantin' him to wait for his little snack. Ye're not doubtin' he'll be here soon?"

O'Leary, in truth, was anxious. He had been racking his brain for some theory that would satisfactorily account for the delay. As yet he had not been able to hit upon one. But that was no reason why Darlin' dear should be distressed.

"Begorra, I'm not doubtin' that at all at all. He'll come flashin' in here now in two ticks. Most likely he went out in a canoe with Doug. They'll be paddlin' up. Shure, it's a fine summer's evenin' and the light isn't much more than out of the sky."

"Ye're not after thinkin' he'll mebbe stay in the town all night?"

He was about to flout the idea when he suddenly received a message from that portion of his brain where caution held its seat.

"Shure now, that's an idea. It's plain they'll be pressin' him to stay, and how could he refuse? To spend a night in a home like that will be something for him to remember. It'll be a little pleasure for him and a bit of education in a way. If he isn't here in another quarter of an hour, it's there he is, and we'll be seein' him to-morrow."

Janet sighed.

"I . . . I was thinkin', Michael, that he'd mebbe *hurry* home to-night."

"Why should he hurry, Darlin' dear?"

"He knew what pleasure we'd have in viewin' his new splendour and joy. He's got a heart and . . . imagination. Mebbe he's met with some hurt."

"There ye are now, ye little fuss-budget! Ye forget he's a man and well able to look after himself. But I'll just be steppin' down to the river to see if there's anny sign of a canoe comin' up the stream."

There was a canoe on the way but it was making slow progress. Well, that was not to be wondered at. Engrossed in their conversation, the lads would grow slack in their paddling. Young fellows like them were apt to be unconscious of the flight of time. As for himself, he could enjoy sitting here in the cool by the river for an hour or two. It was a place for calm and quiet meditation. But he wished he had told Darlin' dear to go to bed.

The canoe advanced and at length drew abreast of him. It passed on, up the stream.

It was within half-an-hour of midnight when he reached home again.

"Darlin' dear, it must be as you said. They're keepin' him at The Elms to-night. Ye'll just be gettin' to bed now. It's good-night and happy dreams!"

All the next day they waited for him. He would likely be home by noon. Then O'Leary remembered that the Durstons rose late on Sunday mornings. They were careless about early Mass. They also made a good deal of their Sunday dinner. They would want Mark to stay for that. He would be along some time in the afternoon.

. . . For supper at the latest. . . . Before bedtime in any conceivable case. . . .

Intense but suppressed excitement now reigned in the O'Leary household.

Even Florine had caught the infection and was showing signs of perturbation.

"De Mark feller no come back some more, yes? Mebbe heem be seek, das so? Me do some ting? Me go some place and mak' de ask for heem?"

Janet administered a mild rebuke and sent the girl to bed. Then she said:

"Michael, he's not been to Beddington at all. They'd not be after keepin' him all this time, and he wouldn't be after stayin'. He's never left the boom. He's up there now, sick or hurt. Mebbe there was something in the food that didn't agree with him, or he's sprained his ankle or broke his leg. Shure, and he's always boundin' about and eager to do two men's work, the darlin'! It's at the boom he is."

O'Leary slapped his hands together.

"Begorra, it's the brainy woman ye are! Ye've solved the riddle entirely. But I'm not thinkin' he's hurt at all at all. It's most likely they've been workin' today. I should have been thinkin' of that before. They sometimes work on a Sunday when a late order comes in for a special raft. Faith, that's just what's been happenin'. While we've been fussin' about him he's just been goin' on with his work. I'll be for drivin' up to the boom in the mornin' and make sure he's there, just to relieve your anxiety, Darlin' dear. So now ye can be gettin' to bed with an easy mind. Shure ye've been givin' yourself unnecessary trouble."

After Janet had retired, O'Leary sat long in deep and troubled thought. It hurt him to think that he had not been frank with Janet. He had endeavoured to disguise from her the real state of his feelings. He had tried to deceive her. He had no confidence in his theory regarding Sunday work and he was persuaded that she placed no reliance upon it. Granting the theory was sound, there were the two long summer evenings at Mark's disposal. The distance would be nothing if he had the wish

to come. He felt certain Mark would want to come. There could be no mistaking those signs of his affection. Something serious had undoubtedly transpired. But what? He could not be dangerously ill or injured, for if such a thing had happened the boom boss would have notified him. It was a mystery.

At length his thoughts turned in upon himself. He pursued a ruthless enquiry into his own spiritual condition. Was it right for him to be so deeply engrossed in this young man whom chance had thrown in his way? Why had he been so strongly yearning over and delighting in him? Why had his heart clutched at him so eagerly? Was it the repressed paternal instinct asserting itself? Clearly it was that. The thought of standing as a father to Mark had brought him a sweeter satisfaction than he had ever known before. It opened up a vista of bright hopes, pleasant plans and dear delights. It filled an aching void in his heart.

But why should there be any aching void in the heart of one who had consecrated his life to the service of the Church? What right had he to be yearning for the functions of fatherhood other than those which legitimately came to him along the line of his calling as a Father in God? Had he been indulging unlawful desires and tasting forbidden sweets? Had he been unfaithful to his priestly vows and renunciations?

These questions tortured him. He feared that he had been enticed and led astray by the wiles of the Evil One. What he had been regarding as a good gift of God now appeared as an enticement of the flesh and the devil. He was in danger of losing his soul by feeding his hungry heart on food not meant for him. The very hunger of his heart was in itself a condemnation.

He could now see that he had been prompted by unholy motives. True, he had been moved by pity and love; but it was merely a natural pity and a most human sort of love. Examining his aims, he found them unworthy of a priest. His love had been seeking a return in kind. It lacked the pure spiritual quality it ought to bear. The youth was a heretic. He was outside the fold. Yet he had not consciously coveted him for Mother Church. He

had laid no plans for his conversion from Protestantism. He had only been thinking how delightful it would be to see Mark developing his powers, achieving a prosperous and happy life and always returning him a son's affection. It all branded him as a carnal and a sinful priest. He had been untrue to his trust. He was an unprofitable servant.

Softly he stepped forth into the cool night air. Noiselessly he made his way to the little church now enveloped in stillness and darkness. With trembling awe he entered. A single faint spot of light told where the candle was burning on the altar. Slowly he felt his way to where the image of The Virgin stood. There he knelt and prayed.

For a time he offered the prayers prescribed by the Church. He recited the rosary with its fifteen mysteries, the pageant of Our Lord's whole earthly life, beginning with the Incarnation and ending with the coronation of His Mother in heaven. But no comfort visited his troubled soul. Then he prayed from his heart:

"Mother of God, be pleased to help me, for it's deeply distressed and perplexed I am. . . . Shure, and he came to me lookin' all pure and sweet from God's own shinin' river. . . . It was from me very feet he looked up into me face and smiled. . . . It's confessin' I am that I want him for me own, me very own. . . . I want him for me son. . . . Mother of Jesu, ye knew the love of a son. . . . Be pleased to intercede for me! . . . It's confessin' I am that all this day I've gone about me priestly work without puttin' anny soul into it at all at all. . . . All day me heart has been as a stone because the boy came not again. . . . Och, it's a mighty love that has come into me life. . . . Must I tear it from me heart? . . . Is it not anny way possible to sanctify it and make it an instrument of spiritual service? Shure, and I'll seek to win him for the Church. . . . Night and day I'll be prayin' he may become a good Catholic. . . . I'll be seekin' to subject me own sinful heart to the high claims of The Redeemer. . . . Peccavi! Peccavi! . . . I've sinned in seekin' me own joy before the honour of

the King of Heaven. . . . Be pleased to visit the punishment on me and spare the lad! Mother of God, have guard of him this night!"

Long he knelt there in the stillness and the coolness and the darkness, his vast frame quivering with emotion, his eyes fixed in rapt adoration upon the Virgin's face. Then suddenly . . . strange things happened. The little chapel was filled with light. . . . There came upon him the sense of joyous peace. . . . The picture of the Mother of God became alive. With a sovereign clearness which vividly impressed itself upon his soul, a smile arose into her eyes and the red lips began to move. Whether it was only an optical illusion induced by gazing so long and fixedly at the picture, or whether the priest had fallen into a mystical trance—which visited him sometimes in ecstatic hours—the vision he beheld seemed to be endowed with all the characteristics of reality. The Virgin's lips were moving.

Then she spoke. . . . Soft whispers crept into the verge of his consciousness and mingled with the operations of his understanding. The words, at first low and indistinguishable, gradually became full toned and distinct until at last they fell upon his ears in cadences of sweetest music. Perhaps, like "the divine sign" of Socrates, the rational suggestions of O'Leary's brain were projected without and then returned to him again through the outward ear; but to *him* it was the voice of divine inspiration, "the voice unbroken that resounds throughout the centuries, exempt from change, from sin exempt, the seven sounds in one. . . ."

"Canst thou suffer for him thou wouldest love? Canst thou bear pain and shame for him? Canst thou receive a sword through thy soul? Canst thou believe in him thou lovest when men revile him? Canst thou cleave to him when others forsake him?"

Tears were now raining down O'Leary's face.

"Mother of God, thou knowest. Give me the baptism! Pass me the cup! Let the sword smite!"

The eyes of the Virgin were now lustrous with heavenly radiance. Her lips were bedewed with glistening grace. Her voice was vibrant with caressing tenderness.

" Cease from thy doubts and fears, lover of my Son! Let thy heart be at rest in its strong resolve! In such love as thine is priestly service. Walk by faith and not by sight, so in the end shall come to thee a full reward."

Then the light slowly faded from the eyes, the lips, the face of the Virgin. All was darkness and silence.

When at length O'Leary left the Church,

> " Morn, in the white wake of the morning star,
> Came furrowing all the orient into gold."

XII

Few words passed between mother and son when O'Leary returned from his visit to the boom. Neither of them could find material for much conversation, nor were they in mood to pursue it. Each could see that the other was hard hit. The priest simply put his hand on her head and said, with quivering lips :

" Darlin' dear, it's a happy man I've always been and always must be in havin' such a woman for me mother."

She replied :

" Shure, and it's never a trouble I'll be knowin' at all at all, while God leaves me me own Michael. Would ye be likin' your dinner soon? "

" If ye please, Darlin' dear, and then mebbe I'll just be after takin' a little drive to Beddington. I'll put a few things in a bag in case annything should prevent me from gettin' back to-night."

He drove into town and left his horse at the stables in connection with the Parker House Hotel. Then he walked up to The Elms. Glancing through a window he noticed a number of patients in the doctor's waiting room. He passed on around the house and to the lawn. Doug was taking his ease in a hammock slung between the cedars.

" Good day, Father O'Leary ! How's everything? You're quite a stranger. How's your mother, and how's Mark getting on? "

" Shure, the little mother is in excellent health and spirits, and Mark's doin' fine."

" I thought perhaps I should see something of him on Saturday afternoon. I understood he was coming down to do some shopping. But I suppose he wanted to hurry back to Otnaby to show off his new togs. No blame to him, but I was rather disappointed. Won't you have a

seat? Father will probably be at liberty in half-an-hour. I believe mother is resting at the moment."

"Shure now and if ye'll excuse me, I've just thought of something I must be attendin' to immediate. Begorra, I wonder if I'll ever learn to let me head save me heels! I'm always just muddlin' along with never sense enough to put me sober second thoughts first. It's a thought that's just occurred to me that's takin' me away so abrupt. Ye'll give me regards to the family and I'll doubtless be callin' again before long."

Ah! So nothing was known at The Elms. Well, they should learn nothing from him, at least not for a while yet.

He had not an idea in his head as to what his next move should be, but he profoundly believed that The Blessed Virgin would give him guidance as the need for it arose. He must bide her time.

He turned his steps towards the hotel. Presently he heard a newsboy shouting:

"*Argus! Argus!* All about the big fight!"

O'Leary was not a man to hear a call like that unmoved. Notwithstanding all the perplexity and misgiving with which his mind was burdened, it leapt to that call as a lusty trout might leap to an angler's fly. He stopped and bought a paper. Then he quickened his steps towards the hotel. He would reserve this juicy morsel for consumption at his leisure in the quiet of the smoking parlour. A moment later, he stretched himself out in an easy chair and opened up his copy of *The Argus*.

On the front page, in glaring headlines, he read:

SATURDAY EVENING BRAWL IN QUEEN STREET!
POLICE ROUGHLY HANDLED!
WHO IS MARK WOODBURN?

O'Leary bolted upright and stared at the lines. His eyes blazed. The leaping fire in them threatened to burn holes through the paper.

He continued his reading.

"About six o'clock on Saturday evening, the usual quietude of the town was disturbed by a disgraceful brawl in Queen Street. The affair would have done discredit to a shack town in some mining district of the wild and woolly West.

" THE INSTIGATOR OF THE TROUBLE

was a powerfully built young fellow who refused to give his name to the police, but who told the Magistrate this morning that he went by the name of Mark Woodburn.

" It seems that Woodburn attacked a stranger and demanded money from him. Unfortunately for the ends of justice, the unknown person assaulted laid no charge, and, indeed, has not since been identified. Our reporter learns that he pluckily showed fight and managed to defend his property until the arrival of the police. Woodburn

VIOLENTLY RESISTED ARREST,

viciously kicking Constable Knight, and striking Constable Cochrane, who at the police court this morning displayed a badly swollen and blackened eye.

" When brought before Stipendary Black, the prisoner pleaded that he had been swindled out of four dollars by the man he attacked, whom he declared to be a thimble-rigger working a fraudulent sleight-of-hand trick in conjunction with a confederate.

" Questioned regarding his recent movements, the prisoner claimed that he had been working for the Beddington Boom Company during the last four weeks, but prior to that had

NO FIXED PLACE OF ABODE.

He was sternly reprimanded by Stipendary Black, who imposed a fine of twenty dollars with the alternative of two months in jail. To the evident surprise of the Magistrate, the prisoner promptly paid the fine and immediately hastened from the Court.

" The sentence was an exemplary one, for while a certain amount of sympathy was felt for the accused on the supposition that his story was true, young wild bloods of his type must learn that they cannot be allowed to take the law into their own hands when they have suffered the loss of money through their own folly. They must learn that to create a breach of the peace is

A SERIOUS OFFENCE,

while to resist arrest and attack the officers of the law in the discharge of their duty, calls for condign punishment."

O'Leary laid aside the paper and gave himself for a moment to quiet thought. Four and twenty dollars!

Mark would not have a penny left. And where was he now? What must his feelings be? What his next move? He could not have gone back to the boom, for in that case he would have gone by way of Otnaby. Well, he must interview the police.

He waited an hour at the police station before getting into touch with Sergeant Needham. Then he plunged at once to the heart of his business.

"It's about the young man Woodburn I'm askin'. Can ye be tellin' me annything of his movements since the Magistrate relieved him of twenty dollars and left him without a cent to buy a crust of bread? Shure, and it's distressed I am for him, seein' he's a member of me household and one that I'm practically adoptin' for me son. Do ye know what direction he's been takin'?"

"Indeed, I'm sorry it means trouble for you, Father O'Leary. We had no hint of that. He told us he had no friends or acquaintances in these parts except the men he worked with on the boom. But I fear you've taken up with a wrong one. We have strong suspicion that he has a bad past, in fact that he is one of the most dangerous young criminals in the country. He corresponds quite closely to descriptions we have of a certain Buck Greenwood, who lately completed a two years sentence for house-breaking. With that in mind, we had him watched, and learn that he has gone down by the river road, evidently on his way to St. John. We're relieved that he didn't go back to the boom."

"Buck Greenwood, was ye sayin'? He's Mark Woodburn, I'm tellin' ye, and no other. I'll listen to no slander of him. Faith, and would ye blacken the character of me poor unfortunate boy simply because he tried to get back his hard earned money that had been stolen from him by a pair of sharks? And ye let them same sharks go scott free! Begorra, ye strain at a gnat and gulp down a camel hoof and hump! Ye can have no idea what his twenty-four dollars meant to him. Och, they meant visions of joy! And all Saturday night I waited for him! And all day Sunday! And all Sunday night! And him here in your stinkin' cell! I'm tellin' ye now, he's a fine fellow with the makins of a noble man in him. What

young man with anny spirit in him wouldn't have tackled the scoundrel that fleeced him of his earnins? Begorra, I'd have done it meself like a shot when I was his age. And so would ye. It's hard treatment he's been gettin'. Twenty dollars fine for protectin' his own right! I'm callin' it outrageous! It's a good way of makin' criminals out of honest youths."

"Well, Your Reverence, I hope you're right in claiming he's not a criminal. But we know he's been a tramp and we know he's a liar. You know it too."

"Meanin' that he lied when he said he had no friends in these parts? Shure, and 'twas an honourable lie and wholly to his credit. It was a courageous lie. He told that good brave lie thinkin' to save me and others from sharin' his disgrace. He was willing to bear it all alone. He was willing to forfeit everything, all his new standin' and fine chances for the sake of protectin' us from anny trouble or disgrace through him. Mother of God, I love him for that lie! It's nobler in its essence than anny truth ye may have been tellin' me since I stepped into this place."

"But that was not the only lie he told. He said the police twisted his wrists."

"Och, and how are ye knowin' that was a lie? Shure, I can see plain it was the truth, the shameful truth. It accounts for the way he behaved towards them two big ruffians that mishandled him. Begorra, if I had 'em here I'd knock the two pates of 'em together this blessed minute. I'd teach 'em to twist me poor lad's wrists, and mebbe make him incapable of doin' anny work before he starved to death! Ye know right well they twisted his wrists, and ye're not to be sayin' annything different to me! D'ye hear? They twisted his wrists, didn't they?"

The Sergeant looked around the office.

"I don't know what ye're after lookin' for," continued O'Leary, "but ye'll just be tellin' me for the peace of your mind that's it likely the police did twist his wrists."

There was a look in O'Leary's eyes as he stood there towering above him that the Sergeant did not like.

"Well, they may have done so. I wasn't there. I

didn't see what went on. But they deny having done it."

"Then it's two liars they are. In anny case ye'll be after takin' back what ye said about me lad havin' lied against 'em, and about his bein' somebody else than himself."

"Yes, certainly, Your Reverence. . . . I can't prove it against him."

"Shure now, and it just amounts to this. The police arrested an angry lad, righteously angry because he had been swindled, while they let the real culprit go. Indeed, they let two dangerous blood-sucking sharks escape for the sake of twistin' the wrists of an honest hard-workin' youth, and seein' the Magistrate take twenty dollars from him and fling him out upon the world penniless, heartbroken and besmirched! Och, it's a fine bunch ye are to call yourselves protectors of the peace and safety of the citizens!"

With that the priest strode forth.

XIII

In front of the hotel O'Leary was accosted by Doctor Charles Durston. At that particular moment he would sooner have met the devil, but he could see no way of escape from the ordeal.

"I say, Michael, I've been looking for you all over. Doug told me you had called. I thought I should find you here if I hung about long enough. I want to talk with you. Shall we go into the smoking room?"

Selecting a quiet corner of the room, Durston produced a case of cigars. Then he began to talk in what, to O'Leary, seemed a most mysterious fashion.

"I fear you must be thinking badly of Madge and me for not calling sooner to see you and Mark. We've planned to drive up on a Sunday when we could catch you both at home, but each Sunday since the affair occurred I've been nailed down close with special work. You must think we're an ungrateful pair of wretches."

O'Leary wrinkled his forehead in perplexity.

"Affair?" he said. "What affair? I'm not quite followin' the thread of your discourse."

"The affair at the boom, of course. I hope you won't think we're capable of taking a matter like that lightly. I can assure you we have taken it tremendously to heart. Heavens, man! Every time I look at Lena I get a lump in my throat. Madge does a little weep almost every time his name is mentioned, which is pretty often."

For a moment O'Leary was speechless with wonder.

"Whose name have ye in mind, may I ask?"

"Don't pose, Michael! Mark's name, of course."

"Shure, and it's all Greek to me that ye're talkin', Charles. I don't know of anny affair at the boom. Mebbe ye'll be good enough to elucidate your remarks so as to bring them within the range of me comprehension."

It was now Durston's turn to gape with amazement.

"You're surely not telling me that you don't know

about Mark saving Lena's life that Saturday afternoon when the young folks paddled up to the boom?"

"Faith, and I've never heard a syllable about it from anny livin' bein'."

"By Jove! That's the limit! Well, I'm smothered!"

"It's true what I'm telling ye, Charles. It's not a word I've heard of anny such matter."

Durston looked at him long and earnestly: looked till his eyes became blurred with mist.

"Didn't he come home wet? Didn't you know he'd been in the river?"

"Shure, and I could see that same, but I thought little of it. When I mentioned the matter to him he laughingly said he'd been larkin' on the logs and got a duckin'. But then, ye'll be expectin' a mere waif and nobody like him to be queer. He's probably *inherited* something in the way of a *streak.*"

"Listen, Michael! Lena was larking on the logs and fell in. The current swept her under the boom. God! It makes my blood run cold to think of it! He dived in after her and brought her out. Not more than a man in a million could have done it. She is there at home now, warm and breathing and beautiful instead of rotting in the bed of the river, because of what he did."

O'Leary turned his head away and passed a hand over his eyes. Presently he remarked: "Shure, that's quite an interestin' story, Charles."

"We . . . want him to have a little token of our appreciation," continued Durston. "I've bought a gold watch for him, Michael, as good a one as I could find, and I hope it will last him his lifetime. We want to consult you about the inscription."

The priest's face hardened.

"Shure, and ye can just be sendin' the watch back where ye got it, or be givin' it to Doug! Mark wouldn't have it."

"Good Lord! Wouldn't any young fellow be pleased with a thing like that and prize it?"

"Ye're forgettin', Charles, that me lad isn't like others. He's *inherited* a *streak* of something . . . a streak of *pride.*"

"Oh, rub it in! Rub it in! I can stand it! But he'll take it to please you, if not to please us."

"He wouldn't take it even if I gave me consent."

"Do you mean that you would not consent?"

"Ye've grasped me meanin' entirely. Ye always was a man of quick perception, Charles. And now I'll just be askin': Have ye seen to-day's *Argus?*"

"Not yet. I don't bother with it till the evening, and not often then."

O'Leary drew the paper from his pocket and spread it out. "Mebbe ye'll oblige me by readin' that and tellin' me what ye think of it before there's anny more talk about presentin' Mark Woodburn with gold watches."

As his glance fell upon the headlines of the article which O'Leary had indicated with his finger, Durston uttered an exclamation of surprise. He clutched the paper and held it stiffly before him. His face flushed as he proceeded, but he made no word of comment until the reading was finished.

Then he blazed out with:

"It's a nasty knock for him. I . . . I'll soak Black for this!"

There was a hard note in O'Leary's voice as he asked:

"Would ye be for givin' Mark a gold watch now?"

"Confound you, Michael, what do you take me for? Certainly! A gold watch with a gold chain added to it! When you sift this thing out there's nothing much here against the lad except the damned lie near the beginning."

"And at what point do ye think the article lies?"

"Where it suggests that he tried to rob a man. Of course he didn't do that. It's plain to be seen he had himself been robbed and was only trying to get his own back."

"Ye feel certain about that, do ye?"

"Why, of course! He isn't a lunatic. As for resisting and attacking the police—well—what of it? A bit foolish, of course, but only natural for a high spirited youth who had been more sinned against than sinning. Like enough they were rough with him."

"They twisted his wrists, Charles."

"No doubt. But how is he taking it? Feeling pretty blue, I guess. By the way, where is he?"

"As near as I can make out he's somewhere between here and St. John, legging it for all he's worth to hide himself away from the sight of us all."

"You don't mean to say you haven't seen him! Didn't he send for you?"

"Faith, and the first knowledge I had of the affair was from that same paper. He was in the hands of the police from Saturday afternoon till this mornin', and then old Black turned him adrift without a cent in his pocket and nothin' to stand between him and starvation except a bruised face, a pair of swollen wrists, and a broken heart. A broken heart, Charles! Have ye got annything in your surgery that can heal a broken heart? I reckon it takes a powerful medicine."

"Why the blazes didn't he tell the police to send for me? I'd have gone bail for him in a minute and taken him home."

"Same old reason; he's evidently *inherited* something."

"Oh, cut that out! Don't be tiresome and hateful! I'm not thinking now of what he's inherited, but what he's *merited*. But, of course, we shan't let him slip away like this. We'll go after him and bring him back."

"Ye're partly right, Charles. *I'm* goin' after him, right now. One of us is enough for that job."

O'Leary touched a bell and the hotel porter appeared.

"Be pleased to have me pony hitched and brought to the front immediate!"

"I'd like to go with you, Michael. I think I ought to go. After all, I'm the one who's under obligation to him. You don't owe him anything. It's all the other way about between him and you."

"Faith, and ye know nothin' of that at all at all. Ye'll leave the bringin' of him back to me!"

"But you may need my help. Two heads are better than one, even if one of them is a sheep's head."

"I'll not be huntin' him entirely with me head. It's the cords of me heart he'll be pullin' on continuous. I'm not goin' to miss him. Mother of God, I'll hunt him through the livin' world!"

Durston gently touched a hand of the priest.

"Good old Michael! It's worth a young fellow's while to get into a scrape like this just for the joy of having the Priest of Otnaby go after him and bring him back. He's a lucky young dog. But wait a minute! I want to scribble a few words for you to look at before you leave."

Procuring pen and paper he rapidly wrote:

"Editor *Argus*.

"Sir,

"In to-day's issue of your esteemed paper, you ask in large display type

"WHO IS MARK WOODBURN?

"I beg leave to furnish you with a little information on the point. Mark Woodburn is an honest hard-working young man, now employed by The Kingsclear Boom Company. Some three weeks ago MARK WOODBURN SAVED MY DAUGHTER FROM DROWNING AT THE VERY GREATEST RISK TO HIS OWN LIFE.

"On Saturday afternoon MARK WOODBURN WAS ROBBED IN BEDDINGTON BY A GANG OF SWINDLERS, WHO MANAGED TO EVADE ARREST BY OUR INTELLIGENT AND EFFICIENT POLICE.

"I deeply regret that I did not know of his recent trouble till now, when I learn that our esteemed Stipendary—hoping, no doubt, to protect him against future trouble from swindlers—relieved him of the last penny of his earnings.

"Believe me to be, sir,

"MARK WOODBURN'S GRATEFUL FRIEND AND ADMIRER,

"CHARLES DURSTON.

"The Elms,

"Beddington,

"July 23rd."

He passed the paper to O'Leary. As the priest read it a mist came into his eyes.

"Charles," he said, when he had concluded the reading, "I never thought ye had much of a head on ye but I always knew ye had a heart. Shure, I've often worried to see ye so careless about your religious duties. Seldom goin' to Mass and never to Confession, ye'll not be makin' a saint. But begorra, ye're something of a man! Faith, now, and I'll just be movin' on."

XIV

At Potanic, ten miles down the river, O'Leary got his first tidings of the fugitive. It was the postmaster who gave him the information.

"Yes, he was here. Left about two hours ago. Jove! He was a chromo. Looked as if he'd been drawn through a knot-hole and beat with a soot-bag. Said he'd been in a fight. Had a pleasant voice and nice eyes. Lovely smile, too. Asked if I could put him in the way of earning a bite to eat. Willing to saw wood, clean out stables, or do anything. Didn't have any work for him."

"But ye'd be after givin' him a bite to eat, all the same, I'm thinkin'?"

"I offered it to him but he wouldn't have it. Said he wasn't no beggar. Claimed he'd starve to death before he'd take charity from anybody. Queerest fish I ever seen. Couldn't git him to take even a glass of milk. So he's known to Your Reverence?"

"Yes, he's one I'm takin' a deep interest in. He's had a bit of hard luck and taken it overmuch to heart. But he'll soon be all right now and not lackin' for annything at all at all. I'll just be movin' on and thank ye!"

A few miles further on O'Leary met the mail driver, who reported that he had seen one answering the description.

"He was just going through the grove at The Narrows, about a mile beyond Oadby. I should think you'd overhaul him somewhere about Grafton."

This proved to be a fairly accurate guess. Mark was two miles beyond Grafton and twenty-three miles below Beddington when he was overtaken. He had not troubled to turn his head at the sound of the approaching vehicle. It was immediately beside him before he glanced up. His face blanched.

" Me son, ye're travellin' in the wrong direction. Shure, and this isn't the way *home* to Otnaby and to *Darlin' dear.* Ye'll just be after correctin' that mistake now and gettin' up here beside me in the buggy! Whoa! Back, Dolly! All aboard, me son!"

" Oh, Father O'Leary, I can't go back there any more! You . . . you . . . do you know what's happened?"

" Shure, and I know all about it. I know ye're comin' back with me, if I have to take ye by main force. I'm hopin' ye won't make it necessary for me to take ye by the scruff of the neck and the slack of the breeches. Och, if ye're goin' to be troublesome, I'll make short work of ye. I'll put ye aboard here and sit on ye. I'm thinkin' the gentle pressure may squeeze some of the pride and rebellion out of ye. Up ye come!"

" I . . . I'm sorry, but . . . I can't."

" No doubt ye're feelin' a bit weary with your walkin' and your fastin' all the day, but ye're not so spent as all that."

Mark was leaning over the wheel of the buggy looking up into O'Leary's face. The priest's hand was now resting on his shoulder.

" Father O'Leary, be merciful and let me go! I can't face what's back there. I'm disgraced. And just as everything seemed to be going so fine! I must try to start again where I'm not known. I'll never forget you as long as I live, nor dear old granny. I'll try to go straight, and mebbe some day I can come back and hold up my head and look you in the face."

" Och, ye young divil, and would ye be after arguin' with me and wastin' me precious time? Ye'll understand that me patience is exhausted and that Dolly's head is turned towards home. *Come on here!*"

He tightened his grip and gave a mighty pull. The one movement of his arm was enough to lift Mark bodily over the wheel and lay him across the floor of the buggy.

" Now then, ye headstrong young divil, will ye be for sittin' beside me or under me? Ye can have a choice."

Mark looked up and smiled. Then he clambered to the seat. It seemed to him that by one movement of the

priest's arm all his troubles had been lifted and hurled away. In this company he could face the devil and all his angels. O'Leary's arm went around him. In a voice of infinite tenderness he said:

"It's good to get the feel of ye again, me son."

Mark put his face to his friend's shoulder for a minute. Then he sat up and smiled.

"I . . . I'll try to live it down, Father! Do you think they'll take me back on the boom again?"

"Shure, it's on the boom ye'll be goin' if the Durstons and O'Learys count for annything."

"Will the men look on me as a black sheep?"

"Shure, they'll be takin' ye for what ye are, no sheep at all at all, but a fiery young colt that mebbe needs a bit of breakin' in. And ye'll be patient and steady goin'. Ye'll keep thinkin' of Darlin' dear and all the people that's full of gratitude to ye and that's now busy puttin' all Beddington right regardin' the truth of your little fracas. Ye'll win through just fine and splendid. But tell me, did the coppers twist your wrists?"

Mark held them up. They were both puffed and black.

"Och, the spalpeens! But I'm thinkin' ye got one good swipe at Cochrane. Shure, and with anny kind of fair play ye'd trounce the pair of 'em."

"I shouldn't have struck him; I know that now. But I couldn't help it at the time. I was wild."

"If ye'd done anny less than ye did ye wouldn't be worth takin' back to Otnaby and Darlin' dear. Shure, it isn't anny barn-yard goslin' with a beak of wax that she wants squawkin' at her heels. She'll be proud of ye, with mebbe a little criticism of ye at the back of her mind regardin' your discretion."

They drove on quietly for a time, when Mark asked: "How did you get on the track of me, Father?"

"Shure, me son, it was The Blessed Virgin Herself that directed me. She's takin' a deep interest in our affairs. I've put ye under Her protection. I hope ye'll always be adorin' her, and bowin' the knee in reverence. It isn't anny harm can come to ye while ye keep faithful in sayin' your Hail Marys'."

"Father O'Leary, you forget that I'm a Protestant."

"I'm thinkin' that's only because your religious education has been neglected. It's not to be supposed that ye've thought deep into spiritual matters. Ye'll be welcomin' a little guidance. It's into the true fold ye'll want to be comin' now, along with your real friends, where ye can find all the strong helps ye need for the savin' of your soul."

"Do you think there's no salvation outside of your Church, Father?"

"I'm not goin' so far as to say that, me son. One might cross the Atlantic in a birch bark canoe, but it would be a hazardous adventure and a mighty foolish one when he could take passage on a twenty thousand ton ocean liner. I'm hopin' the best for them that go voyagin' in flimsy crafts over cold and stormy seas. Some of 'em may weather through. But shure it's faint and chilled and comfortless they must be feelin' all the way, and never anny sense of security at all at all. But here we are at Oadby. We'll speak more about these things later on. We'll feed the body now. First that which is natural and afterwards that which is spiritual. For shoulderin' along through this present evil world, man is what man eats. Whoa, Dolly!"

When asked about the possibility of obtaining supper, the proprietor of the Travellers' Rest remarked that the hour was late, and he could only give them something cold; bread and cheese, and perhaps some cuttings from a ham.

"Faith, and a nice pot of hot coffee would be worth half a dollar extra to us this evenin'. Would the half dollar be of anny use to ye?"

The proprietor grinned.

"You can have the coffee."

"Shure, and by that same token, it takes fire to do the coffee, doesn't it?"

"That is so."

"And that same fire and that same pot that's boilin' water for the coffee could be used for boilin' a few eggs, couldn't they?"

"I s'pose so."

"Shure, I can see ye're a man of excellent judgment.

Now if ye could find a dozen fresh eggs and put 'em in that pot of boilin' water, after ye've extracted the fluid ye'll be needin' for the coffee, I'm thinkin' the operation would be worth another extra dollar to us. Does it strike ye as a favourable proposition? "

"It does, rather. But I'm not sure if we have the hen fruit you require. I'll speak to my wife. Are you sure a dozen will be sufficient? There are two of you." The innkeeper smiled.

"We'll make 'em do under the adverse circumstances. We don't go in for heavy feedin' so late in the day. All we require is a bit to stay our stomachs till we get home."

A moment later the landlord's wife appeared. She was a youngish and comely woman, with a twinkle in her eye.

"I'm sorry, Your Reverence, but we can only find ten eggs. Will they be of any use to you? "

"Shure, they're worth a good honest dollar bill to us. And seein' ye're so agreeable about the boilin' of 'em, they'll be all the more enjoyable and wholesome. It's a little thoughtfulness we'd like to be showin' ye in return, so, to save litterin' your room, we'll be satisfied with a table out on the verandah."

The verandah looked out upon the river, now a broad band of silver in the moonlight. It was a hot July evening. Myriads of fireflies whirled and twinkled through the sluggish air. From a neighbouring pine grove came the clear notes of a whip-poor-will. Out on the stream canoes could be seen, floating here and there, sometimes singly, sometimes in groups held together by paddles laid crosswise from one to another. Over the water sounded the strumming of guitars and mandolins, accompanied by snatches of song, interspersed with sudden bursts of laughter. Near the bank of the river, under the cover of spreading elms, a canoe sat in the shadow, while its occupants, oblivious to all the world, were beholding universes in each other's eyes.

O'Leary lit his pipe, stretched out his mighty limbs, and sighed with content.

"It's pleasant people one often finds, me son, in these village inns. Shure, the proprietor and his wife are a most accommodatin' couple. It's live and let live they

believe in, and a very good motto it is for all mankind."

"I can see they're out to live and to make a living," responded Mark.

O'Leary could not recall a time when the world seemed so beautiful to him as it did that evening. As he lounged there on the little verandah puffing out great wreaths of smoke, his soul thrust forth its tentacles into a sea of joy. He sipped the wine of a shoreless ocean. The paternal instinct in him—lately so clamant and irrepressible—now revelled in new found contentment. Mark was his. Nothing could come between them any more. He was at rest. A deep peace brooded in his heart. No conflict now between his yearning for a human love and the love divine. He could be a father to Mark and a faithful priest as well. He had subordinated the one desire to the other. Everything was now in proper order and relation. His yearning for paternity was hallowed by virtue of its absorption into the passionate desire and determination to fulfil towards Mark the functions of a true Father in God. The Blessed Virgin approved. All was well. Yes, everything now was the best possible in the best possible of worlds.

He doubted not that he would be able to lead Mark into the true fold. The lad's ideas on religion and the Church must as yet be largely unformed. They would be light and wandering ideas. They would lack substance and coherence. They would rest on flimsy foundations. What a joy it would be to give them definite form and compactness and symmetry! To mould them into the ordered beauty of the Holy Catholic creed! To touch them into vividness and warm them with the spirit of devotion!

In this whole matter The Almighty had been wondrous kind to Michael O'Leary. He had committed a rich spiritual treasure to this rough earthen vessel. The treasure would sanctify the vessel. It would impart a new fragrance. It would clothe it with a new lustre. It would shine out through it with transfiguring splendour.

The path before him now looked smooth and pleasant, flower-fringed with delights. Mark was susceptible and responsive. Mark loved him. Mark would be the clay,

O'Leary would be the potter. The Master would accept the work and reward his servant.

And now the supper came on; half a ham, a loaf of bread, a batch of butter, a pot of steaming coffee, and the eggs. O'Leary took a plate, put five eggs on it and passed it over to Mark.

"Ye'll be on the square with me now and no foolin'! Get yourself outside them eggs with proper expedition!"

"Are these all I may have?" asked Mark with a smile.

"Shure, it's all I'm allowin' ye on this occasion. I set no limits to your excursions into the ham."

As the meal progressed, O'Leary's sense of satisfaction grew apace. He looked across at Mark and exclaimed:

"It's a bountiful world, me son, and a beautiful one. Hark! Do you hear the whip-poor-will? . . . And do ye see the fireflies? . . . And the silver river? . . . And the glidin' canoes? . . . Are ye hearin' all the sounds of mirth and gladness? . . . Shure, and it's music and dancin' we're after havin' to grace our banquet! It's an orchestra an' an illumination that's provided free for our entertainment! Och, it's a beautiful world!"

Here the landlady appeared with a huge bowl of strawberries and a jug of cream.

"Shure, and it's the lovely lady ye are entirely! May ye ever have the Kingdom of Heaven in your heart and all the stars of the mornin' to sing to ye!"

She courtesied and smiled. As she left the verandah she touched her apron to her eyes.

O'Leary seized a fork and stabbed a mammoth strawberry. He held it aloft and turned it round and round.

"Faith, and it's a masterpiece! It's possible to believe that the Almighty could have made a lovelier thing, but it's certain he never did. The strawberry, me son, treads a path of glory from the cradle to the grave. It's lovely in the flower and luscious in the fruit. It's a delight to the eye, a pleasure to the nostril and a consolation to the palate. But, like all the sweet and precious things that are of the earth earthy it passes swiftly away. *Sic transit gloria mundi!*" He popped the berry into his mouth and smacked his lips.

It was done with such a mischievous twinkling of the eyes and such a humorous manipulation of the lips that Mark burst into loud laughter.

"Father O'Leary, you're a first class sport! I'm sure there can't be another man in the world like you."

The priest leaned towards him with a tender light glowing in his eyes.

"I trust ye're not thinkin' me over joyful this night. Shure, and it's a time to be merry."

He put out his hand and touched Mark on the knee. Then, dropping his voice to a whisper, he said:

"This my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

XV

Mark resumed his work on the boom and continued there until the end of October. He had a standing and pressing invitation to visit The Elms, but put in no appearance there until shortly before his departure for the winter in the bush.

He had accepted an invitation to supper. It was a simple meal. There were no servants in sight.

"You've been a long time getting here, Mark," said Doctor Durston, "but we're mighty glad to have you with us at last. We're not able to say what we feel about that affair at the boom, and we won't try. We just want you to know that while we're alive we are your folks, and this is to be as much a home to you as you care to make it. If only Doug was here now we should be quite the complete and happy family."

Mark did not disguise his pleasure in this kindly reception. He sat next to Mrs. Durston. She seemed to envelop him in an atmosphere of gracious motherhood.

Lena at first showed some embarrassment, but as the meal progressed she regained her usual easy manner.

She chatted with him about the boom and bush work. She talked about O'Leary and Darlin' dear.

"They'll be sad at parting with you, I know. It will be a long and dreary winter for them. But the Spring will come in due time."

"I'll be looking forward to the Spring, you may be sure. In fact, I look forward to everything. I'm keen for the Winter in the bush. I know it will be great. And then to come down with the drive! All the excitement and stir of the freshet and the tumbling logs! I dream about it all."

"That's the game!" said Doctor Durston. "I only wish I had my dream time back again. But you'll find

that they work the very in'ards out of their men up there. You must take care of your health. By the way, I've put up a packet for you. Come into the surgery and I'll explain its uses."

After half-an-hour in the Surgery, during which the Doctor explained the principles of first aid in cases of accident and illness, Mark joined Lena in the drawing room. She was waiting for him, evidently in an excited mood.

"Mark, I . . . I . . . I hope you understand something of what we feel here. We . . . we don't know what to do. Father wanted to give you something . . . something rather valuable. But . . . it didn't seem fitting."

"Good heavens, Lena, I should say not! Whew! It's mighty hot in here!"

He mopped his forehead, which was standing thick with drops of perspiration.

"Listen, Mark! I wouldn't let them do anything. I couldn't bear to think of anybody doing anything . . . as a return for what you did. Nothing . . . nothing in the world could be put on a level with that. But I . . . I want you to have something of mine . . . something that has no value . . . except that it . . . it carries my thoughts with it . . . my thoughts and my prayers for you. Will you take this little book with you to the bush? I . . . I should like you to keep it always."

It was a little morocco covered catholic prayer book. His face flushed with pleasure as he took the breviary from her hands. He opened it and slowly turned its pages.

"Of course, you know by heart every word it contains. It . . . it was only because it was mine . . . and I had used it . . . that I wanted you to have it," she explained.

"I shall prize it. I can't tell you how much I shall prize it. And it will be all new and interesting. I've never seen a book like this before. I notice it's a book of catholic prayers. I'm a Protestant, but it will be great to go through this and to know that it was yours.

Nothing could please me more. It's—it's kind of you to do this."

She stared at him aghast. It was some time before she could speak.

"But . . . but . . . I . . . I . . . took it for granted you were a Catholic. It never occurred to me that you could be anything else. Being like one of Father O'Leary's own family . . . I . . . I assumed that."

"Oh, it's all right, Lena! I'll enjoy the little book quite as much, perhaps more than if . . . if it was the other way with me."

Her face flushed and her head drooped.

"I've made a mistake, Mark. A stupid mistake. My prayer book can't mean anything to you. Please give it back! I'm so sorry!"

"No, please don't take that view of it! I shall love this little book. Every bit of it . . . from cover to cover. I shall respect it. I shall study it. I shall cherish it. I'd rather have it than anything else in the world that I can think of."

"Very well, Mark. And now, as many good wishes and prayers for you as there will be snow flakes on the ground!"

She gave him her hand for an instant and then left the room.

* * * * * *

That evening O'Leary and Janet were in tender mood.

"Shure, Darlin' dear, I'm feelin' for ye. It's the lonely woman ye'll be this winter, with never a sight of his face to cheer ye. And six months is a long time for ye to wait. I'm fearin' ye've mebbe set your heart too much upon him. Ye mustn't expect to be seein' him often after this. The big world will be callin' him away. He'll mebbe be forgettin' all about us in a year from now."

"Ye're only sayin' that for the sake of hearin' me contradict it. Well ye're knowin' he won't never forget. But it's yourself is the big baby over him and not me. *I've got a son of me own.*"

O'Leary glanced at her sharply.

"Shure, and what are ye meanin' by that, Darlin' dear?"

"Och, Michael, can't I always be seein' it in your eyes? Ye fuss about him like a woman over her first-born. But I'm glad ye can father him. It's just a bit of joy that's due to ye."

"Ye don't think it's anny sin then for . . . for me to feel fatherly to him?"

A deep flush spread over his face.

"Faith, and it'll be counted to your merit. It'll please the Blessed Mother of Our Lord."

"I'm glad ye think so, Darlin' dear. But he won't be needin' anny one to father him from now on. He's on his own feet, strong and independent. He can make his own way. It's always less and less advice he's needin' or carin' to take. He did most of his shoppin' by himself this afternoon."

"Hush, Michael! He's comin' down the stairs."

Mark entered with a parcel under his arm, which he proceeded to unroll upon the table. First he took out a red woollen sweater. It was thick and warm.

"Please, Granny, will you give this to Florine? She's not to know it came from me. It doesn't come from me now because I give it to you."

Janet turned to O'Leary.

"Saints preserve us! And what do ye think of that? Shure, the child must have it and she must be knowin' whose money bought it. But och, it'll turn her head entirely! Isn't it a beauty!" She held it up and stretched it out.

Mark next took up a smaller parcel wrapped in tissue paper. "This is for Darlin' dear with my love."

As he handed the parcel to her he put his arm around her and kissed her on the cheek.

She sank into a chair and put her hands over her eyes. The parcel lay unopened on her lap.

"Me son, me son, what have ye been after doin'?" protested O'Leary.

After a little she lowered her hands and very slowly turned back the wrapping of the parcel. It contained a pair of beautiful fur lined gloves.

"Och, but they're the loveliest things I ever did set eyes on! But oh, it's a sinful cryin' shame! To think of your hard earned money goin' like that! It's more than a week's wages they've cost, and that I'm knowin' to. Mark, ye darlin', ye're a wicked wasteful boy! I don't know how to be scoldin' and thankin' ye enough. Shure, and me ould hands never slid into the likes of 'em in all their born days. It's never a touch of the cold they'll be knowin' in these. I'll be after wearin' 'em to bed, just for the soft feel of 'em. Shure, and it's the vain woman I'll be in me ould age."

There was still another parcel, the largest of the lot. Mark handed it to O'Leary, saying:

"And this is for yourself."

O'Leary's hands trembled and his face quivered as he untied the string.

He found a soft feeling garment of black material. He unfolded it. It was a new cassock, made by a Beddington tailor to measurements of the priest taken seven years before. Some allowance had been made for increase of bulk. O'Leary put it on and bound its cord about him. It was a perfect fit. For the first time in memory, words failed him. Janet was standing beside him, passing her hands lightly over the cassock and murmuring: "Oh, Michael!"

The priest's mighty shoulders heaved with the force of his breathing.

"Sit down, Michael!" said Janet. "There's somethin' more here. Faith, and I don't know how we'll be livin' through it all."

She brought him a new briar pipe and a pound jar of his favourite smoking mixture.

"Whoa, there! Steady! The road is slippery and it's a sharp turn just here. Ye'll have me capsized in a minute," said the priest.

He stuck the pipe into his mouth with the bowl upside down.

"And I can't be for guessin' what's in this box," said Janet.

It was a large cardboard box filled with the best quality of wax candles.

"They're for the church," said Mark.

"But ye don't see anny use in keepin' candles burnin' in the church," said O'Leary.

"You do, Father, and that explains it."

"Mother of God, what a queer mixture ye are! But I'm sore troubled about ye spendin' all this money for us. Ye can have little left out of your savins. If ye get the habit of partin' with your earnins after this fashion it's divil a dollar ye'll ever have to your name. Shure it's the duty of thrift I must be impressin' on ye. It's heart-breakin' handsome what ye've done and ye know, ye rascal, how I'm exultin' in the big generous heart of ye, but it's chastisin' ye deserve all the same. Och, what can I do with ye!"

XVI

A KEEN November wind was whistling through the streets of Beddington, tossing the curls of the children, chafing their cheeks apple red and sweeping the dead leaves into long fluttering rows, when Mark alighted from O'Leary's buggy, flung his kit bag over his shoulder, waved his hand to the priest, and made his way into the crowded little railway station.

It was 10 a.m., the hour appointed for the departure of the train that was to take Mitchell's crew of seventy men as far as Stanton on their way to the logging camp on the Tobiatic. A score of men had yet to put in an appearance. When half-an-hour had passed, several were still lacking to make up the crew's full complement. It was known that they were about the town regaling themselves at various illicit drinking bars. The town clock struck eleven before the last of them came staggering through the station to join their companions on the train.

Snow was now falling and the wind was rising. The train was a slow one. The best to be expected from it was fifteen miles an hour. Word came that it had been snowing up North for the last six hours. If much snow fell on the way they would be in for a tedious time. They were due to arrive at Stanton about dusk.

Few of the men went aboard without a bottle or a flask. Before long some of them fell asleep. Others were getting drowsy. A number were merry. One or two were in quarrelsome mood.

The noisest and most dangerous of the gang was Slade Lamond, an Otnaby half-breed, noted for his fighting propensities when in drink. He was a thick set, powerfully built fellow of medium height, with huge shoulders and long brawny arms. Foremen always dreaded the ordeal of getting him to camp. But he was well worth the trouble he gave. Once in the bush and away from

temptation, he would work like a steam engine. He was also an expert stream driver. When sober he was one of the mildest mannered and pleasantest creatures alive; infinitely friendly and obliging. His lips seemed ever trembling on the verge of a smile which, when full-blown, exposed two gleaming rows of milk white teeth set in rose red gums. Drink transformed him into a demon.

Slade was always intending and sometimes did generous things in support of "Old Marchette," his mother, and Julie, his crippled sister. Unfortunately his work during the last summer had taken him from home, with the result that the greater part of his earnings had been squandered in the whisky dives of Clinton.

Only twice during the whole season had he been seen in his native village, and then with empty pockets and unsteady step. Marchette and Julie grieved much to note how matters were going with him, while they strove by every possible shift and thrift to keep the wolf of hunger from their door.

Slade was one of the last to board the train. He lurched into a seat and flung the pack from his back, accompanying the movement with a wild yell. The pack fell across Mark's lap. Presently Slade pulled off his woollen cap, thick with snow, and shook it in such a way as to send a copious spray into Mark's face. Mark smiled and shifted slightly in his seat. The half-breed jammed the cap on to the back of his head in jaunty fashion, leaving undisturbed the mass of thick black hair that was closely plastered over his forehead. Fixing Mark with full challenging eyes, he tapped himself upon the chest and announced, in what was intended to be an impressive if not a threatening tone: "Slade Lamond, me!"

Mark smilingly acknowledged the salutation. Then he turned and looked out of the window. His thoughts were immediately caught away from what was going on around him in the car. The snow was slanting down at an angle of forty-five degrees, cleaving the gray expanse of air with myriads of parallel lines. Each individual snow crystal, while speeding freely on its independent course, a thing of joy with star music in its heart, never-

theless acknowledged the command of the Generalissimo of the winds to march in line and time with the unimaginable millions of its fellows, which composed the White Army of the skies, to wrap the world in purity and peace.

He recalled what Lena said to him yesterday when he was bidding her good-bye.

"As many good wishes as there'll be snow flakes on the ground!"

Did she really mean that? Could she mean anything like that? Wishes were individual products of a thinking mind. They were things to be created one by one. Evidently she spoke at random. A wish for every snowflake would mean that she would be thinking about him to all eternity. She doubtless meant to commend him to the Angel of Beneficence and thus get rid of him at a stroke.

If she really wished a snowstorm of favours for him, he hoped she had in mind a different fall from this. He would like to think of her tokens as fluttering softly down upon him through a calm untroubled air. These snowflakes were smiting the ground like spear points.

Then something suddenly smote *him*. It was Slade Lamond's fist, directed violently against his shoulder. He wheeled himself around. Lamond was drawing the back of his left hand across his lips. He had taken a long pull at the whisky bottle. He was now holding forth the bottle in his right hand.

"Youm drink wit' me, yes?"

Mark shook his head and smiled.

"Thank you, no! I'd rather be excused."

Lamond frowned. He thrust his head forward and then jerked it vigorously in the direction of his right shoulder. He tapped himself importantly and portentously on the chest.

"Slade Lamond, me!"

"Yes, I've heard you say so several times. But I won't drink, if you don't mind."

Slade leaned towards him and shook his left fist in his face.

"Youm take drink or youm git dat!"

"Hold on there, Slade!" called a voice; "leaf the kid be!"

Slade's anger flamed up furiously.

"Bah! Hell!"

He swung his arm and let drive a terrific blow straight at Mark's face. The blow was parried and Slade's left fist went crashing through the window. With an oath he jerked it back through the jagged glass, gashing it through palm and wrist. He sank back heavily into his seat. The blood spurted in torrents upon the floor.

"Here, one of you," cried Mark, "hold his hand up while I get the cold water!"

In a few minutes he was back. Taking the injured hand of the now unresisting Slade he thrust it into a basin of ice-cold water.

"Hold it there till I get out the dressing!"

He reached for his kit bag and opened it, searching for the surgical package which Doctor Durston had given him with many explanations regarding its use. Presently he began to swathe the wounded hand in antiseptic gauze. Layer after layer he wound around it. Then he covered it with absorbent cotton and tightly bandaged it.

Slade remained quiet while this operation was in progress, occasionally lifting his eyelids in a slow and heavy way. When it was completed his head drooped and he shuddered. With his uninjured hand he reached for his bottle. Mark's hand was in advance of him.

"No more whisky!"

He flung the half empty bottle through the broken window.

Lamond stared at him for a moment in a dazed sort of way. He tried to speak. He was too full either for sound or foam. He could only point a finger at Mark and tap himself on the chest. His head lolled. His eyes glazed. His hands dropped helplessly. He rolled over on the seat dead drunk.

During the afternoon the car was the scene of considerable hilarity and not a little uproar. While one lot of men grew drowsy and dropped asleep, another bunch woke up to renew the spree. Attempts were made at singing. The tunes were as numerous as the voices. Some were rasping along in a deep monotonous guttural, while others were shrieking in falsetto. Coarse jokes and

banter were flung about. There was a certain amount of punching and pulling. Through it all Lamond lay motionless in heavy slumber.

As they were nearing Stanton Mark undertook to awaken the sleeper. His first efforts were without result, but after a considerable amount of shaking Slade opened his blood-shot eyes and snarled. He partly raised himself and then fell back, striking his head against the woodwork of the car. He put his hand to his head and rubbed it. He looked at his injured hand, and then at Mark. He was trying to recollect what had happened.

"Say! Youm no drink wit' me, das so?"

"Yes, that's so."

"Den me go for geev' beeg smash on face, yes?"

"Never mind! We'll blame the whisky for that."

Slade began to snivel.

"Me bad devil! Oui, das so! Slade Lamond, me."

"No time for that now! We must get off the train here. Can you walk?"

"Sure. One leg, two leg. One hand, two hand. Och! hell!"

The little eating houses along River Street were in readiness for the crew. All day their fires had been roaring, while every available inch of oven space was crowded with crocks of baking beans. Cauldrons of coffee were spouting steam around the cooking rooms. Tables were piled high with stacks of bread. The men would be hungry and they would pay cheerfully.

As the crew trooped forth from the station and received the stinging air upon their faces, they gave vent to their feelings in a series of wild whoops. Most of them were steering a zig-zag course. The few citizens encountered on the way were vociferously informed that these were Mitchell's men, the boss gang of the Tobiatic, able, individually or collectively, to lick any dog-gone lot of lumberjacks that ever trod the bush. They could mop up any town on the St. John and were prepared to prove that at the slightest provocation. Meanwhile they refreshed their lungs with deep draughts of clean cold air.

And now they were making clamorous raids upon the eating houses. There were rough-and-tumble scrambles

for seats, and loud bawling out of orders. Bets were made as to who could "punish" the most beans or get outside of the largest number of coffees. Presently the din subsided as they seriously addressed themselves to the business at hand.

Mark had enquired of the Station Master for the nearest doctor.

"Second turn on the right! Third house on the left! Doctor Stewart! Heal your body, prescribe for your soul. No extra charge. Finest man in Stanton."

While making his examination the Doctor remarked:

"Pretty ragged affair! Need a few stitches. Good first aid. Nice clean cuts. How did it happen?"

Slade looked at Mark and hung his head.

"He hurt it on some broken glass."

"Broken bottle, eh?"

"No, a car window."

"I see. Guess the bottle played its part."

The Doctor produced his appliances.

"How much dat job for cos'?" asked Slade.

"Let me see. You're going into the bush. You won't have much money. Guess a dollar will have to do."

Slade thrust his right hand into his pocket and drew out his money. It amounted to fifty-seven cents.

"Das not dollaire. Me not haf needle."

"Yes you will! Never mind about the money! Put that back into your pocket!"

"I've got the money," said Mark. "I've got three dollars here."

He drew out a dollar bill and placed it on the table.

"Will you get it back from him?"

"Sure. That'll be all right. We're very good friends."

"Oui, das so. Us de beeg frien'." Slade's smile was now in full flower.

"I want you to hold your hand very still now and not flinch. It may hurt a bit. You won't move it?"

"No, by gar! Slade Lamond, me."

As the needle bored its way through his flesh Slade grinned.

"Well, that's all right so far. Now for number two. Take my advice, Slade, and stick to your friend . . .

what's his name?" glancing at Mark.

"Me not know hees name yet." He looked sheepishly at Mark.

"That's funny. S'pose you just met on the train."

"Oui, das so."

Mark smilingly gave his name.

"Quiet now! As I was saying, you'd better stick to Woodburn and steer clear of old John Barleycorn."

"Me not know dat feller. Heem not in dis gang. What boss heem work for?"

"He works for one who does a big business in his way. I believe they call him Diabolus Satannicus Beelzebub."

"Me not know dat feller too. Where heem leev?"

"They say he has his headquarters at a place called Tophet, down Gahenna way. But he travels about a lot. Keeps on the move, going to and fro in the earth and walking up and down in it."

"Me not see heem. Me leev Otnaby. Dat ole feller cut on de log bush, eh?"

"Yes, he does a power of cutting down and sawing up every year. Destructive old brute. Fells the green young stuff along with the old. Slashes and burns right and left. Would ruin the country if he had his way. Has ruined a lot of it now."

"By gar, if me see heem, me knock hees block off! Slade Lamond, me."

"He's a hard old nut to handle. Knows all the fighting tricks."

"Me smash heem up all right, das so."

"I'll give you a hint, Slade. The best way to fight him is on your knees."

"Das be funny ting. Me like de stand up knock. What you mean? Jerk hees feet? Fetch heem down? Den sit on hees neck?"

Mark burst out laughing.

The Doctor's eyes twinkled.

"Perhaps Woodburn will explain it to you later on. Be a nice little piece of work for him to do. You might arrange to fight together."

"No, by gar, heem jus' stand back. Me do de fight for heem. Us de beeg frien'. Slade Lamond, me."

" Well, I'll leave you to settle that between yourselves. But I guess Woodburn will have to do his share. So you live at Otnaby. Got a wife there? "

" Non. Jus' ole mudder Marchette, and Julie. Marchette, she plenty wrinkle on de face. Julie, she stiff on de hip."

" I hope you left them lots of dollars when you came away, dollars to buy the bread and the pork and the beans."

A flush of shame tinged Slade's dark skin. He hung his head. Then a happy thought occurred to him.

" De Mark boy, heem write for companee geev her de wage."

" That's right."

The Doctor had now concluded his work.

" Well, I guess that's all. Woodburn, you'll take the stitches out in about a week. Good luck to you both ! "

Slade fidgeted with his cap. His conscience was now awake and pricking him.

" Das be fine ting for ole Marchette when she git de wage. Smile on de lip and shine on de eye, eh, das so? Julie, too, she be vaire please."

" Yes, and it'll be a good thing for you, too."

" By gar, das so. Me not go on whisky drunk no more. Marchette she soon fill up de stockin' leg. Me be reech man purty soon, ain't it? "

" Yes, that's the game. You stick to it ! "

" Oui, me stick like hell. Slade Lamond, me."

As they returned to River Street they met the men streaming out of the eating houses. The snow had ceased and the wind had dropped. A clear cold moon was riding the sky. They had still half an hour before the sled teams would leave the station for White Lake, where they were to spend the night in the Company's shanties. They bolted into the nearest eating house.

" Got any grub left? " cried Mark.

" Sure. Plenty. Slap it on the table in two ticks. All you can git outside of for half a dollar. Beans smokin' hot and lashins of pork to 'em. Coffee strong enough to float a bullet. Roast taters too, if you want 'em. Dig in ! "

Mark was ravenous. Slade's appetite was in excellent condition for one who had been through his late experiences. After his second cup of coffee and his first plate of beans he patted himself abdominally.

"Me feel what you call vaire bully. Dat hand she purty soon come right, das so?"

"Yes, but it'll lay you off from work for a week or so."

"No, by gar, me chop wit' odder feller. Heem all right."

It was a drive of ten miles to White Lake. The men packed themselves into the sleds and moved out into a white and silent world.

Their way soon led them into the bush. Softly they glided along over the soundless snow road and beneath bending firs that bowed above them like cowled and benedictory monks. Here a new spirit took possession of the men. They were inbreathing the pure air of the forest. A solemnity fell upon them. They had entered one of Nature's silent oratories, full of fragrance, peace and the presence of God. The tones of their voices grew gentler. There were moments when no sound was heard save the soft impact of the horses' feet upon the snow.

Mark and Slade rode side by side on the same sled. Presently one of their companions showed signs of distress. It was Joe Ringor. He had been one of the heaviest drinkers and had taken little food. He looked blue and depressed. He shivered a good deal. Once he groaned.

Mark took off the old fur coat (O'Leary's) which he was wearing and passed it to Joe.

"No, you'll need it yourself."

"Not me. I'm too warm. If I get chilly I can jump off and run."

Joe took the coat. He cast a look of gratitude towards Mark and lowered his head.

The cold rapidly increased. After a time, Mark jumped from the sled and ran alongside. He was immediately joined by Slade. The half-breed drove out his feet and kicked the snow above his head. He caught Mark by the arm and they ran half a mile in team fashion. Slade was

bareheaded, his black hair flopped about on his forehead.

As they slowed down he said :

" Us de boss runner, eh? Us de beeg frien', ain't it, das so? "

Rejoining the sled, Mark began to whistle the air of a tune he had picked up from the Salvation Army.

" Sing it, Mark ! " requested one of the men.

Mark shook his head. But the tune had already suggested the words to Joe Ringor.

The psychology of a gang of lumbermen is an interesting study. Rough as they are, vulgar, sensual and sometimes brutal, they have in them a strain of religious emotion that may easily be touched. As the words of the song passed through Joe Ringor's mind, they completed the destruction of what little self-control had been left him from his drinking bout. He broke into sobs.

His companions looked at each other and grinned. The next instant they were scuffling, sparring and knocking off caps. It was their way of disguising emotion, for there was scarcely a man of them who did not know the song, while every one of them realised how the case stood with Joe. They continued their horseplay until Joe joined in. This acted upon him like a tonic.

When this excitement quieted down and the men had got their breath again, Mark struck up with :

" John Brown's body lies a-moulderin' in the clay."

The marching music of this song exactly suited the new mood of the men. They joined in lustily. The men in the next sleds took up the tune. It passed along the line and the whole jolly party drove up to the lighted shanties, singing at the top of their voices :

" Glory, glory Hallelujah,
Glory, glory Hallelujah,
Glory, glory Hallelujah,
As we go marching on ! "

XVII

THE lights of the shanties were put out at nine o'clock. Then for six hours there was silence save for the snoring of the men. At three in the morning the place began to blossom with lights again. The cooks were astir. Teamsters with lanterns were moving towards the stables. Presently the horses were stamping and neighing as they nosed up the hay in their cribs, or thrust their mouths into buckets of warm mash. Pleasing odours began to float forth from the cookhouse. Breakfast was to be at 4.30.

A dozen men with buckets went to the lake to break the ice which had formed during the night and to bring up the water needed for the horses and the crew. Ablutions were of a simple and vigorous sort. The men plunged their hands into the ice-cold water and flung it over their faces, blowing and spluttering like so many porpoises. They lathered themselves with cakes of brown soap, scrubbing their necks and heads with thick rough towels.

Mitchell, the foreman, made it a point to lead his men by the force of example. He was up with the earliest risers. As he stepped out of doors the first man he encountered was Slade Lamond, axe in hand.

"What are you up to, Slade?"

"Scout de camp road. Heem vaire bad."

"You can't do anything with one hand."

"Bah, oui! Can chop wit' heem. Hol' wit' odder feller on helbow."

"Well, I s'pose you can have a try at it. But we shan't be starting for an hour and a half yet. You want your breakfast, don't you?"

"Das all right. No need all time be eat. Mak' all fat on de inside. Me jus' take look at log road, den come back for eat."

While the other men were dressing, arranging their

kit bags, and preparing for breakfast, Slade put in an hour's work. He was back in time for breakfast. He spotted Mark and took a seat beside him at the table.

"Youm look vaire bully. Bright on de eye, pink on de cheek. Hair all fit tight jus' like one curly silk cap. Mon Dieu! All de nice gal be for smile."

Slade made quick work of his food and was the first to leave the table. Smilingly he approached the foreman.

"De Mark boy, mebbe youm let heem go wit' me, das so?"

"If he likes. I was thinking he might shovel."

"Bah, non! Geev heem hax! Us go troo sleek like dat!"

He made a slashing movement with his hand. When Mark stepped out of the shanty he found Slade awaiting him with two axes.

"Come on! Us be first straight troo to Beaver Brook!"

The crew had a heavy task before them. It was twelve miles to their camp on the Tobiatic, and the road—if such it could be called—over the eight miles to Beaver Brook, was one of the worst in the country. At the best of times it was one to strain men's backs and cripple the legs of the horses, but now, with nearly two feet of snow lying on unfrozen ground, it would be unusually difficult and hazardous. For the first few miles it ran through a dense growth of birches and firs, which, under their heavy burden of snow, bent low across the track, forming a countless succession of barricades. Beyond that stretched a burnt district with sudden hills and deep narrow gullies. It was a region strewn with huge boulders, amidst which the track twisted in serpentine fashion. Further on, the trail led over a bog, where, if a horse once sank in the spongy ground only a miracle could extricate him without a broken limb. In addition to all this, there would be hidden water-courses eating channels through the track, and treacherous sunken springs that needed to be shunned as death traps.

It was arranged that a score of men should go in advance, with shovels, axes and canthooks; some to deal with the drifts, some with the barricades of saplings, others with the heavy stuff brought down across the track

by the autumn gales. It was what they termed " swamping the bush road." Without this work the trail would be impassable for the teams heavily loaded with supplies.

It was work that called for quick intelligence and expert craftsmanship. Men must be able to think swiftly and act ingeniously in order to grapple with the situation. They must see at a glance how to shore up a sunken roadside here, negotiate a dangerous water-hole there, or avoid a big boulder yonder. Often they would need to " swamp " out an entirely new path. The teams, which brought up the rear, must be attended by guards on either side of the sleds to prevent the stores from being jolted off, and to pull with the straining horses on the heavier grades.

Lamond worked prodigiously. With swift strokes that were always true and powerful, he severed the overhanging saplings. Once out of sight of the other members of the crew he went wild with excitement. For the second time on this trip Slade was drunk—this time, drunk with the spirit of rivalry.

Mark was soon steaming with perspiration, but he kept up the pace with admirable staying power. Slade, handicapped as he was, could yet chop two saplings to Mark's one. They worked on one side only of the road, slashing down every obstruction in their way. Slade tossed his mane and laughed in glee.

" Dey no ketch us some more till Beaver Brook ! "

Having traversed the wooded section of the road, they rushed on into the burnt region. Slade was now all over the track like a ballet dancer. He tested the ground with his feet and the handle of his axe. Nothing escaped his notice. If he found a dangerous patch of the road where there was no material at hand to mend it, he put up a warning post and traced a new track. Where the road lay over high ground and was evidently sound, he went forward on the run.

Reaching the bog, he tested the trail with scrupulous care.

" Nodder hour and heem be right."

The day was sharp with frost. If the snow could be tramped well into the bog where the feet of the horses

would come, an hour of this temperature would harden it into safety. Slade indicated his idea to Mark and they began the treading of the snow. There were several hundred yards of bog to be treated and the work must be thoroughly done. Slade would not be satisfied until the snow had been packed close and hard beneath their feet. Trampling as steadily as pile-driving machines, their progress was yet necessarily slow. Working at top speed for half-an-hour, they had covered about a hundred yards when the other members of the advance guard hove in sight.

Slade shook a fist in their direction.

"Dey ketch us here! Bah, hell!"

It was inevitable they should be overtaken. No two men could contend successfully with such overwhelming odds. John Annis was the first to join them.

"Slade, you're a terror! Guess you've about killed the kid. Might show him a little mercy after what's happened."

Slade's pearls flashed into view.

"Bah, non! Heem all right. All what youm call de wire string on de inside. All time whish! whish! Heem be de boss swamper soon."

When the tramping of the bog drew near completion, Annis said:

"You better go on ahead, Slade, and leaf the kid with us." A cloud overspread Slade's face. He looked at Mark beseechingly. He scowled at Annis.

Then he asked:

"Youm want stay wit' dem, das so?"

"No, certainly not; I'm sticking to you."

The cloud vanished from Slade's face in a burst of sunshine.

"By gar, come on! Us be de beeg frien'! De Mark boy, you. Slade Lamond, me."

There was another mile of trail to be traversed before coming to Beaver Brook. They reached it well in advance of the other members of the swamping party. In a few minutes Slade had a roaring fire going.

The horses had only been able to travel at a snail's pace. There were frequent halts. Each team kept one

man busy knocking out the snowballs that formed under their hoofs. The sleds reached Beaver Brook at noon. Here they lunched on tea and hard tack.

The remainder of the journey presented little difficulty, the road running through a firm and level country. It was a well-wooded district, instinct with animal life. Timid and startled creatures peeped and scampered and whirred around them. Now a caribou took a wondering look at the strange procession, wheeled and vanished. Innumerable rabbits darted across the road, or ran for some distance in front of the invaders, insolently tossing their hinderparts in the air. Tracks in the snow told where the lynx had prowled and the bear had loped on his ungainly way. Frequently the partridge could be heard drumming in the distance, while occasionally a flock would start up in frightened flight. The majority of the men paid slight attention to these signs and movements, but to Mark it was all of fresh and thrilling interest. All this wild keen animation had significance for him. It meant that the forest was a sheltering home for myriads of the loveliest and most gifted creatures of God. Was it right to destroy a forest? Was it not a crime against nature? Could not man take from the bush what was necessary to supply his legitimate needs, and yet leave food and shelter for bird and beast?

And was it not a desecration to lay a whole tract of timber flat to the ground? Those barren regions through which they had passed, had died a first and second death. The loneliest and most savage creature of the wilds avoided them. Even the birds shunned them in their flights. They seemed to lie beneath a curse.

On that first journey to the lumber lands, seeds of future purposes and enthusiasms were sown deep into Mark's mind. To cull and yet to cultivate the forest growths should be his aim. To utilise what was mature and nourish what was struggling towards maturity, preserving all the while the homely feel, the stately dignity and the tender hush of forest shades and shapes and silences—that seemed to him a mission to which a man might well devote his life, and in its development find vital contact with what was pure and true and beautiful.

The camp was reached at 3 p.m. Asleep beneath its blanket of snow, it looked, at first sight, like the buried ruins of an ancient hamlet. But now it suddenly sprang into life.

Within a few minutes the unforgettable smell of burning birch logs was in the air. Steaming and snorting horses shook their rattling harness impatient for the stall and the straw. Men with every sort of burden on their backs strode here and there. Lights began to twinkle. There were echoing calls and counter calls. Astonished yet inquisitive rabbits sat up on their haunches and watched, or flicked away in terror. Ere long the tantalising scents of frying ham and boiling potatoes spread throughout the clearing.

The camp included a cluster of buildings constructed of rough-hewn logs with double boarded roofs. The central space was occupied by the cook-house, the largest building of the group, which served the two-fold purpose of dining room and assembly hall. This was flanked by two dormitories, each containing fifty bunks. Behind these stood the stables and the smithy. There was also a building for the storage of supplies, and a large wash-house.

Tucked in by the mothering forest for cosy comfort, the place had a restful look. The neighbouring pines breathed a sweet pungency into the air. In that clear dry atmosphere the tops of the towering trees seemed neighbouring the stars. The cold was keen but kindly. A genial balmy cold. Here was a spot where men could keep tinglingly alive by day and sink into deep regenerating slumber when their work was done.

Mark had been engaged as "cookee," or handy man for the camp. His work would be to help in preparing and serving meals, laying and clearing tables, washing up and bringing wood and water. It meant that he must be at it early and late. The duties called for one who was quick, willing and tireless. It involved more hours than any other job in the bush.

He was ready for duty immediately upon arrival at the camp. That first meal was always a difficult one to negotiate. Everything had to be started up. Provisions and utensils must be sorted out. Shortly after six o'clock

the bell rang for supper. The men came trooping in with many a jest and quip. Each man had already drawn the number of his table seat, obviating all necessity of bickering or scrambling. The place was well lighted by hanging oil lamps and heated by two large box stoves. The tables were of planed white pine, free of any covering.

As this was to be the social centre of the camp's life for five months to come, a number of simple rules for the observance of the crew were hung up on the walls. Obscenity and blasphemy were forbidden. There was to be no wrestling or sparring. They were not to spit on the floor.

As the men marched out after supper, Lamond lagged behind at the door. Much work remained to be done in the clearing of tables and making ready for the morning. When the place was empty of all but the cook-house crew, he bounded back and struck into the work. While Mark stacked up the dishes, Slade carried them to the wash tub. When the dishes had been washed he bore them back to the tables. He had the swift silent movements of a panther. He remained till the last tap of work was done. Then he put his hand on Mark's arm and asked:

"Where youm leev, Mark boy?"

"I live at Otnaby. I make my home with Father O'Leary."

Slade was dumfounded.

"Youm no tell me dat? Me no see you dere some time."

"That's where I make my home. As you know, it's next door to your mother. I've been working on the boom all summer and fall, and spending my Sundays at Otnaby. Father O'Leary is like a real father to me."

"By gar, de Curé, eh, das so? Heem beeg like dat?"

Slade lifted his hands high above his head and then stretched them out to their full extent.

"That's him all right."

"All time de begorr, and de beeg ha ha, ain't it?"

"Sure. He's the jolliest man alive."

"Heem de fines' Curé on de whole world. Heem boss foreman to Jesu son of Mary."

"I guess that's so."

"Heem all time kind to ole Marchette and Julie, but heem knock hell out of Joe Laramie. By gar, heem shake de devil out of beeges' injun or half-breed as never was."

"Yes, he takes a strong hold of his people."

Slade now began to look thoughtful and troubled. He drooped his head and tapped with his moccasined feet on the floor. He chewed at the back of his right hand. After a while he said:

"Youm no tell heem 'bout dat whisky drunk, no?"

"Certainly not."

Slade heaved a sigh of relief. He looked at Mark and smiled.

"Mebbe one time me mak' de confess. Me no like tell heem much bad. Mak' heem go sad on de face. Mak' heem cry on de eye, eh, das so?"

"But he'd help you out of any trouble."

"Oui, by gar! Heem go into hell heemself for lift odder feller out."

"That's so."

"All de saint and Virgin do jus' what heem say, das so?"

"I . . . I don't know. I think they ought to. They couldn't do better." Slade was silent for a moment. Then he said:

"Youm write de Curé for draw all de wage on ole Marchette. Das so, by gar. Marchette and Julie mus' haf it all. De word from me. So! Slade Lamond, me!"

XVIII

The Tobiatic country was a broken rock-ribbed region which rendered difficult the work of swampers and teamsters. It was hard on the horses and their outfit. Yet it paid the lumberman well for his investments. It was heavily timbered, mostly with stout sound pine. They rose in serried ranks from the lowest gullies to the highest hilltops. Loggers liked the life of the Tobiatic. They throve well there. They came out in the Spring increased in weight and aching with strength. In that pure fragrant air illness was practically unknown. When the time came to undertake the strenuous work of stream-driving no crews in the country were fitter for the job.

That Autumn, Mitchell's men got promptly to work. The weather settled into a spell of hard frost. The song of the axe resounded through the land.

It is a stirring song. There is a suggestion of marching music in the short staccato notes of blades that ring their tuneful way to the hearts of the pines. The music rises to crescendo as the stricken tree begins to sway and crack and snap at the core. It rushes to a grand finale as the lordly victim, bowing its head in surrender and waving its arms in farewell, crashes to its doom.

When they fall these monarchs of the forest fall in stately fashion. They are magnificent even in their vanquishment. They maintain a certain dignity even in defeat. Plumed warriors that have conquered in a thousand battles with tempest and with time, they retain a regal bearing in their overthrow.

They are cast down but not destroyed. Shorn and naked, they must presently be dragged away in captive chains, but they will reappear to bear a worthy part in other scenes. Though they may no longer wait for the coming of the wind to wake the music in their branches; though

they may no longer shelter the nests and nestlings of birds within their shadows; though the very blood be dried up in their veins, their solid substance compacted through the years, enables them to face a future worthy of their past.

Henceforth they become intimately associated with human life—with human homes and hearts and hopes. They enter into all the ways of men. They go to theatres and churches. They are present at banquets. They contribute to the construction of altars and of thrones. They yield themselves to the mechanic for utility and to the artist that he may fashion them into forms of beauty. They shelter childhood and old age. They cradle the newborn and coffin the dead. Intermingling with all the life of man they witness his joys and sorrows, his sanctities and sins. They listen to his profanities and prayers, his cursings and caressings. They will provide him with an instrument of music, a floor to dance upon or a couch where he may lie down and die. Surrendering their forest freedom they go to bear their varied part in the pleasures and sufferings, the ambitions and conflicts, the triumphs and despairs of the human world.

Mark became speedily engrossed in his work and in love with his surroundings. The last six months had wrought a notable change in him. They had ushered him into a new world and opened up his nature to its depth. He took a different outlook upon life and another attitude toward it. He had now a home behind him and those who were to him as his own people. He rejoiced in a fixed and solid base of operations. He was in line with a career. He had found definite ends to work for, high things to hope for, dear ones to love. From being a bit of flotsam adrift and tossed on the sea of life, he now held a place on the ship of destiny. Instead of shrinking from more than superficial contacts with those about him, he was now cultivating companionships and friendships. He had lost his feeling of isolation. He was at last a recognised member of society with a place, a function and a future in the world's affairs.

As one consequence of this inward change the very face of nature came to wear a new aspect for him. It was a friendlier face, more communicative and encouraging. He

felt at home in the forest and on terms of understanding with it. The solemn woods, whose snowy gleaming aisles he often trod in the dim light of early mornings, seemed to offer him their confidence and comradeship. There were serene white hours when the brooding stillness gave him the sense of being attended by mystic presences. There were times when he stood within the close and calm enfoldment listening to unearthly whispers. There were moments when it seemed that the next step on the white road would bring him face to face with God.

Work was driven forward at a lively pace. Mitchell was one who could infect a crew with his own spirit. Hard-headed, keen-witted, severe on carelessness and slackness, he was, however, reasonable and kind. He took a personal interest in each of his men. He was ever devising schemes for increasing their comfort or adding to the pleasure of their evenings. The men liked him and responded readily to his ambitious plans.

For the first week Slade worked as a swamper. After that he took his place with the choppers. He wore the smiling look of a happy child. When he entered the cook-house at night his face was an illumination. His chief delight was in helping Mark with the late evening work. He soon grew tenderly confidential.

"Florine Laramie, what leev wit' Curé, she be nice leettle gal, ain't it, das so? Same like sunflower on gardenne. She be smart gal too, by gar. She tink me bad feller, I guess so. All time de whisky drunk and fight. Dat mak' her vaire fright, eh? She tink me never haf no money. Youm no hear her say some ting 'bout me, eh?"

"No, Slade. I haven't heard her talk much about anybody."

Slade looked up at the ceiling, showing the clear whites of his eyes. He shifted his standing.

"Good ting for her when she go work for Curé. Haf all time de bright smile for you, eh?"

"Yes, she's always pleasant with me."

"Mebbe some time you wink on de eye, eh? Den she wink so, like dat, eh?"

"Not yet. I haven't learned that trick. You seem to know the game."

"Oui, das so. Smile—like dat! Wink on de eye—so! Turn head round slow and smile some more! Plenty grease on de hair and leettle curl. Mebbe cigar for hol' in hand like dat. Nice leettle gal, Florine. Spik soft all time to ole' Marchette and Julie too. She soon be right for mak' de marry. But she no look at me. . . . Non . . . not yet. . . . Mebbe youm say us de beeg frien', eh? Das mak' her feel kind for me. Den some time mebbe she geev me de glad eye and de smile, ain't it, das so?"

One evening after Mark's work was finished Slade beckoned him aside.

"Youm like be reech man purty soon, yes?"

"Sure thing. Just tell me how to do it!"

"Snare de rabbit an' trap de mink! By gar, youm make de beeg money. Bunny, heem go hoppety pat all over. Good for eat. Fine lettle feller in de pot. Mink, heem swell feller. Fines' fur as never was. All smooth and thick. Five dollaire for skin. Mak' leettle dead-fall. Trip de stick what knock heem on de head when heem go for rabbit meat. Snare ketch rabbit, rabbit ketch mink. Den youm be reech man. Das so. Slade Lamond, me."

Slade drew from his pocket a coil of rabbit wire. A few dexterous movements of his hands and he held up a perfectly made loop snare.

"Oui, youm ketch heem plenty, vairie soon. Easy ting. Hang jus' so! Heem go hop hop, pat pat, den chick! Sweek! Heem dere for youm pick up. One feller, five cent. Two feller, ten cent. Youm be reech man soon. All de crew smile on de lip an' lick de chop. Das so, ain't it?"

It proved a profitable bit of instruction. It was supplemented by further tuition on several nights and mornings when Slade initiated Mark into the secrets of the trapping of the mink. After that results came rapidly. Before anyone else was astir Mark made his rounds in the bush. He rarely returned with less than half a dozen rabbits. Often he would bring in three times that number. The bill of fare received a welcome addition. Mark's credit

account soared swiftly. Presently the mink began to yield to his craft. Meanwhile Slade had made a toboggan sled for his use to simplify the matter of carriage.

When Mark announced that he had seen the foot-prints of a bear while making his morning round, Slade was at once hot with excitement. He declared that Mark must have a gun. He would speak to Mitchell about it. The foreman readily consented to the loan of a rifle. At this time of the year a black bear would be well worth bringing in. The female bear might be somewhat out of condition with the care of her cubs, but the male animal, having fattened on the oak ridges in the autumn and browsed on succulent green tips since then, would be fat and hearty.

The prevailing idea regards the bear as always an ugly and dangerous creature to meet. The Canadian black bear, however, is not only harmless but furtive and shy. His temper is mild and benign. He is a strict vegetarian, and like all vegetarians from Bernard Shaw to the least of that enlightened cult, he is of a gentle and trustful nature. Bruin has no quarrel even with other prowling males of his own species. Toward man he is indifferent. On a sudden meeting he may manifest surprise but never resentment.

A few mornings later the camp was roused at an early hour by the sound of rifle shots. Slade bounded away in the direction of the reports. Voices carried far in that still air and his halloo was speedily answered. It was not long before he found his friend standing beside the warm carcase of a dead bear.

The half-breed danced with delight.

"By gar, heem be fine ole' feller, das so. How youm git heem like dat?"

"Met him here. He came walking down this log-road cool and unconcerned. When he saw me he sat up on his haunches and waved his fore paws. His way of saying good morning, I suppose. He seemed such a polite and friendly old chap that I disliked putting a bullet into him; but I wanted that coat he is wearing for Father O'Leary. It will make a good rug for his bedroom floor. Nice to put his feet on when he gets out of bed on a cold winter's morning."

Slade whipped out his sheath-knife and at once proceeded to skin the bear. He did this, as he did every sort of work, with great rapidity. As he rolled the hide away from the carcase he laughed and said:

"One time heem black boy; now heem white feller."

He plunged his knife the full length of its blade into sheer fat. He reckoned the bear was carrying enough fat to fill two buckets and suggested that Mark should hasten to the camp and bring them. It would be better to bury the unused portion of the carcase where it lay. When Mark returned Slade was nearing the completion of his work. He declared there was enough grease to slick the hair of the whole camp till Spring with plenty left to take home to the girls. Mark should get five dollars for it.

"No," said Mark, "the skin is mine, the grease is yours."

Slade stoutly protested. It would be nothing short of robbery. But Mark would consent to no other arangement. He had shot the bear; Slade had skinned him. His own part in the affair was the easiest. They would divide the spoil in the way he had indicated.

Presently Slade began to cut great steaks from the bear's rear quarters. Mark watched in astonishment.

"What are you going to do with that? We don't eat bear, do we?" Slade looked at him in a superior yet indulgent sort of way.

"Fines' meat on de whole worl', dis end. Sweet like leettle lamb. Melt on de mout'. Heem fat on de beech nut and de green bough. Cleanes' eater on four feet. Eat? Oui! I guess so."

There was high feasting that night in Mitchell's camp on the Tobiatic.

It was not to be expected that a big crew of men should be long at the rough work of the bush without some accident occurring. The first man to come in disabled was John Annis. To his disgust he had sprained his right wrist. This rendered him useless for loading the logs on his sleds. Mitchell looked black. It meant that Annis would be a week or ten days idle. He knew of no one he could put on the team. The horses would have to stand in the stable eating their heads off till John got fit again.

Mark overheard the conversation between Mitchell and Annis. A little later he went to Mitchell and said :

" If they are willing to spare me from the cookhouse, I can work that team till John gets right again. I'm used to horses."

" The blazes you are ! But you're not used to working horses on a stunt like this. You have to know about logs and loads and roads as well as horses."

Mark declared that he was confident of being able to do the work. Mitchell submitted the proposal to Annis. Annis frowned. " Bad job if he lames the nags. Them hosses has to be handled keerful. The sorrel's a bit chafed under his collar now, and he ain't much for makin' up to strangers. Him and the black is both of 'em particular 'bout their grub. Reckon I'll be all right in a day or two."

" You can keep an eye to the feeding of them yourself. The point is, are you willing to take Woodburn's place here as far as you can."

" Yes, I ain't above doin' that, but I ain't no streak of greased lightning."

The exchange of work went on for ten days. At the end of that time Annis admitted that his horses were in excellent condition. Slade slapped Mark on the back

" Youm be boss teamster now, ain't it, das so? "

XIX

During these days Mark lived in a keen and eager way. His work involved long hours and called for much activity but it put no heavy strain upon him. He liked to be busy and to move quickly. For his swiftness and brightness they dubbed him "The Firefly."

His happiest hours were those of early mornings when he ranged the bush alone, acquiring the woodman's craft and the trapper's skill. He studied with interest the ways of the living creatures around him, the partridge, the squirrel, the weasel, the muskrat and the mink. On his first rounds he had noticed traces of moose, but these soon disappeared as those furtive creatures withdrew from the logging area to quieter and safer resorts.

He studied the forest—in all its changing aspects and varying tones. At times, recalling OLeary's words, he would regard it as a cathedral with the trees for worshippers. In hours of stillness they would stand as if rapt in contemplation of the infinite and eternal. Moved by a breeze they would bow in adoration. Swept by a storm they would sway and sing and toss their arms like an excited congregation yielding to a sudden inspiration.

At other times the woods appeared to him as a spacious home where members of a heterogeneous family lived in peace and comfort. The teeming life of bird and beast was seen to be enfolded in the forest's protective care. The forest mothered its vast household. It knew how to board and bed them, to shelter them from cold, to provide them with playgrounds and hiding places.

Again he would think of the world around him as an art museum displaying curious carvings in wood, beautiful modellings in snow, marvellous tapestries of moss, and matchless etchings done by the sharp and delicate pencils of the frost.

It was a growing time with him. His mind was reacting vigorously upon a suggestive environment. Facts

observed and impressions received during this period of his life were destined to feed his mind in later years. Much that was now vague in consciousness would afterwards become vivid. He was fortunate in having a thoughtful and comparatively well-read foreman. Mitchell never tired of expounding the theory that the forests constituted the fountain-head of the country's fertility and prosperity. He declared that the streams were the offspring of the woods. Clouds formed and rains fell in answer to the supplications of the trees. Blot out the forests and the whole land must mourn. The rivers would perish and the fields be stricken with sterility. Mitchell was consistent. He was keen for forest preservation. He held that by judicious cuttings which spared the younger trees, and by intelligent care in the prevention of fires during the summer months, the forests should last forever as a perpetual scene of beauty and source of wealth. He claimed that the woodland wealth which had been destroyed during his lifetime would be sufficient to pay the national debt of Canada ten times over. Hence, while he urged his crew forward in what he regarded as economic cuttings, he kept a watchful eye against anything approaching wantonness or waste.

One of the most distinctive features of the Tobiatic camp was its possession of a small but well selected stock of books. It consisted of cheap unbound editions from the Seaside Library. They were easily portable and took but little space. Though aware that scarcely a single volume had ever been read by any member of the camp except the foreman, the Company supported Mitchell in his claim that it was wise to have them on hand in case a reader should occasionally be found among the men. As a rule Mark had the Sunday afternoons to himself and these were devoted to an eager perusal of the literary treasures at hand. During the winter he read "The Professor at the Breakfast Table," and "The Idylls of the King."

It was no unusual thing for Mitchell to leave the camp after breakfast, with a wallet of food in his pocket, and be seen no more till evening. He was ranging the country with a view to selecting a site for the next season's operations. He had decided that the area over which they were now cutting could profitably be allowed a few years rest.

Returning from one of his tours he called Mark aside and said:

"They must do without you here to-morrow. I want you to go with me. I've about settled on the spot for our next camp. It's up at the head of Loon Lake. Thickest growth of pine I've ever seen. A perfect ocean of it. Want you to see it. It means a longer haul to the river but it will be over better ground than we have here. That will probably even things up. We'll get away fairly early."

Mark felt flattered and pleased by the proposal. Mitchell had already shown his interest in him and his liking for him, but this was a special mark of confidence and favour. He had as yet no way of knowing what an excellent judge of character the foreman was, while he was also ignorant of the fact that Senator Charlton had suggested something about keeping an eye on young Woodburn and letting him know how the lad shaped up.

"It will be a treat for me, sir. It's mighty kind of you to take me."

"That's all right. I'm studying my own interest and pleasure. Perhaps you may see something beside pine to-morrow that will appeal to you."

"Indeed! May I ask about it?"

"Moose!" replied Mitchell, laconically.

Mark's face lighted up with enthusiasm.

"Oh, I say, it's a picnic! I'm on for it red hot."

"I located a yard to-day and I don't think they'll shift much before to-morrow. I was well to leeward of them, so they got no warning. If this breeze holds, and I think it will, we should come upon them in a couple of hours tramp from here. They always feed against the wind. We can know before we start what direction they're taking. There are three of them. If we can bag one or two of them it will please the men. Moose, as you know, is all good eating, from lip to heel. There's nothing the men enjoy so much. We'll go halves on the proceeds. The company allows six cents a pound dead weight."

No creature that goes on four feet is more desirable for edible purposes than the moose. Whether you cut the meat from the massive shoulders or the rump, it is more

finely flavoured than that of caribou or deer, while the muffle, the tongue, the heart and the shin bones roasted, are set aside as special delicacies.

Mark protested that Mitchell's offer was too generous, but the foreman laughingly replied that he guessed it was about right and like as not nothing would come of it.

"It's all chance. You never know your luck. You may be thinking you've got everything in your favour and that you're bound to get the drop on them only to find that they've had a warning in some mysterious way and are off to the Never Never country. It's just that element of uncertainty that makes still-hunting anything like sport. I'm not greatly struck on it anyhow. It comes a little too near the butcher business for my liking. Of course I know the butcher is a useful and generally respected member of society. We should all miss him, perhaps more than we should miss the parson. But it is scarcely a vocation that gives play to the higher qualities of the mind and heart.

I often think about the sheep and cattle men too. They breed those beautiful creatures, feed them and fuss over them and coddle them, get to know them and admire them and perhaps almost love them—and then—off with them to the slaughter pen! It's quite necessary I know. But somehow, it doesn't seem very nice. The gentleman stock breeder is a big man in his way, but I think he needs to be without imagination in order to be happy. Now toward these moose we stand in a different relation. No previous intimacies. No acquaintance. If we are lucky enough to see them at all it will be just once for all. There's not so much reason for growing sentimental about them. But, all the same, I much prefer to get the bull moose by the calling method in the mating season. That's all sport. You pit your intelligence and judgment and skill in imitating the call of the female moose against the wonderful instincts of the bull and his marvellous acuteness in smelling and hearing."

"Have you had luck at that sort of hunting?" asked Mark.

"I had a great go of it over in the White Lake country last September, with Steve Glode for my caller. We were

at the big bog. It was a lovely evening for calling. Perfectly still. We had all signs favourable. Plenty of recent hoof marks and fresh droppings. We could feel the moose all around us. After listening for half an hour we heard a big chap knocking his horns against the trees on the opposite side of the bog. Steve raised his birch bark trumpet and ooh-wahed, after the style of the forest enchantress. Immediately the bull answered with his emphatic baugh ! baugh !

" It looked all right for us when presently from further up the bog came the unmistakable whinny of a female moose. That is a sound no Indian can properly imitate. And then, ooh-wah ! oo-wah ! ' Bah ! hell ! ' said Steve. ' That finish us. Heem go to her now.' Then something startling happened. Another bull began to speak. Baugh ! Baugh ! ' By gar, das be fight between dem feller ! ' said Steve. And sure enough. The bulls started to meet each other. They would decide the issue by combat. They were both full of fury, the fury of love and jealousy. They baugh-baughed at one another and made tremendous clatter with their horns as they smashed their way through the bush to join the battle. Then crash ! Steve and I had legged it across the bog to get a view of the affair. We saw the whole thing. It was the fiercest bloodiest affray you could ever witness. Steve was for shooting them both while their horns were locked together. It would have been a simple matter and a big haul for us. But the fight seemed to me too great and tragic an affair to be interfered with."

" How did the battle end? " asked Mark excitedly.

" They fought till one of them got his death wound : a prong of the enemy's antlers deep in his side. Even the conqueror was badly battered. His horns were broken and he was gashed and bleeding. We let him depart with his laurels upon him. I hoped he might meet his lady love and that she would comfort him and lick his wounds. The dying bull we speedily dismissed from his misery. I thought he had earned the right to lie in state upon the field of his brave defeat. Much to Steve's disgust we left him there."

Mitchell paused and lit his pipe.

"Was that all you got out of the trip?"

"No, the following morning we reaped our reward. In answer to Steve's call a bull walked out of the bush and stood clearly outlined with his head between two silver birches. For a full quarter of an hour he remained motionless—listening, wondering, pondering the situation. Then he slowly moved away. Steve called again, and the moose wheeled about and came down to the edge of the bog. There he halted, now with his head lifted high in the air, now with his nose to the ground. After a time he turned, as if to retreat to the bush again. Once more Steve called, and now he turned and walked well out upon the bog. He seemed to be coming on confidently, when he stopped and tore at the turf with his hoofs. Baugh! Baugh! he said, and shook his head. Then low and soft Steve gave his oo-wah! oo-wah-wah! The bull came on, quickening his pace and putting a questioning tone into his speech. Baugh? Baugh?

"At a hundred yards I wanted to fire from our place of concealment. But Steve was now ambitious to win the highest tribute to his calling. If at this short distance he could call and the bull still come on, he could boast of the achievement for the remainder of his days. Oo-wah! Oo-wah-wah! The bull broke into a run. In another minute he would be on top of us. At fifty yards I fired and brought him down. Now, that's what I call sport. There's something about the whole business—the subdued light of the dawn or the twilight of the evening—the dead stillness of the air—the pungent earthy and leafy scents—the wildness of the scenery—the feeling of silent adventures and secret match-makings going on around you. The silence, suddenly broken, perhaps, by the weird wail of a loon on the lake—along with the choking excitement of your battle against the defensive outfit of the bull—there's something about it all that makes it one of the supreme hours of a sportsman's life.

"But I've talked too long. I never know where to stop when I get on this subject. I'll pick out a good pair of snow-shoes for you. They'll come in handy for a part of our tramp. There's two feet of snow on the lake."

It was late before Mark slept that night and then he

dreamed of being engaged in a terrible fight with Slade Lamond. Florine Laramie was somewhere in the background and she was calling out for him to kill the half-breed. Then Lena Durston somehow got into the picture. She was addressing Slade in most endearing terms and cheering him on in his fight. Mark was not much given to profanity but when he heard Lena's honeyed words to Slade all the bad language he knew poured from his lips in a black boiling spate. He told her what he thought of her and where she might go. Then he suddenly woke. A hand was on his forehead. He looked up and saw Slade bending over him.

"Youm haf de bad dream, eh, das so? Time for roll out now."

Mark sprang from his bunk.

"Jove! I've had a hell of a dream! Everything topsy-turvy! Regular bubbling of witch's broth! All from listening to an exciting moose yarn Mitchell was telling me last evening. I say, Slade, you beat an alarm clock. Do you ever sleep at all?"

"Oui, me sleep like log. Das vaire good."

Mark told him in confidence of the proposal Mitchell had made. Slade smiled pleasantly for a moment and then a shadow came across his face.

"Youm be de beeg frien' now wit' Mitchell, eh, das so?"

There was no mistaking the note of apprehension and the accent of appeal in the half-breed's simple words. Mark put a hand on his shoulder affectionately.

"He's a good friend to me, Slade, and I need him. I like him too. But, of course, he can never be a chum of mine like you are."

Slade threw back his head and laughed, showing his gums and the red roof of his mouth.

"By gat, dat mak' me feel vaire bully. Youm no go back on me, eh? Us all time de beeg frien', eh? Youm be beeg boss purty soon. What den? Us de beeg frien' all de same, eh? Das so?"

"Look here, Slade, I'm not likely to be any kind of a boss very soon. But if I do get on, it won't make any difference between you and me. I'll always want you for a friend."

"Bon! Me be dere on de spot! Us de beeg frien'. Youm de Mark boss; Slade Lamond, me."

Mitchell and Mark got promptly away on their enterprise. A stiff breeze was blowing. They found it half a gale when they left the shelter of the bush and struck out upon the snow covered ice of Loon Lake. The wind whipped the snow into their faces, stinging their cheeks and half blinding their eyes. Yet Mark did not fail to be impressed by the solemn grandeur of the white and green world which spread before them here. This was indeed the "forest primeval" that rimmed the lake and stretched away in billowy masses far as the eye could see. Swept by the wind it seemed to be roaring out in challenge to any human being who might venture to step a foot within its dark mysterious depths. The fighting element in Mark's nature was roused. He felt a sudden and fierce desire to penetrate to the recesses of that tossing sea of pine and subdue the mightiest creatures lurking in its dim and secret lairs. The wine of the wild had gone to his head.

At the shore of the lake they halted to strap on their snow-shoes. For a mile or more they travelled up the ice and then struck into the bush. Here they removed their snow-shoes and slung them over their shoulders again. The growths were too thick for progress to be made on this expansive footgear. A quarter of a mile from the lake they came upon the signs of a moose yard. Mitchell carefully scanned the hoof prints.

"It's all right," he said; "we're well to leeward of them. I don't think they're more than a mile away. But one can never tell. Something may have put it into their heads to go on a roving expedition and they may be ten miles off. However, we must be on the lookout now every second. We'll travel slowly and dead against the wind and fifty yards apart. Get your rifle out of the case and have it ready for any emergency! Be sure to keep on the level with me! It doesn't do for one to go ahead of the other. Almost every winter someone gets killed that way. The other fellow loses his head in the excitement of creeping upon a yard and mistakes his mate for a moose. Almost anything in the bush will look like a moose to

you when you're fully expecting to see one the next instant. I guess you're fairly cool. Got your head screwed on all right, eh?"

"Can't vouch for the coolness, sir, but I won't shoot you, that's sure."

"Not likely you'll shoot anything, however good a chance you get, if you aren't cool. You'll fire at the sky. All excitable first-timers do that. But if you can remember to aim first at the ground under your moose and then gradually raise your gun, it may help you. Now then, mum's the word, sharp's the outlook and quick's the action at the proper moment."

For an hour they followed the moose tracks which seemed to grow no fresher than they were at the beginning. Then they came together for a whispered conversation. Mitchell predicted that they were in for a long if not a fruitless tramp.

"That's the worst of it in this weather and in such thick bush. One can't tell if the tracks are a day or a week old. We'll go on for another hour anyhow. It's fortunate they're travelling parallel with the lake so that, if we do bag anything it will be easy to get it out."

A few minutes later Mitchell raised his hand and then pointed to the ground. There were signs that the moose had spent the night here and were not long away. Mark's heart was thumping hard and the pulses were singing in his throat. But his hands were steady. He was one who could impose the strength and calm of his will upon fluttering nerves. Fortunately, too, he had another ten minutes before the test arrived. He had turned the foot of a knoll and was looking keenly down the narrow aisles between the trees in front of him, when he sighted something huge and dark, that certainly had slightly moved. Rocks did not move. No more did stumps. For an instant a mist came into his eyes, but presently he was seeing clear again. Yes! Bang! The creature leaped and fell. Ah, there it was again! Bang! But that moose took a lot of killing, or else his aim had been poor. For there it was again! Bang! once more.

Mitchell was now beside him. his face tense with excitement.

"I hope you haven't been wasting bullets on some old stump. I haven't seen a darn thing that looked the least bit like a moose. Of course, they're off now for good and all if they were within a mile of us. Which way were you shooting?"

"Over there!"

"Well, there might have been something there. If so, they took a bit of a turn. I hope you've got one."

They went forward about thirty yards and there, in close proximity with one another they found three warm dead moose.

Mitchell stood and looked at them for a moment in silence. His rifle was under his right arm and his hands were thrust deep into his trousers' pockets.

"Blazes! It's the same old story! The greenhorns get all the luck. But I say, Woodburn, this is some moose-killing. Far as I know, it's up to the record for the Tobiatic country. It's only once in a dozen years that one rifle does so well. I've never heard of more than three at a go. Guess that's about all there ever is in a yard. Congratulations! The camp will brag about this forever."

XX

A MAJOR event in camp life is the arrival of the post with its budget of letters from home. Mitchell's was favoured in this way about once a fortnight, when teams with supplies came in. They had been six weeks in camp before Mark received his first letter from O'Leary.

". . . It's great joy your letter brought to Darling dear and me, with all the news of your journeyings and your doings in the bush. It's a big and bright life ye'll be living up there now, I'm thinking, and ye'll be flourishing well in mind and body. Shure, and it was a good bit of work ye did in sending down the order from that rascal, Slade Lamond. Marchette and Julie will now have every comfort through the long cold winter, along with the blessing of quiet and thankful hearts.

"When I broke the good news to Marchette the glad tears slid glistening down every furrow of her cheeks and her sweet old face looked for all the world like a sun-kissed hillside all astream with the melting snows of Spring. . . . 'Heem be good feller, my boy Slade! Mebbe youm say some ting for heem to Blessed Virgin.'

"It's a trying time we've been having with Jacques Levigne and the bad foot of him. It had to come off. Charles Durston performed the operation. Darling dear has been there a good deal with watchful eye and helping hand. Florine has been kind and willing. She's a tender hearted girl.

"Joe Laramie is away from work with bad lungs. I don't like the look of him nor the sound of his cough. I'm thinking if ye could send me a pot of pure pine balsam fresh from the tree, I might concoct a mixture that would help him. It's wonderful the healing grace that's shed from the heart of a pine when its side is gashed by the axe. The bleeding pine has medicined many a sick man into health before to-day.

"It's just a jar of honey I'm sending ye, to let ye know that your memory here is as sweet as the essence of the honeysuckle and clover. And there's a pair of socks from Darling dear, who charges me to tell ye that there's a loving wish knit in with every stitch. Ye'll please to be writing again soon. . . ."

A team was leaving for White Lake in the morning. That night the lights in the cook-house burned late.

Two score of scribes were toiling at the tables. Their faces wore a strained and troubled look. They crouched low over their task. Perspiring foreheads were mopped with brawny hands which presently left dark stains upon the paper. Ink blots were dropping thick as hail. Tongues were protruded or tucked into bulging cheeks. Mouths were twisted into curious shapes.

They found the pen a more awkward tool than the axe or peevy. The wretched thing was so light and erratic in its movements. Now it would be jabbing a hole in the paper, now gliding away to the boundary. When pen was exchanged for pencil the case was not much improved. The brittle lead broke off exasperatingly.

What to put down was the biggest puzzle. These confounded pens and pencils, which were supposed to serve as channels of communication, seemed to put a blockade against thought. One had a bright idea in his mind a moment since, but at the point of transcription it had fled.

Some of the letters were for wives, more of them for sweethearts. Over the latter the most painful struggles took place. It is easy enough to make a girl understand your meaning when you have her by you where you can smack her on the hands, push her about and do sundry other loverly things, but how can you depict your burning emotions on paper? You cannot paint the heat of fire. You cannot sketch a soul in black and white. You cannot print the melody of a heart song. These things are simply impossible. You bite the end of your pen handle in despair. Then you write the things you have no need to write and leave unwritten the things you ought to have written, and there is no continuity or illumination in you.

Moreover, how can one keep his wits about him when his mates are all the while breaking in upon him with their

banter? How dare he touch upon deep personal matters when other fellows have their eyes on him and some are even peering over his shoulder? And how can the writing be made to look like anything but the tracks of some wandering bird, when clumsy or mischievous chaps continue to bump against the scribe? It is truly a time of tribulation.

Mark wrote a long newsy letter. He gave a detailed account of the life of the camp and of his own experiences in trapping and shooting. He had a good deal to say about Mitchell, whom he regarded as a really great man.

". . . It's a wonderful help to me to be under a man like him. He seems to know something about everything. A great reader and a deep thinker. He could surely get better jobs than this if he wanted them. But he loves this life. It's an education for me to have the privilege of long talks with him."

He wrote warmly about Slade Lamond.

" He's a wonderful fellow, powerful and tireless in body and with a heart as big as a house. He seems much like a child in some ways, but he's no fool. On the contrary he's rather shrewd. He sticks to me like a burr and I like him ever so much. He swears by all the saints that he won't go on de whisky drunk no more. He has great respect and love for his Curé."

Slade had been hovering around until Mark should be through with his writing. Then he went forward quickly and with an eager look on his face.

"Me no do de ink-sling trick. Mebbe youm write leettle word for me, das so? Leettle word for Curé read to Marchette."

" Sure, Slade, that's a fine idea. Your mother will be pleased."

Slade glowed with smiling importance.

" By gar, mak' her smile on de lip, eh? Mak' her shine on de eye, eh, das so? "

" That's what will happen, without a doubt. Wait till I get some more paper! There! Now come on! Tell me what to write! I'll put it down just as you say it."

Slade stood first on one foot, then on the other. He thrust a hand under his belt. He tugged at his front hair. At length he said :

"Ole mudder Marchette and Julie too. It's fine time us haf' on de bush. Plenty for eat, warm for sleep. Easy work, plenty wage. Me no need de money. Youm haf' it all. Forty dollaire till now. More for roll up. Git de warm clothe an' good grub! Some ting red for Julie come Christmas! De bear grease I sen', Mark shoot heem. De gum I pick off de tree. Mebbe youm geev dat to Florine. Das all for say dis time.

"SLADE LAMOND, ME."

XXI

THE traveller in the bush is assured of a hearty welcome for the night if he can reach a logging camp.

Should the visitor be a half-breed trapper, or an Indian pot-hunter who comes straggling in at dusk, his furs will be examined by critical eyes, while expert advice will be given as to the best trapping areas and hunting grounds. Should he be a timber-ranger, he will be told of tens of thousands of unclaimed mammoth pines "up Frozen Ocean way." For a consideration, there are men in the camp who can put him in the way of making his everlasting fortune. If he is a camp inspector, it will be late before he gets to bed. He is surrounded by groups of serious, wise-looking men, all of whom have valuable hints to offer upon the best method of running a logging "joint." Should he be a teamster, bringing fresh supplies and letters from home, he will receive an ovation.

Of all the men who visited the camps of the Tobiatic country no one was hailed with such universal cordiality as "Daddy" Dixon, the colporteur. By common consent his was the most winsome personality a-foot in the bush. No one could approach him in power to stir the stagnant pool of camp life.

"Daddy" had a round pink face, a pair of sky blue eyes and a shiny bald head. The men were fond of saying there wasn't a hair between him and heaven, a saying that carried as much truth as poetry. He commended himself to the men on various grounds. He was an excellent woodman, plucky, hardy, ingenious, able to shift for himself under the most difficult conditions. Exaggerated stories were told of the way he had fended for himself in nights of blizzard and of how he had slept as bed-fellow with the bear and the lynx. He was a man of independent spirit; no whiner and no pious sponger. He asked no favours. He sought to confer them. Withal, he had a

pretty wit, a constant flow of humour, a clean-shearing edge of sarcasm when it was needed, and an inexhaustible fund of pleasing anecdotes.

" Daddy " had desired and had tried to be an evangelist. But his humanitarianism had defeated his evangelism. Deep down in his sub-consciousness he believed in the perfectibility of man's nature without supernatural aid. Of this belief he was happily unaware. If such a doctrine had been put before him in plain words he would have denounced it as a heresy. It is only the occasional man who can truly say, I know what I have believed.

Certainly " Daddy " had never tried to ram religion down men's throats. He would acknowledge that. He thought the Kingdom of Heaven could enter the heart of a man as the scent of a Mayflower entered his nostrils. He believed it was his duty to bring what light and warmth he could to bear upon the men, and leave the Kingdom to achieve its own entrance into their lives.

But of late the worm of discontent had been gnawing at his soul. He was not satisfied with his methods, nor with the visible results of his work. He had been a sower of the good seed, but he had bound no sheaves. Or, when he changed the figure, he counted himself an unsuccessful fisher of men. He would cast his net into the shining waters that seemed to be all alive with swarming souls, but instead of promptly and boldly pulling it in, after the approved fashion of the travelling evangelist, he would leave it floating on the tide of their emotions. His fish were never landed. When again he changed the figure, he told himself that he had never definitely booked a single recruit for the army of his King. He hoped that some promiscuous and temporary good had been done in the camps he visited, but he had gathered no tangible fruits of his labours, and could look for no stars in his crown. He doubted if there would be any crown at all for him, starred or starless.

As he looked into his own heart he concluded that he had been ruined in his work by the fear of man. Many a time he had tried to screw his courage to the point of asking the men to speak out and pledge themselves to a better life, but he had always funked it in the end. Some-

how, he felt it was hardly fair to the men to press them at this point. How could any one or two of them openly break away from the broad to the narrow path unless the whole lot of them did it? They were a flock. Bound together by the close contacts of camp life, each man aware of every act of his neighbour, knowing every word that was on his lips and almost every thought that passed through his mind, it would be a daring thing for anyone alone to commit himself to a new way of life.

Yet, when he penetrated to the core of the matter he was left with the conviction that he was a coward. He had not asked the men to hold up their hands or to sign a card simply because he was afraid to do so. They might make no response. They might sit motionless. They might smile derisively. Thus they would expose and accentuate the feebleness of his preaching. That was where the rub had been all the while.

For this visit to Mitchell's camp he made the journey from White Lake on foot, dragging a toboggan load of books, magazines, illustrated papers and tracts. Everything was to be given away except the copies of the sacred scriptures. The men were well able to pay for these and he could not think of putting them on a level with other writings.

He arrived on Saturday and that evening conducted a free-and-easy. The gift literature was spread out on a table. He sold a few Bibles. Then he gave a little talk on current events, told a few amusing anecdotes, and led a sing-song. All the while he kept hailing old acquaintances and making new ones.

He had an extraordinary memory for faces and names. It might have been years since he had seen a man, and then in some distant camp, but "Daddy" would spot him and name him in an instant. He picked up new names with equal readiness. In the course of two days he would know the name of every man in the camp and the place he came from. People wondered at this unusual faculty. They concluded it must be his gift.

In truth, it was as much a gift of the heart as of the head. He learned quickly and remembered long because he focussed his attention and interest upon each man in

turn. He cared for them ; not as the egoist, caring only that men should attach themselves to him, build themselves around him, create for him an instrument of power, make for him a name and a place and an income, but purely for the help he could impart. His concentration was the expression of his genuine affection.

" Daddy " was no sloppy sentimentalist. While his heart was a brimming pool of love, he was yet shrewd and keen. He was a good reader of character. The man did not walk the bush who could hoax him or pull the wool over his eyes. The men knew this, with the result that their fondness for him was interwoven with a firm respect, and touched with something of wholesome fear.

The following day he spent among the men, seizing upon such opportunities for private conversation as came naturally in his way. He made himself one with them. He slept, dressed, washed, shaved, and ate in their company. If they indulged in sports, wrestling, quoit-pitching, hammer-throwing, he looked on with interest. He would write letters for men who knew not how to wield the pen.

On the evening of his arrival the colporteur's attention was much engaged with Mark. He watched and studied him. He noted the finely balanced, well-poised head, the broad brow matched by a certain massiveness of jaw. He noted the intelligent, thoughtful, kindly eyes ; the firm but sympathetic mouth. He observed the breadth and depth of shoulder ; the length and breadth of back ; the lithe, clean-moulded limbs. " Ah ! " he thought ; " here's a type ! Head of a thinker on the body of an athlete. *Mens sana in corpore sano.* Thoroughbred. Strength, sense and soul. Capacity, power, leadership. But why here ? Seems happy and at home. Something mysterious."

In the middle of Sunday afternoon he found opportunity for a quiet talk with Mark.

" Your name's Woodburn, I believe. Don't think I've met you before. Where do you hail from ? "

" I make my home with Father O'Leary at Otnaby."

" Relative of his, I suppose."

"No. I fell in with him when I was hard up and he's been mighty kind to me."

"He would be. He's a mighty good man. I've known him for many years. He should have been a Bishop. Anywhere else but at Otnaby he'd have been a great preacher. You'll be a Roman Catholic, I take it."

"No, I'm a Protestant. I wish I could be a Roman Catholic for his sake. I think it troubles him that I'm so stiff against it. He seems to have his heart set on getting me into the Church."

"That's strange. I've always found him most tolerant and broad-minded. He's been good to me. Always encourages me in my work."

"I think it's his loving interest in me that accounts for his eagerness to make me a Catholic. He . . . he's almost more than a father to me."

"Well, it's better to be a good Catholic than a poor Protestant. There isn't much, anyway, in being a mere Protestant. It isn't what we protest against that counts, but what we stand up for and support. We don't live by our negations but by our affirmations and enthusiasms. You believe that, don't you? I sometimes think the devil is a Protestant."

Mark puckered his brows.

"I think I see what you mean. It's a new idea to me."

"Well, hold on to it and turn it over in your mind! You may find it fruitful. It isn't what one abhors but what one cleaves to that builds the soul. We grow not by our dislikes but by our devotions. We cannot live by our disgusts but only by our enthusiasms. It is only as we fix our hearts on what is positively good that it becomes worth while to fight the evil. Error is to be killed not by the sword of the intellect but by the flame of the heart that loves the truth. God is to be found not by the idol-breaker but by the altar-builder."

"Daddy" paused to let his words sink in. After a space he said:

"I hope you follow me. The gist of it is this: Be a Christian and then it won't much matter whether you're a Protestant or a Romanist."

"What does it mean to be . . . a Christian?"

"It means to put your trust in God and try to be true to your highest self. That is what Christ did. That makes one a Christ's man, a Christian."

"Are you sure? Might it not as well make one a Mohammedan or a Buddhist?"

Daddy was silent for a moment. Then he said:

"Not you. Not anyone here in this country. Not now in this age and land when Christ's teachings about God and man are so well known. Not with His example shining so brightly before men. The light on the path He trod puts all other paths in shadow. In trusting God and trying to be true to your highest self you will inevitably be led into spiritual fellowship with Christ. You will become His disciple, His follower, His man."

Mark looked at "Daddy" and smiled.

"I like that simple way of putting it," he said. "Much of the religious talk I've heard has only been confusing to me. That's my trouble with the Romish Church. I can't see through its doctrines. I can't see anything in its forms and ceremonies and symbols. They get me all mixed up. They make everything look all blurred."

"Daddy" put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a spectacle case. He opened it and drew forth a pair of glasses.

"Put these on and tell me how things look to you."

Mark put them on and glanced about the room.

"All blurred and dull! They fairly blind me."

"Just so! Now, that's because you have a sound, strong, keen eye in your head. But I can see a lot better with those glasses than without them. I read in them. I can't read without them. Can't make out a letter of ordinary print. When I put them on the letters all stand out distinctly. They're a great help to me. Couldn't get on without them in my work.

"And so it is with the forms and symbols of the Church. They help the weak soul-sight. They probably help more souls than they hinder. There are not many perfect eyes either in men's heads or in their souls."

This was the unexpected.

"But . . . but . . . Mr. Dixon. . . ."

"No, no, call me 'Daddy!'"

"Well, then, 'Daddy,' it seems to me you are rather defending the Romish Church than condemning it. I took you to be a Protestant. I . . . I don't quite understand."

"Yes, I am a Protestant. I accept their doctrines, in the main, and observe their forms of worship. But I don't condemn others who find God by a different road. The Roman Church can make saints out of certain types and temperaments. It has made millions of them. Why should I condemn? But I think John Annis is waiting to speak with me. I'll have to leave you. Perhaps we can have another little talk before I go. In any case, give my love to Father O'Leary!"

XXII

" DADDY " hugely enjoyed his Sunday with the men. By the time they had finished their evening meal there was scarcely an individual among them with whom he had not held a little private and pleasant conversation.

That evening was memorable in the history of Mitchell's camp and no less memorable in " Daddy's " life. There was not a single absentee from the service he held. As usual they began by singing a number of favourite hymns. Then " Daddy " rose to address them.

He proposed to tell them the story of a lion fight he had been reading about in an old book. He liked the book and he liked the story. The lion in the case was a bad lion. It was a man-killer that found its way from the desert and made sad havoc amongst certain outlying settlements. The terror of that lion spread far and wide. There were women who could not sleep at night for the thought of what it might do next. Children cried out in fear at the mention of it. It had the run of the region till one day a plucky chap named Benaiah located him in a pit and went down and tackled him. It was a cramped place for conducting a fight, and to make matters worse there was a big snowstorm on. The floor of the pit was thick and slippery with the snow. But the lion was there and unable to get away, so Benaiah went for him.

" And now what would you say if I told you that while he was fighting for dear life and for the lives of others, someone went to the edge of the pit and kicked a mass of snow down into Benaiah's face? "

" Daddy " paused for an answer.

" I say, what would you think of one who did the like of that? "

" He'd be a dirty son of a dog! " shouted John Annis, as he drove his right fist into the palm of his left hand.

" Well yes, if he did it intentionally. But suppose it

was only done in carelessness? What if he was only looking on in amusement and didn't quite realise what he was doing? How about that, John?"

"Give him two years for manslaughter! Orter gone into the pit himself to lend a hand. Cowardly cuss, I'd say. Let him do two years in jail! If he was messin' round like that he was too big a dam fool to be left at large."

John looked around upon the assembly and the men greeted his outspoken opinion with applause.

"Well, boys," continued "Daddy," "that chap Benaiah happens to be here to-night. He's fighting under another name, but that doesn't matter. He's facing his lion in a pit and he's having a mighty hard time of it. He's got snow enough to contend with in the pit without having any more kicked in his face from outside. I want him to have a fair chance."

The men were all attention. They began to have some inkling of what "Daddy" was driving at.

He went on to tell them that every man had to do his hardest fighting in the pit of his own heart, and what with one thing and another it was slippery footing.

He reminded them of the lions they had to fight. There was the lion of their lust. It was a fierce lion, ever crouching at the door. When roused it would mercilessly pursue its prey with stealthy tread and dripping jaws. Had that lion broken loose in any of them? Had they left devastation and mourning behind them in the places where they came from, through the ravages of that beastly passion? Were dark shadows gathering over homes out yonder because of what they had done? Had they left shame and heartbreak and despair behind them by failing to fight that lion?

Ungovernable temper was another lion they should be fighting. The cruel and false words men flung about them were mostly shot out in the heat of anger. The hasty and savage blows they struck were the gestures of senseless wrath. Every day friendships were being strained and broken, never to be repaired, because men refused to fight this lion in their hearts.

Some of them were endangered by their appetite for

drink. They couldn't smell whisky, or get glimpse of a flask without going wild for a spree. They would come into the bush drunk and then fling away their whole winter's earnings in a miserable drinking bout on the way home.

He knew that after men got into such troubles they had their times of remorse when they made up their minds to fight these evil impulses. And then, like as not, some acquaintance or perhaps some chum would thoughtlessly put snow in his way. Not many would do it intentionally or deliberately. But it tripped up the fighter all the same.

Of course, if a man made a secret of his fighting; if he chose to do it in the dark; if he pretended to be indifferent to the presence of the lion in the pit, he deserved all the snow that might be kicked in his face. He ought to let his mates know what he was at. He ought to give them a chance to do the decent thing by him.

Men were so foolishly shy about this business. In fact, they were cowardly. They couldn't stand up to a little banter. They were ready to curl up in their shells if somebody sneered. He believed more men failed in this world for lack of courage than from any other cause. He wished they had the pluck to be frank and open about the fact that they wanted to be better men and were asking God to help them. They might get on then and accomplish something.

"Daddy" had been sailing along majestically with his address, feeling as brave as any hero that ever fought a lion, when suddenly he felt all his own courage oozing out through his finger-tips. He knew he ought to go straight forward and challenge the men to declare themselves there and then. But he funked it. Instead of doing what his conscience told him to do, he suddenly concluded his address and announced a hymn. He knew in that instant he had lost his soul. And he had thrown away the golden moment for binding sheaves.

But before the hymn could be started Joe Ringor was on his feet.

"Just a minute, 'Daddy!' I want to ask a favour."

"Yes, Joe, what is it?"

"I want to ask if you think God can save a coward?"

"Daddy's" first impulse was to answer the question in the negative. But then, there might be another coward in the room besides himself and he didn't want to discourage anybody. Possibly Joe's own conscience was asking the question.

"Sure He can, Joe! Just try Him and you'll soon find out!"

"Well, that's good news, 'Daddy,' for I'm a rotten coward. The day afore I left home I signed the pledge against drink. I broke it the very next day, just because I didn't have sand enough in me to stand bein' chaffed a bit by the boys. Seems I can't drink at all without gittin' drunk and makin' a beast of myself. I ain't blamin' the boys. They didn't mean no harm. It was just my own stinkin' cowardice. When I go home and the wife asks me if I kept the pledge, I'll likely lie to her. Too much of a coward to own up. Guess I'm in a bad way. Seems to me I ain't wuth a kick from a mule. I'm just a low-down mangy pup. But I'm wantin' to do better. If you think God'll look at me and give me another chance and mebbe a little help, I don't mind sayin' I'd like to strike a bargain with Him on His own terms. If you like you can write down my name to that effect."

"Daddy's" heart turned a back somersault. Slowly he rose to his feet, but before he could utter a word John Annis broke in.

"Hold your hosses for a jiffy, 'Daddy!' It happens I'm the skunk that got Joe drunk. I'm the dirty son of a dog that kicked snow onto him when he was fightin' his lion. I orter be hosswhipped for it. But I ain't never goin' to do sich a thing agin, so help me God! I want to be a better man and I'm goin' to ask God to help me. I don't care a continental darn who knows it. You can put my name down under Joe's."

Before Annis had finished men were standing up all over the room.

"Whoa, back a bit!" cried Annis. "Give 'Daddy' a chance! This ain't a hoss race."

"Daddy" was no longer on the blighted orb that men call Earth. He had been caught up into the seventh heaven.

"Just a minute, boys, till I get out a little book!"

With trembling hands he produced a small blank book with ruled lines.

"If you don't mind, I'd like to write a few words across the top of the page."

Presently he said:

"This is what I've written:

"'Mitchell's Camp, Upper Tobiatic.

"'December 18.

"'We the undersigned put our names down here to declare that we want to be better men and want God to help us.'

"I'm going to sign this myself after you've put your names down."

"I say, 'Daddy,' if your name goes to that there document it must go at the top."

"All right, John."

"Daddy" signed his name.

Joe Ringor and John Annis followed. Then the men trooped forward. In all fifty-three names went down. A few of the men asked "Daddy" to write for them, they were such poor penmen. But he insisted that all who could write at all should do it for themselves. He declared that the Recording Angel was an expert in deciphering handwriting.

One of the last to go forward was Mark.

As he was about to turn away he found Slade Lamond at his elbow smiling. Slade wasn't clear as to what all this meant, but he had caught something of the drift of things. Anyway, he knew he must stand with Mark.

"Daddy" looked at him questioningly, but held out the pen. The half-breed shook his head.

"Slade Lamond, me!"

"Yes, I know. Don't put your name down if you think the Priest wouldn't like it!"

"Das all right. De Mark boy, heem write for me."

Mark took the pen and wrote: "Slade Lamond, me." Opposite the words Slade made his mark.

When all who wished to do so had signed, "Daddy" suggested they should sing. What would they like to sing?

Joe Ringor sprang to his feet.

" I'd like if we could have the hymn Mark was hummin' on the road to White Lake. It's 243 in the book. ' When the roll is called up yonder I'll be there.' "

They sang that and then other hymns for half an hour. It was now time to bring the meeting to a close. " Daddy " Dixon was no longer a coward.

" Before we break up, boys, I want someone to put the words we've subscribed to in the form of a prayer. I don't just know who to ask, but I think it should be Joe."

Joe slowly rose to his feet. But not a word could he utter. He stood for a minute, then broke into sobs, and sank into his chair.

" It's up to you, John," said " Daddy."

Annis looked about him and coughed. Then he got to his feet. Joe Ringor was sitting just in front of him. Thrusting one hand into Joe's long hair and gripping his shoulder with the other, John proceeded :

" This is a new stunt for me, Lord, and you'll please excuse mistakes. We just want to say that we hope the names as has been put down in ' Daddy's ' book may be the names of real white men. We ain't that now, but ' Daddy ' says you can clean us up. And, I say, we want you to help us not to chuck no snow at each other when any of us is fightin' his lions. That's all I can think of just now, so no more at present, and hopin' you are the same, from yours truly, John Annis."

John lifted his head and straightened his shoulders.

" Now then, boys, three cheers for ' Daddy ' Dixon ! "

After the cheers had been given " Daddy " said :

" It's the most wonderful thing that ever happened in my life, boys, and I reckon it just came in time to save my soul. I've been a coward all along. Scared of *you!* Afraid to ask you to do anything like this ! You've cured me of that. This little book will never leave me. It will go with me to my grave."

XXIII

Towards the end of March a cold storm of rain beat down upon the bush for a day and a night. When it was over the men found themselves in a world of flashing crystal. On the snow a glistening crust had formed thick enough to bear a man's weight. Where the snow had been previously packed down and worn smooth, as on the main log-roads, all was now a blue glare of ice.

The trees had been turned into glass: each trunk a column of glass, each branch an arch of glass. The myriad needles of the pines had been converted into tiny pyramids of glass. As the morning sunlight struck across this crystal world the scene was one of dazzling splendour. There were moments when some tall scintillating pine became suddenly a mass of dancing rainbows. There were moments when whole lines of trees, simultaneously stricken by the light, blossomed into long vistas of iridescence. It was fairyland. It seemed a world too sparklingly brilliant for dull earth-bound beings to inhabit.

It was a world of sweet unearthly music. Each tree had become a steeple hung with countless little silver bells which, at the slightest breath, rippled into tinkling chimes. It was a grand festival in honour of the Ice King. There was pageantry and pomp of orchestration. Though the show had been extemporised it was perfect to its finest detail. Slender saplings trembled with delight and quivered through all their fibre to find themselves converted into instruments of music. Giant trees swayed to the intoxication of their own new-born melody. Even to brush against a bush was now to release a shower of liquid notes.

Yet, with all its glitter and its music it was a treacherous world. Neither horse nor man could get about in their accustomed foot-gear. Nothing but a creature with clawed feet could keep upright. The lynx and the bear could manage, but the moose with their smooth hoofs were

helpless. In pathetic fashion they were slipping and sprawling and spraining themselves all over the Tobiatic country. Soon the most of them were down and down to stay until this strange ice world should melt away.

In order to carry on their work the men changed from moccasins to spiked boots. The smith was busy sharpening the horses, but even the keenest shoeing could not make them safe for working on steep roads of glass.

It proved to be a fleeting world. It was built in a night to vanish in a day; a transient splendour, a passing spectacle. On the second day the temperature rose and in an hour the trees stood dripping and disconsolate, weeping for the short-lived glory. They were back once more in their ordinary work-a-day garb. The show was ended and invisible hands swiftly bore the scenery from the stage.

And now there were signs of an imminent break-up. A considerable quantity of the cut timber still remained to be hauled to the river. Mitchell was determined that the last log should be got to the stream. His men were of the same mind. This involved a week of tremendous strain. The choppers laid aside their axes to help the teamsters. Several days brought rain. On other days the sun shone strong. Every hour the roads grew softer and the work more difficult and dangerous for the horses.

Men armed with canthooks and handspikes accompanied the teams to lift the sled-runners that sank into slush or stuck on protruding rocks. The crew were often to their knees and sometimes to their hips in slush. But their spirits never failed. Enthusiasm rose as the end came into view. It was a race against time. The last day's work was one that none of them ever forgot. The whole bush was awash. The teams could only drag the fourth part of an ordinary load. But they cleared the winter's cut. By sunset the last log had been delivered at the river. It was a sore and aching crew that crept into camp that evening, but a triumphant one.

For the next two days they scarcely went beyond the cook-house and the stables. It was a welcome rest preparatory to starting work upon the drive.

The time was not wholly spent in idleness since there

was a certain amount of packing and camp clearing to be done. They were eager now for the change to the more exciting work of the stream. Any day the ice might run out of the Tobiatic, and immediately it was clear the driving work would be upon them. This would take them into the midst of varied and swiftly shifting scenes. The spice of danger would be ever present. They would be earning bigger wages. They would be facing homewards. It seemed as if the quickening springtime had set leaping in their blood something of the young wildness now running riot in the sap of every tree and shrub and flower-root of the forest.

It was an early freshet that year and a mighty one. Days of warm rain on deep lying snow set all the Tobiatic region steaming and streaming. The snow sank and faded like a dream. Hillsides roared with new-born cataracts. Rivulets were hatched in innumerable multitudes. Speedily the rivulets united into brooks, brooks grew to rivers, and rivers to inland seas. The Tobiatic, usually a sedate and sober stream, went on a prolonged spree. Growing hourly more intoxicated with its vast potations from the hills, it went rolling on its boisterous way mad drunk.

This vast glut of waters made the first week of the drive an anxious time. The logs must be kept on the move and well in the middle of the stream to prevent them straying and becoming stranded on the shores when the freshet fell. On both banks of the river they would be caught and held in thousands unless men were at hand to release them and send them on their way.

The work of the stream driver involves tremendous strain. He works to his knees and often to his waist in ice cold water. There is constant and heavy lifting to be done. Huge stranded logs must be caught up with cant-hooks and bodily borne into the stream. It is work that taxes every fibre of men's bodies and tests the core of their strength. It calls for the agility of the acrobat and the sheer strength of the wrestler. But men in the heyday of their strength love the work. In order to sustain the heavy drain upon their energies they feed heartily five times a day. They breakfast by lantern light and take their supper

after dark. They fall asleep over their evening pipe and lie in deep oblivion until dawn.

The second week of the drive brought a big jam at Snake Rock. This was one of the ugliest spots on the river—a winding ledge situated in a bend of the stream at the foot of a long rapid. It was the part of the Tobiatic called The Guzzle. More than one winter's operations had been brought to standstill and failure here. Rapidly falling water, involving a long delay at Snake Rock, spelled defeat.

A drive of logs dashing down the foaming waters of The Guzzle and making for Snake Rock was a sight to stir the blood. They were like wild horses. Sometimes a mighty log, running in a blue rip of water, and borne over a smooth rock would leap into the air like a steeple-chaser.

The jam began to form as the men were quitting work for the night. Mitchell was anxious. He got but little sleep. At day-break he had a picked crew ready to attack the piled up mass of logs which had now assumed formidable proportions. Among those chosen for the work were Slade and Mark. The half-breed looked at Mark and grinned.

"Youm be boss stream-driver now, das so? Youm stay wit' me vaire close on dis job! Das for keep eye on you. Slade Lamond, me."

Up the jagged mountain of logs the crew clambered swiftly till they reached the top. They seemed to have the feet of mountain goats. Like lightning they plied their canthooks, hurling the loose logs down the pile and sending them diving into the stream. The upper portion of the jam melted rapidly before their onset. Half way down the mass they encountered an intricacy of entangled timber that held them up for an hour. Then Mitchell, who was with them, gave warning that they were near a key log. When that should be loosened the great mass would disintegrate. It was like the exploding of a mine. The mighty force of the stream playing upon logs balanced at all angles would hurl them into the air and send them toppling and tumbling with resounding impact into the foaming waters below. This was the critical moment,

when men must leap for their lives from one flying log to another, dodging such as came darting at them, always making sure to keep their feet, since one false step would mean disaster if not death.

After locating what they believed to be the key log it was half an hour before they could work it loose, so deeply was it intricated in the bowels of the mass. Then, in an instant, the crisis came. There was a report like the booming of heavy guns. The air was full of flying timbers and of leaping men.

Once the jam had been dispersed the timber behind came grinding down. All day long a score of men worked on Snake Rock, keeping a constant stream of logs floating past. They worked as long as daylight lasted and were at work early on the following morning. A second jam had formed during the night but it was comparatively small and gave little trouble. Before dark that night the rear of the drive had passed the danger point.

Half way down the Tobiatic an event occurred which cast a gloom over the crew and indeed over many another gang of drivers throughout the country.

"Daddy" was on his way out of the bush. He had gone ten miles out of his course in order to spend the night with Mitchell's men. He was carrying a heavy pack and when he reached the river he admitted to himself that he was tired. He would be thankful to stretch himself out in front of a fire and rest. He was more tired than he knew.

Approaching the river on the side opposite the tents he noted that the stream was running thick with logs. He started to cross on the floating timber. Ordinarily he would have found this no great venture, but now with his load and his weariness it was a different matter. Attempting to leap from one running log to another, he misjudged the distance, or perhaps his strength. Finding himself in the rapid water he made frantic efforts to fling off his pack. But without success. The pack clung to him and dragged him under.

A cry was raised by those who had witnessed the mishap. Then three men went flying to the rescue. They were Joe Ringor, Slade Lamond and Mark.

Mark's feet seemed shod with lightning. They scarcely touched the logs in his skimming flight. Sometimes he could see the pack bobbing up, only immediately to disappear. Once he saw an arm thrust out and thrown over a log. As though possessed by a malignant demon the log wrenched itself away.

For an instant he caught sight of " Daddy's " face. It seemed to wear a look of surprise. In another instant it had sunk from view.

Diving to the spot where he had disappeared, Mark swam swiftly under water and presently came into contact with the drowning man. There was no movement in the body. He clung to it, however, and brought it to the surface. There Slade took the burden from him.

" By gar, dat be too bad! Heem not spik no more. Heem be wit' Jesu Son of Mary now."

It was a ticklish job to convey that lifeless burden safely to the shore. For upwards of an hour they wrought in the hope of fanning any faint spark of life which might might remain. At the end of that time they knew beyond a doubt that the spark had flown.

" Daddy " had often expressed the wish that he might be taken in the midst of his work and buried somewhere in the forest. So these men who loved him well laid his body to rest in a little grove of pines a stone's throw from the stream. There he would have the river to sing to him and the trees to whisper over him. Like the river his life had flowed clear and strong and freighted with wealthy gifts for his fellowmen. Like the pines it had run straight in the grain, sound to the core, fragrant and beneficent.

They lined his grave with evergreen and every man of the crew as he passed by threw a sprig of pine upon the rough board coffin.

No funeral was ever attended by a sincerer company of mourners. They were all " Daddy's " boys.

In an inside pocket, carefully wrapped in oilskin, they found the precious book containing their signatures and those of scores of men from other camps. All these had been taken during the last season. It had been the most fruitful season of his life. They laid the book on his breast under his clasped hands.

Mitchell read the committal service and then John Annis made a speech.

" Boys, I guess it's all O.K. with ' Daddy.' He ain't in for no more trouble. He's handed in his cheques and got 'em cashed. He's layin' where he'd like to be. He was some man, our ' Daddy.' "

He paused to get rid of a lump in his throat. Men were standing around him silently and with glistening eyes. One man was kneeling, with bowed head and clasped hands. It was Slade Lamond. One man was on his face. It was Joe Ringor.

" He's layin' there now, boys, with that little book on his heart. Our names is in it." He paused again. Joe Ringor sobbed.

" I guess we ain't sorry our names is there. They've got to stay there now. . . . It's up to us to go straight and stand by what we signed. . . . We don't want to make a fool of ' Daddy.' . . . He trusted us and we must be a lot of skunks if we don't make it worth while for him to keep on trustin' us."

XXIV

It was a great evening for Michael O'Leary when Mark and Slade came home from the drive. He met them at the shore where they landed from a boat. Throwing his arms around Mark he gave him a mighty hug. Then he held him off at arm's length and scrutinised his face.

"It's the backs of your eyes I'm looking at, me son. Shure, and it's them rear walls of the optics that tells the story of the soul. If there's anny grime or stain attachin' there it speaks of inward pollution. But faith, they're lookin' bright and clear."

He gave Slade a whack between the shoulders.

"And what have ye got to say for yourself, Slade, me boy? Ye're lookin' hearty. Shure, and Mother Marchette will be joyed to see ye."

Slade's ivories flashed into view.

"Us haf de good time. Us de beeg frien'."

They made a picturesque group as they strode up the village street. O'Leary towered above Mark and Mark towered above Slade. The latter walked a little behind the others, but close at Mark's heels.

Mark looked about him with eager interest. Notable changes had passed upon the village. In all directions signs of new life appeared. Fresh faces were in evidence. Men of a keener cut and a brisker step than Otnaby had been accustomed to were to be seen moving here and there.

"Ye see, me son, the progress they're makin' with the buildin' of the mills. The saw mill is nearly completed. They've a lot of the machinery in already and they'll be turnin' out lumber in six weeks from now. The lath and shingle mill is finished and so is the plainin' mill. That space they're levellin' over yonder is for the pilin' yard. And ye see the houses that's goin' up. We've already added about two hundred to our population, with a lot more to come."

"Yes, it's great," said Mark with enthusiasm. "We'll

be a little town here presently, when this business gets into full swing. Lovely location for one too. Finest on the St. John. Not another hill like ours on the river. It is beautiful in all seasons but I think it is at its best in the autumn when the maples are in flame. The two streams meeting here seem to braid the place with silver. I suppose those little houses are for the workmen. Can't say they're beautiful, but they'll probably serve their purpose."

"They're not bad at all at all. We'll be hopin' they may be clap-boarded later on, and mebbe in the fulness of time we shall discover paint. It will be a slab town to begin with but it can develop and improve. There's a score of them houses buildin' now and we expect to have fifty of 'em up by the end of the season. At present the men are livin' in them tents ye see along the shore."

"I was noticing them. Look something like a big gipsy encampment, don't they?"

O'Leary laughed.

"Och, begorra, that same was a lovely evenin' we had, me son. There was a vein of poetry runnin' through our movements in that little encounter. Poetic justice, I'm thinkin'—in the matter of the trout. But speakin' of our fine location here, wait till ye see me new Church risin' up grand and imposin' and overtowerin' the whole community! Shure, and that will be the outstandin' feature of the landscape."

"Good. I'm glad to hear about that. You'll certainly need a new building. That little place of yours only seats about forty people."

"It seldom seats the half of that, me son. But things will be different now in the new time. The mill hands will be mostly French from the Gaspé peninsular, and they're noted for their attachment to the Church. It's great days I'm lookin' forward to. But I've other news for ye. I've been in conference with Senator Charlton to-day. He sent for me. Had questions to ask about you."

"What questions?"

"Wanted to know about your education and what I thought of your reliability. He had been talking with Mitchell. What Mitchell said did ye no harm at all at all."

Mark slowed down and came almost to a stand-still.

"I don't think I understand the drift of this. Perhaps you'll explain."

"Shure, and with the greatest pleasure in the world. He's after engagin' a new boom foreman. He's lost Risteen and needs someone to take his place. They're in for a busy time this summer. They've more logs in the boom than ever before. There's been a record cut of timber all around the backlands of the St. John. The stuff is a rare mixture. They're aimin' to get out nine rafts a week this season instead of six. Charlton proposes to put on a big hustling crew and he's lookin' for the right man to take charge."

"Do you mean that he's thinking of me for the job?"

"Yes, that's his idea. Shure, and he's on the right track entirely."

Mark came to a dead stop.

"Oh, I say! This is a stunner! I couldn't take on anything like that. I'm too young and I don't know enough about the work."

"I'm thinkin' ye're scarcely the right and proper person to decide them questions. Shure, and ye're not a minute too young. Ye know how to get on with men. Ye've got the energy and the quick intelligence that's needed. Ye're to see Charlton to-morrow. I'm thinkin' the job is waitin' for ye if ye're minded to take it."

Mark wiped the perspiration from his forehead. He felt a slight tug at his coat. Turning swiftly upon Slade, he noticed a wistful look in the half-breed's eyes."

"What's the matter with you, Slade?"

"Youm take dat job! Us de beeg frien'! Youm de Mark boss. Slade Lamond, me."

He knew then that Slade was begging for a place on the boom and pledging his best support.

"By Jove, I'll take the job if they offer it to me, but only on condition that you go with me."

Slade was in ecstasy.

"By gar, us ma' de raf' grow vaire soon. Jus' sen' 'em out like shot from gun. Youm take dat job, yes."

Saying this, Slade parted company with them and went home to Marchette and Julie.

As O'Leary and Mark turned in at their gate, Janet rushed to meet them. She put her hands on Mark's shoulders and laid her wrinkled face to his.

"Shure, and he's got all the breath of the pine trees in the lungs of him and all the sparkle of the river in the eyes of him!"

O'Leary led him to his room.

"It's a sight for sore eyes to see ye in this room once more, me son. But ye'll just be hurryin' now, for supper will be ready in a minute. It's high feastin' we're in for this night. Ye couldn't be guessin', could ye?"

In excellent brogue Mark replied:

"Faith, and I smell 'em."

"Och, and it's the lovely Celtic ye could be doin' with a little practice. Shure, and I've often thought your mouth was just the proper shape for it. But come on with ye! It's spick and span ye are already without more fussin'. Don't be retardin' the main business of life!"

They seated themselves at the table. Presently Florine came from the kitchen bearing a huge platter. Without lifting her eyes she deposited her burden and turned away.

O'Leary called to her.

"What's the matter with ye, Florine? Don't ye see who's here?"

Mark was on his feet, holding out his hand.

"How are you, Florine? Glad to see you again."

She wiped her hand on her apron before putting it to his.

"Youm be all right on de bush, yes?"

With that she hastened away. O'Leary uncovered the platter. "Lifted eight of 'em this mornin' from a favourite old pool of mine. Four miles up the Emenetta, then a mile up the Black Brook. I was there at sunrise. Shure, and the sky was just one broad meadow of blossomin' lilac for half an hour before the sun came up. Marchette has four of them same trout for supper. Slade should be good for the two biggest of 'em. He's deservin' a tasty bit to put between the teeth of him. It's all his bush and drive money has come to Marchette. Over two hundred dollars. And not a cent of it has been wasted. It's Marchette herself is the thrifty soul. Now, I'm

thinkin' these are what may be termed the landed aristocracy. Begorra, it took some wrist to land 'em."

"No doubt," agreed Mark. I'm sure this chap was a fighter, by the build of him."

"Aye. Isn't he a lordly gent! He was holdin' his head high when I encountered him."

During the progress of the meal they talked of their experiences of the last six months. Mark told of happenings in the bush and on the river. O'Leary related the news of the village and the progress of affairs at Beddington.

"Ye'll be surprised to hear that Joe Laramie has gone. I buried him three weeks ago. He took Pneumonia in the winter and after that went into decline. I think the last part of his life was the happiest."

"I'm sure it was," said Janet. "He kissed Kate before he died. I saw him do it. She was sittin' beside him holdin' his hand. She was bendin' down over it. He turned himself in bed and kissed her on the sleeve. Kate looked up at me and said:

"'Joe Laramie my man now, all same like long time back!'

"Shure, and it's lonely for Kate in the cabin now. Florine goes up most evenins to spend an hour with her. I'd be likin' it better if she didn't go and come so much with that Joe Therrien. I'm not carin' for the cut of him at all at all. He's got a lecherous look. He's got an obtrudin' and retreatin' eye; over-bold and yet cowardly. Och, she's infatuaed with him. Until lately she was bright and happy. Now she seems disturbed and miserable. She's unhappy when she's seen him of an evenin' and more unhappy when she hasn't seen him."

"Perhaps you know that Slade is in love with her."

"Shure, and he's worth a dozen Joe Therriens. But how can ye make a girl see that, once she's obsessed by the wrong man?"

The conversation then turned upon the plans for the new Church. Mark enquired about the prospects for raising the money. O'Leary spoke hopefully, even confidently.

"Shure, and God disposes the hearts of men. I've had big encouragements already. Moore tells me I can have all

the stone I need free from the quarry. Charlton is donatin' the timber. That's a splendid gift, seein' he isn't one of us. But he has an eye to the general well bein' of the community in which he will be holdin' so big a stake. Then there's Durston. He's comin' in strong. Not only is he givin' five hundred dollars, but he's standin' behind the enterprise with all his influence.

" It's near demented I am at times with the joy of the prospect. I'm thinkin' now that the time may come when I shall not only have a pastoral function but a preachin' opportunity. I may have a people about me to whom I can open the best part of me mind. Shure, and that will be the fulfilment of manny a dream and the answer to manny a prayer. It's fair burstin' I am at times to utter the thoughts that arise in me. But God knew what was best. Instead of paintin' pictures on the minds of me fellow men, I've had to be diggin' strayed sheep out of ditches and pullin' 'em out of the thorn tangle. No doubt it was the work assigned me by heaven and best fitted to serve for the savin' of me soul. But if, in the days to come, there's a chance to utter me mind and heart in a fuller way, it's Michael O'Leary will be the glad and thankful man."

" I wish ' Daddy ' Dixon could have lived to see the new time ;" said Mark. " He had a high opinion of your preaching ability."

O'Leary's face flushed.

" I don't know how he came by that, but he was always charmin' with me. He had the habit of liftin' his hat to me, a habit most uncommon with Protestants. When I remonstrated with him, he said he was thinkin' of wearin' two hats on his visits to Otnaby that he might lift 'em both, one to the priest and the other to the man—the best one of 'em to the man. That was the sort of lingo he talked. But och, he was a pleasant creature, always bright and debonaire. He had the tenderness of a woman and yet he was essentially a man's man. There's manny a one holdin' high position in the Church that wouldn't make one side of him. There's less sunshine in this old world now than there was before he went away. I'm glad ye had contact with him. He was ever on close speakin' terms with The Almighty."

XXV

O'Leary was about to leave the Church on the following evening when, hearing a soft footfall, he looked round and saw Slade standing at the door with bowed head.

"Come in, Slade! Faith, and I'm glad to see ye here. It's not often I've seen your face within these walls of late years."

Slade went forward timidly, cap in hand. He crossed himself and genuflected before the Virgin and the altar.

"Me come to mak' de confess. Vaire bad man, me."

It had been two years since Slade last came to confession. O'Leary realised that he would be bearing the weight of the sins accumulated during that period. The sooner he could unpack the poor fellow's conscience, the better.

Having taken their seats, O'Leary said:

"Shure, and we're all sinful creatures, Slade. We're a bad lot entirely with the wicked hearts of us. But if we confess our sins and turn sharp away from 'em, it's forgiveness we get and peace for the soul."

"Gar! Plenty time me feel like hell inside. Vaire bad man, me. Slade Lamond, me."

"Yes, Slade, poor lad, I'm knowin' about that. There's manny a thing we do that sets fire to the conscience."

"Jess like de birch bark when youm touch heem wit' de match, eh? das so?"

"Yes, very much like that."

A long silence fell. Slade cudgelled his brains to find a convenient doorway that would admit the priest into the dark corridors of his soul. Presently he was dripping with perspiration.

O'Leary came to his help.

"We'll begin with the outbreakin' sins. Go ahead now!"

"Plenty time las' summer me go on de whisky drunk. Money for wage all go swill on de troat. No dollaire for ole' Marchette and Julie. Das be vaire bad, ain't it?"

"Och, Slade 'twas a bad business for shure. And it nearly broke your mother's heart. She suffered both in mind and body. Mannys a time I found her with nothin' but a few praties in the house to eat. But ye've been doin' fine of late in providin' for her. She's had comfort and joy of ye all through the winter and spring. I'm hopin' them old bad times is done."

"Me not go on whisky drunk no more. Me not mak' her cry on de eye. Me mak' her smile on de lip, and Julie too. She haf de money now for keep."

"Shure, and that's the right way to do. She'll take good care of it for ye."

"Oui, by gar! She know how for keep de stockin' leg. Ain't no feller for git hees hand in dat."

"True. And ye just keep handin' your wages to her, ye'll be well off soon."

"Me be de reech man purty quick, all time workin' for de Mark boss and no more whisky drunk, eh, das so?"

"That's the game, Slade."

Another long silence, during which Slade mopped his forehead and knocked his knuckles against his head.

"Plenty time on bush me no count de bead. Me no say de Hail Mary."

"Shure, and that's a disgrace to ye. And to manny another. Ye live like beasts. Ye take the good things of life from the kind God—food, clothes, shelter, health and strength and never say a thank you! For that ye'll take no supper to-night and no breakfast in the mornin'. Ye'll just be denyin' all food to the insides of ye till to-morrow noon. They'll be shoutin' out lively by that time, begorra."

"Oui, das so. Marchette, she say, us haf de ham an' egg for supper, den de egg an' ham for breakfas'. Heem smell vaire good. Me no touch heem. By gar, das so. Slade Lamond, me."

Slade smiled, seemingly well pleased with the penance imposed.

He was now beginning to limber up to his task.

"One time on camp come de Daddy Man. Sled and plenty book. Heem spik de men and mak' beeg hush. Some cry on de eye for lissen. Den name go down on book. All what sorry heem bad and try be good. De Mark boy put down for me. Mebbe youm no like dat?"

"Faith, and why shouldn't I like it?"

"Heem no pries', dat Daddy Man. Heem not like you. Youm be foreman for Jesu Son of Mary. Youm boss de camp. De Daddy Man, heem be only one for swamp de road."

"No, no, Slade, we won't be thinkin' anny thing like that. Daddy Dixon was a good man. He was my friend. He probably did more good in the world than I'll ever do. Ye did right to put your name in his book. I hope it will help ye to stick to your good resolutions. Shure, and 'twould make him happy."

"You tink mebbe he go dat place where be all time de sun shine and de sing song, eh?"

"Why, yes, Slade, I hope so. I feel shure of it. He didn't have anny standin' in the Church, but I'm thinkin' he stood well with God."

"By gar, if heem be up dere on de sky, me know one ting."

"What's that, Slade?"

"He'll be wantin' gimlet for bore one leetle hole on de sky for look down on crew in camp."

"Begorra, let's hope he'll get it. We'll be rememberin' Our Blessed Lord was a carpenter."

"Das so, eh? Den Daddy Man call for hax and chop beeg hole. Heem lay down on hees belly and all time kip lookin' troo dat hole."

O'Leary was thinking there might be as much truth as poetry in this view of the situation. But he was wishing Slade could make more rapid progress with his confessions. It was time for supper and he was hungry. Then it occurred to him how much hungrier Slade would be before he had performed his penance.

"Me feel vaire bad when he go drown on reever. Me mak' leetle cross and put on grave. Das bad for me, eh?"

"Not at all at all! It shows the good heart of ye. Och, Slade, me lad, ye've been a wild and foolish creature,

and manny's the time I've prayed for ye with sorrow in me soul. But Shure, ye're sound and true at the core and I love ye. Ye can just be goin' now and takin' absolution. Mebbe, if ye're feelin' extra hungry in the mornin' ye might have an egg or two, but no ham. I forbid the ham. And I'm thinkin' if ye just took a bowl of bread and milk this evenin' before ye go to bed, it may serve to remind ye what a child ye are in spiritual matters and how much ye need to be taught and trained."

"Oui, das so. But me come to mak' de confess. Me no do dat yet."

O'Leary settled back in his seat and resigned himself. He must be patient and go tenderly with this extraordinary penitent.

"Well, I thought ye had been confessin'. But out with what ye've been keepin' back!"

"Las' fall time, when start for bush, me go Beddington for tak' roll-way. Firs' ting, whisky drunk. One feller say, 'Haf leetle drink wit' me.' Den nex' feller say same ting. Den Slade wild crazy and look for some one mak' de beeg fight."

He paused to collect his thoughts and to wipe the sweat from his forehead.

"Shure, and it's the big fool ye was. Ye deserved a sound thrashin'."

"Oui, das so. On roll-way feel plenty good. Feel beeg like house. Bottle mos' full in pocket. Want some one drink wit' me. De Mark boy, heem not drink wit' any feller. All time shake hees head when de bottle pass. Jess sit dere and smile. Me say, youm haf leetle drink wit' me. No tank! Me vaire mad. Youm tak' drink, or youm tak' dat. Shake de fist at hees head. Heem say, Please geev me excuse. Den de fist go straight out at hees face. Me vaire bad man."

O'Leary's gorge had been steadily rising during this recital. Now his mighty wrath burst all bounds. He seized Slade by the throat.

"Ye low-lived filthy swine! Would ye be after smashin' the face of me precious boy with your brute's fist? Och, ye spalpeen! Take that! But for the restrainin' influences of the sanctuary and the convenient

grace of God, it's squeezin' the black soul of ye out of your windpipe, I'd be after doin'! "

He cuffed the half-breed with one hand and with the other shook him as a terrier would shake a rat. Slade offered no resistance and made no demur. Once he was released from the priest's grip he only waited to get his breath before proceeding.

" Das vaire good. Das mak' me feel vaire bully. But me no hit de Mark boy. Hees head not dere jess den. Fist go smash troo winder. Rip! Plenty blood all over! Mark boy git de bucket. Den all wrap-up. When leev roll-way, doctaire for sew wit' needle. One dollaire. Mark pay heem. Look dere! "

He showed the scars on his hand. Then he proceeded.

" Us de beeg frien' now. All time de beeg frien' on bush an' reever. Me like heem vaire mooch. By gar, heem want some feller what die for heem, jess sen' for me! "

O'Leary's eyes were moist. He tried to speak but the words stuck in his throat.

Slade was now the fluent party to the interview.

" Me git de forgeev for dat? De Mark boy—heem de Mark boss now—heem mak' de forgeev. Heem tink Slade no de worse feller as never was. Youm say de forgeev, oui, das so? "

" Och, Slade, it's forgiveness ye've had from God, and it's reformed ye are already. It's full absolution I'll be givin' ye for all that's passed since then. And begorra, ye may eat all the ham and eggs ye can lay your sides to. Be off with ye now! "

But Slade was not disposed to take an abrupt dismissal. He came so seldom to confession that he thought it worth his while to get all the comfort the exercise could yield.

He looked up into O'Leary's face with an appealing look. " Mebbe youm no let me say some ting what press heavy here, same like beeg rock."

He placed his hand over his heart in tragic fashion. " Shure, and ye can say anything ye want to. Only, let's not be all night about it."

" Florine Laramie, she leev wit' you, das so? "

" Yes, of course, you know that."

"Nice leetle gal, Florine. All time spik soft to Marchette and Julie. But she no look at me. When me wink on de eye she be fright, jess like one leetle bird when hawk come round. Mak' me feel vaire bad."

"Well, let's hope she'll get over that. She's young yet and shy."

"She no shy at dance las' evenin' when Joe Therrien spik her. Bah, hell! Heem no good. Plenty nice clothe and grease on de hair. All smile on de lip and scrape hees dam ole' fiddle. But heem no good. Heem bad feller. Hollow on de heart. Me know 'bout heem. By gar, some day me knock hell out of heem."

"I think you're right, Slade. Mebbe I can have a word with her about that."

"Mebbe some time youm say, Slade Lamond, heem not so vaire bad feller, eh, das so?"

"Leave it to me, Slade, to do the best I can."

"Das all right, by gar. She be Florine Lamond some day. Me kip de smile like dat, and jess watch out for Joe Therrien. Das all come right. Slade Lamond, me."

XXVI

Many a time while in the bush Mark had mentally scourged himself for indulging the luxury of loving Lena Durston. He told himself that it was preposterous. If Doug could know what was going on within him— how he was dwelling in thought upon the image of her, how he was sleeping at night with her breviary beneath his head, how he was whispering to her as he trod the forest paths—would he not hold him guilty of a breach of faith? It was not for any such absurd development as this that they had given him their friendship and confidence. These tumults, these yearnings, these buildings of castles in the air, were they not essentially dishonourable as well as foolish?

What right had he to be loving Lena Durston? Even Father O'Leary, with all his kindness and forbearance, would be disgusted if he should suspect him of daring to lift his thoughts toward her in the way of love. The good priest had encouraged him to aim high in ideals and work, but this thing was presumption. It was the one thing he ought not to have done. But there it was. How could he have prevented this love from coming into his life? If she had been half the girl she was, the result must have been the same under the circumstances. She was the first girl who had ever given him friendship and enveloped him with charms. A hungry-hearted young fellow like himself could find no armour against that. Nor could he imagine any way by which he might get rid of this love, seeing it was love of Lena, love of a girl who stood incomparable and supreme among her companions.

Certainly he could endeavour to conceal it. He could try to submit to the hopelessness of it. But that it would be living and active in his heart to his last moment on earth, he had not the slightest doubt.

He wondered what his next meeting with her would be like. What would happen when she looked at him with

those wonderful eyes of hers and with all that frank friendliness glowing in her face? Could he remain true to Doug and Father O'Leary and all the rest of them? It was not as if she had been coy and coquettish. She had just been frankly, warmly, earnestly kind and companionable. What a cad he would be to import any other element into such a relationship!

And yet, deep down in the abyss of his being, something persistently told him that God and nature had made them for each other. Brooding over the mystery of his birth, marvelling at the way which Providence had opened up for him into the heart and home of O'Leary and into the Durston circle, remembering that they had all accepted him on a level of equality, it came to seem no impossible or utterly unreasonable thing that he should ultimately win his heart's desire.

He determined not to be precipitate. He would guard against over-haste and rashness. He would be wary, deliberate, patient. He would lay a long and cautious siege. Meanwhile, he would work hard and concentrate his energies upon improving his position. Now that he had been appointed foreman of the boom, he must make good on the job. He would be shouldering a responsible and difficult task. His employers would be taking the measure of him and the eyes of his friends would be turned upon him. It signified something that he had been appointed to this position. Perhaps it prophesied something. It might even prove to be the hinge upon which the door of fortune would turn. His one concern for the present must be to make a success of the undertaking. He girded up the loins of his mind.

His next meeting with Lena was on the main street of Beddington when the street was full of people. All those people were going about their ordinary humdrum affairs. She was but one among the many. But—when he saw her coming toward him—it was like one who had stepped out of another world. She belonged to an entirely different order of beings from the people around her. Indeed, at the moment there seemed to be no other people about. She filled the picture. In an instant the whole scene was changed. The very sunshine grew more

golden. It was no longer a common day. It was a day of days.

"Lena! By Jove! What luck!"

"Mark! Is it really you! How splendid you look!"

Not expecting to meet her here, his manner betrayed some embarrassment. He was slightly awed by her general appearance of elegance. She was charmingly dressed—all in white; white shoes, white pique skirt and blouse, white sailor hat, white gloves. In one hand she jauntily carried a white parasol. The snowy effect was relieved by a cherry-coloured waistband, and the contrast of her bright red cheeks and glossy blue black hair. He tried to keep his admiration from pouring too profusely into his eyes, but it overflowed control. She gave him one of her brightest smiles and by a simple movement invited him to accompany her.

"Are you on a shopping expedition?" he asked.

"No. I've just been making a few calls. I'm on my way home. No doubt you're revelling in the luxury of home these days. Little Michael and Darlin' dear will be joyin' at the sight of ye. Shure, and it's the grand times they'll be havin' now with the boy come home."

He was charmed as he had been once before with her imitation of the O'Leary accent. He was still bending toward her, hat in hand. More than one of the passers-by turned to take a second look at them. He replied to her little speech in a similar vein.

"Och, but it's nothin' to the joy of the boy."

"That would be a difficult point to decide, but meanwhile there's no reason why you shouldn't put your hat on if you want to. The law allows you to wear it in public."

He looked at his hat and then at her. He laughed and clapped the hat on his head.

"So used to going bare-headed that I didn't miss it."

Her lips began to quiver humorously. Glancing at him mischievously she asked:

"Are you sure it wasn't for the sake of . . . effect?"

He had not the slightest inkling of her meaning. He looked at her for a moment in a blank sort of way.

"I don't understand. The only effect it could have would be to make me look like a freak."

To this she made no reply except to flash him a bewildering look from her eyes. Presently she was saying:

"I suppose it's Mr. Foreman we must be calling you now. I've heard about it."

"Have you? Well, I guess I'm in a hot box. Don't see how I'm going to measure up to the job. Seems a shame to take the money."

"I shouldn't begin to worry about either of those matters. You've got a fine chance and the only thing is to seize it strongly and make us all proud of you. If you don't make a huge success of the business 'twill be the death of Father O'Leary."

He was so intent upon watching her face that he gave small heed to his steps. Presently he bumped heavily into a pedestrian and was brought to a standstill with a jolt. Glancing up, with an apology on his lips, he saw it was Policeman Cochrane. Lena halted abruptly and drew a trifle nearer to him.

"Beg pardon . . . Cochrane!" Then with a smile he added: "We seem fated to run foul of one another, don't we?"

Cochrane glanced at Lena. He knew who she was. He had an appreciative eye for feminine beauty. He touched his helmet.

"No harm done this time . . . Mr. Woodburn."

Slightly inclining her head toward the policeman and looking at him over the tops of her eyes, she said:

"That's a relief. So you won't be arresting him today?"

"No, Miss Durston. He'll be quite all right so long as he keeps with his present company."

"Now that's real sweet of you," she replied archly. "But, by the way, what about that dangerous young criminal who was supposed to resemble Mr. Woodburn?"

"He's in the penitentiary at Pennetanguishine."

"How fortunate! It must take quite a load off your mind."

Cochrane coloured slightly as he replied:

"No. We dropped that other idea long ago."

She gave him one of her sweetest smiles.

"Senator Charlton will be ever so glad to know that.

He wouldn't relish the idea of having his new boom foreman shadowed by the police."

"Boom foreman! I'm glad to hear it. Congratulations, Mr. Woodburn!"

"Thanks, old man!" Mark thrust out his hand and Cochrane extended his with a considerable show of deference. Lena's lips were twitching with amusement. As she started to move on she looked over her shoulder and remarked:

"It's a fine Spring we're having, isn't it, Mr. Cochrane?"

"Yes, Miss Durston, a very fine Spring. We're coming on well. We'll soon be in the middle of summer."

When they were well out of hearing Mark observed:

"That man Cochrane has got a great headpiece on him. He's chuck full of brains."

"I didn't notice anything particularly brilliant except that he called you Mr. Woodburn. I thought that was pretty good. What struck you so forcibly?"

"That remark of his about the Spring. Showed careful observation. A timely remark. Great minds run in the same direction. I was thinking that self-same thing myself at that identical moment."

"Now, look here, Mark, I'm not going to allow either of you the credit for that idea. It was my own brilliant conception. Entirely original."

"I'll take my oath it was just what I was thinking. It certainly is a very fine Spring indeed. It's a glorious Spring. As for to-day, it's simply superb. Not a cloud in the sky."

"It may cloud over later on. One can never tell."

"If it does, then all signs fail. I'm getting to be quite a weather prophet."

They were now walking up the driveway toward The Elms. He was thinking of the trepidation with which he first approached the house. He recalled his first view of her. His mind ran swiftly over the course of events since then. It had been a wonderful year. He was living now in a new world. He had found a place in life and a definite purpose. He had found more than that—infinitely more than that. The first time he had walked

beneath these elms it seemed as if his feet were made of lead. Now he felt as if he was walking on air.

"Come on in! There doesn't seem to be anybody around the place. I'm for ice cream; ice cream and cake, with a cup of coffee to follow."

"You believe in heats and chills, do you?"

"Certainly. Everything in its proper order." She touched a bell. She pulled off her gloves and tossed them upon the piano. She stood her parasol against the framework of the instrument. Then she sank into an easy chair. He was still standing.

"Do sit down! I know all these chairs are low. Doug growls about them. Says they make him feel like an elephant in a bread pan. They weren't made for such giants as you. But you can stretch out your legs. There's room enough for you horizontally, so to speak."

Always mature for her years, with a reflective mind and a capacity for practical affairs, Lena had developed considerably during the last year and was now in the bloom of womanhood. There were many conjectures regarding her future. Her friends predicted a brilliant marriage. As a matter of fact her mother had married at her age. Mark found it pleasant just to sit and look about him for a moment. All the windows of the room were open and the place was sweet with the scent of flowers. A light breeze stirred the curtains. As if to celebrate his arrival a ruby-throated humming-bird darted in at one window, whirred about the room and flashed out through another window.

"My! What gorgeous things they are!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," she said; "and there's one of our poets—a former Beddington resident—who writes about them. He has just published a little volume of poems, and one of them is on The Humming-Bird. Here it is. I'll give you a couple of verses."

She swiftly turned the leaves of the little volume and found what she was looking for.

"Perhaps you don't like poetry! I only take it in small doses myself. But I like this sort, and of course local pride counts for something in a case like this."

"Do let us have the verses!" he urged.

"Perhaps you had better read them for yourself. I may not bring out the real beauty of them."

"No indeed! You'd bring beauty out of anything. Please read!"

She looked over the poem for a moment and then read:

"Thought-sudden presence
Out of blank air—
Humming of wings!
Here—a whisk and a flash!
Sipping red balm there—
And the silence sings.

"Plumed gem all athrob,
Thy ruby throat burns
As from the hot kiss
Of a heaven-smit soul
As it panteth and yearns,
In its rapture of bliss!"

The maid appeared to take her order. She was a pleasant faced girl and warmly devoted to Lena. She was easily excited, and when excited had a habit of stammering. She glanced at Mark, giving just the slightest nod of recognition.

"Doris, we want two huge plates of ice cream, all kinds of cakes and biscuits, and a small pot of coffee good and strong. You may bring the cream and cakes first, and the coffee when it's ready."

"W-w-would you l-l-like a f-f-few strawberries? We've g-g-got some in."

"Yes, that would be fine. Bring them along!"

"Strawberries, so early?" enquired Mark.

"Oh, they're not home-grown. They're from the sweet sunny south. Florida strawberries. They have them in the big American cities much earlier than this, but very few of them can get past the U.S.A. millionaires."

She was flitting about the room with swift graceful bird-like movements. Her colour had heightened and now overspread her throat. The soft low music of her voice was like the gentle whir of wings. Her thick black hair rolled backward and drooped in feathery masses over her ears. Presently as she glanced at him

she saw something in his face that recalled her to acute self-consciousness. He reached for the little volume of poems which still lay open at the place from which she had been reading. Slowly and with emphasis he read out the words:

"*Plumed gem all athrob!*" Then he suddenly lifted his eyes and looked her full in the face.

"A good line, isn't it," she remarked in a shaky voice.

"Yes, and I like the others just as well," he answered. "I want to commit them to memory."

"*Thy ruby throat burns.*" Again he looked at her in a deep significant way.

"Well, you don't need any prompting. You're pronouncing the words all right."

"But I may not be taking in the meaning of them. In fact, I'm a bit bothered. I don't quite get the connection."

"Let me see! How does it run?

> "'Thy ruby throat burns
> As from the hot kiss
> Of a heaven-smit soul
> As it panteth and yearns,
> In its rapture of bliss!'

I can't quite make it out. *Lena, who's been kissing you?*"

"Oh, good heavens!" she exclaimed.

She sank into a chair and covered her face with her hands. There came a tap at the door and Doris appeared. She brought a little table, spread a white cloth over it, and set out the refreshments.

"The c-c-coffee will be ready in a f-f-few minutes."

As they faced each other across the table Lena said:

"Now, Mark, you're not to say any more ridiculous things. I never thought you would indulge in . . . in anything like that. I'm no humming-bird. At this present moment I feel more like a hungry hawk. Come on! Dig into that ice cream!"

He was still holding the book. Without lifting his eyes from the page, he said:

"There's another verse you didn't read. I like that best of all.

" ' Thing of beauty, of life,
Bright wink of a day
When we'll be what we are—
Freed of this garment's hem!
O soul, get thy wings,
Find the red balm for aye
(Life of earth and of star)
Flash with love, a live gem! ' "

He closed the book and laid it beside him on the table.

" That's my creed, Lena. The soul is all, and love is the life of the soul. Often we can't see each others' souls because of the garments they wear—garments of one sort and another—and all serving as disguises more or less. But we are what we are in our souls, and the soul is never a live gem till it is smit with love."

" Mark Woodburn! You are positively amazing! Where . . . how . . . when . . . did you learn to think or say the like of that? "

" I don't know. These things come to us. Perhaps Father O'Leary is to be held largely responsible in this case. He talks that sort of thing. He's a soul himself, wrapped up in a mighty lot of flesh. And his soul is all love. You don't dispute the doctrine, do you? You believe the creed of . . . of the little poem? "

She was strangely agitated. But at that point Doris arrived with the coffee.

" M-M-Mister Doug and M-M-Miss Hatfield have just turned in at the g-g-gate."

They looked at each other seriously. " I'll answer your question, Mark. I do accept the creed of . . . of the poem. It's the way to live. . . . In the soul and for love. But the love must be guided. Some deep divine instinct must control it or it will dash to destruction. The humming-bird is guided. It may seem a fluttered and frenzied thing, but it isn't. It is directed. It passes a lot of flowers till it finds the right one—the one that can give it what it needs. It is guided past the poison to the balm."

" No doubt that's true. And if the bird gets guidance, so may the soul, if it wants it. But it must get moving. It must venture forth. ' O soul, get thy wings! ' "

Doug came bustling in, breezy and hearty. Grace looked flushed and timid.

"Hello, Mark, old boy! How's the world been using you? Pretty good, I guess, by all appearances. Welcome back from the fierce and frozen wilds!"

He caught him by the shoulders and whirled him round. Then he glanced at the table.

"Been feasting, eh, you two? Anything left? I'm hungry as a hunter. Been working hard. Stay me with flagons! Comfort me with apples!"

Mark answered chaffingly:

"Call that *work?* Just paddling a birch bark canoe with a dainty maiden in the bow? How are you, Grace?"

Grace greeted him prettily and nestled up to Lena.

"Ha," cried Doug, "you don't know. That same dainty maiden may give you some back water to paddle against. But I must say Grace has behaved very decently to-day. She's been merciful. Fact is, we've fixed it up. We're engaged."

With a little cry of delight Lena took Grace in her arms. She held her there for a moment and then went to Doug and kissed him. Her lashes were wet. Mark offered his congratulations.

Doug threw himself into a chair.

"We plan to get married in two years, if all goes well. Soon as I finish my medical course. The Durstons believe in marrying young. It's a tradition in our family. Look at father and mother! They did it. A practising physician needs a wife. The younger he is, the more he needs her. In the case of a business man it doesn't matter. Glad I'm not going in for business! What do you say, Grace?"

"Oh, he's terrible! I hope nobody will blame me. I . . . I . . . couldn't help it. I'm not sure that I should have consented to an engagement yet awhile. Hope your father and mother won't be angry. I don't know what Len will say."

"You don't look badly worried, dear," said Lena softly. "Of course no one will blame you. We all know what Doug is. Why there'd be no living with him if you didn't accept him."

"By Jove, Lena, that's a sage remark. Hits the nail

bang on the head. I hadn't thought about that, but I see it now. Grace couldn't really live with me unless there was something like marriage between us. It would be hardly respectable. But, are the parents of us about? Let's have them in and get the agony over as soon as possible!"

"They're both out. But I'll ring for some ice cream. I think that will fill the bill at the present moment. Must you be going, Mark?"

"Yes, I've over-stayed my time already. I must get up to the boom before dark."

"Thunderation!" exclaimed Doug, as he sprang to his feet. "I actually forgot to congratulate you! So swallowed up in my own affairs. I think it's great, the way you're striding forward. You'll be well on the road to a fortune before I begin to earn my own living. You'll stand up to that job all right. How's old Slade? I hear he's a sort of satellite to you these days."

"He's in good form. Going on the boom with me."

"Well, if you must go, I'll walk down the drive with you."

When they were alone with each other Doug said:

"You're doing us all proud, Mark. But now, don't make it all work and no play! Give some consideration to the social side of your nature! Come here as often as you can and let us draft you into the Beddington circle! You're built for that sort of thing."

"I don't know about that, Doug, but I certainly won't have much spare time on my hands this summer. I've got to make that boom business boom, and I'm going to do it if I have to bust all my shoe-strings. But I should like to learn tennis, and if I can find a spare hour now and then of a Saturday afternoon, I'd like you to give me a little practice."

"Sure thing! But Lena will do better for you than I can. She's the crack player of our bunch."

"Thanks! And, say, I'm mighty pleased about you and Grace."

Doug glanced at him sharply.

"Oh, we've been really at the love making since we were kids. So long! Come again soon! Soon and often."

XXVII

It seemed to Lena as if that evening would never end. Len and Grace came in. There were hours of talk about the plans and prospects of the newly engaged couple. Lena entered into it all with heartiness. She was pleased with the engagement, sympathetic with Doug's boisterous happiness and Grace's quiet joy. Yet she longed to be alone with her own thoughts and the intervening hours seemed interminably long. When at length she entered her own room for the night she gave a sigh of relief.

Removing her skirt and blouse she drew on a light silk dressing gown. She uncoiled her hair. The thick dark mass fell to her waist. Slowly and carefully she brushed it out. During this operation she leaned forward repeatedly and peered into her eyes as they were reflected in the mirror. They were behaving strangely to-night. At one moment they burned with the fire of eager yearning. Then they smiled in serene satisfaction. Again they were serious with insistent interrogations. Now they grew dim with doubts. She turned off the light and sat by the open window.

The night was clear and cool. She felt as never before the solemnity and mystery of existence. Light . . . Life . . . Love . . . Night . . . Death . . . ! Everything lay within the compass of those five monosyllables. Yet who could unfold their meaning? As she looked from her window the red crescent moon slowly burned its way over the top of a dark cedar. In the street heavy coaches rattled, bearing passengers from the midnight train to their hotels. Then all was silent.

Throughout the evening she had been saying to herself: "I wonder! I wonder!" She intended, as soon

as privacy was secured, to get to work and think things out. But she was not thinking now to any purpose. She seemed, at the moment, to have no power of concentration. Her thoughts were without substance or continuity. Loosely related, even unrelated ideas rattled along the avenues of her mind as those coaches had just now rattled down the street. She was not really thinking at all. She was merely permitting waves of feeling to flow and break over her as waves of the tide break over one who sits in their pathway passive on the sands. It was an unusual experience for her. She found it not unpleasant. She would yield to it for a while. Time enough for ordered thinking between now and morning.

A dog barked. A black cat scampered over the lawn. A second black cat. From a house over yonder came the feeble cry of a child.

Babies . . . dogs . . . cats . . . horses . . . coaches . . . ! Earth . . . grass . . . trees . . . sky . . . moon . . . ! Rivers . . . booms . . . ! Men . . . lovers . . . husbands ! Wives . . . mothers . . . babies. . . . ! Thus ran the circle of life.

Tired folk, contented folk, sensible folk were now asleep. Doubtless Grace had already drifted away to the land of happy dreams. It must be fine to be like Grace; to have no anxieties, no complications, no problems; nothing to contend with and nothing to dread; only a happy waiting upon the future. Grace was lucky. No wonder she could sleep.

Someone else would also be sleeping now up there by the log-crowded boom with the silent imperturbable relentless river flowing swiftly by. She thought of something that made her shiver. She drew her dressing gown more closely round her. The next instant she was hot. A second thought had sent a blast of flame through her blood.

Her mind turned to Doug. She wondered what would have happened had he fallen in love with some girl of unknown origin. What if he had fallen in love with a girl of another religion? Would he go forward and marry her? Would he have the courage to face his

family on the question and, if necessary, defy Beddington and the Church? She hoped so. She believed he would do that. He was no coward. He was a Durston.

Next she found herself wondering how Doug would have shaped up to life had he been a waif and reared in an orphanage. Could he have made his own way in the world as some others had done? Again, she hoped so. He was a Durston. His qualities were born in him. But if he had come to his present clean and sturdy manhood by that hard road he would be worthy of special respect and admiration. How would Grace view a situation of that sort? Difficult to say. Grace was a good-hearted girl but she doubted if there was much tough fibre in her character. But why raise the question? It was entirely irrelevant.

Then her mind reverted to the little poem about the humming-bird. What was it Mark said? "The soul is all and love is the life of the soul?" True words, undoubtedly. But where did he learn them? How had he acquired the power to say such words? He—waif, farm-boy, stable-man, brakeman, rafter, bushman, boom-boss! —Incomprehensible! And why should he say those words to *her?*

"The soul is never a live gem till it is smit with love." Extraordinary! . . . So he was thinking of love! Well, yes, the poem had suggested the thought. All due to the casual flight of that little bird through the room! What a lovely bird it was! A particularly beautiful specimen! How strange a thing was life! How often did serious consequences turn upon small occasions! Destinies determined by trifles! A mysterious world, this!

What had brought that little bird loudly drumming through the room? Was it accident? There were no flowers in the room that could yield it nectar. Had its course been directed by some deep divine design which directed the instinct of the bird? Whatever the explanation it was a momentous flight. It had initiated other flights—flights in which, perhaps, wings if not hearts might get broken. She had always been interested in humming-birds. They were creatures of beauty, charm

and wonder. After this she would view them with awe. . . .

"Plumed gem all athrob!" . . . He had literally pounced upon those words. He had made strange use of them. He had wrenched them from their context and given them an unwarranted application. Mark Woodburn had a taste for language. Mark Woodburn could also be very bold. Had he been making love to her? . . . Or was it merely a light and airy compliment? . . . Where had he learned the art of paying compliments? . . .

The hot blood was now surging into her face. For a moment she covered her cheeks with her hands. But what did this mean—blushing here in the darkness with no one near? . . .

Love! What was love? How could it be distinguished from fascination or infatuation? Could a girl know the difference? It might be a bad job for her if she didn't know. To believe yourself in love, when it was all a mistake, that would be deplorable. It might prove tragical. On the other hand, to be in love and not know it, not trust to it—that would be insanity. She wondered if there were any girls in the world afflicted with that peculiar form of insanity? It must be a rare type of mental malady. It would be destructive of all peace and happiness. She hoped she was sane. . . .

The moon was now riding clear above the cedar tops, sailing serenely on its course. The baby in the house over yonder had ceased its wailing. Probably it was sleeping peacefully under the watchful eye of love. Doubtless love had brought it into the world. It must be terrible when babies were born to loveless parents. . .

She stretched her arms out on the window sill and laid her head upon them. Long she remained in that position, motionless, unconscious of the flight of time. At length she roused herself and consulted her watch. It was 2 a.m. A bird squeaked in its nest beneath her window. Dawn would soon be approaching. It was high time she should resolutely confront her own heart. . . .

Did she love Mark Woodburn? Was that the mean-

ing of this fire which started racing through her veins at every thought of him? It was a fiercer fire whenever he drew near. Contact with him gave draught to it—drove it flaming through her with fresh force. Was it a pure flame, or mingled with smoke from newly kindled fuel? She prayed that it might be on the way to purity. Soon, she hoped, it would be burning clear—passion purified into luminous love.

Did Mark Woodburn love her? There were indications. . . . She began to braid her hair. . . . It would make two plaits. She divided the mass into equal portions. One of these she subdivided. As she deftly and swiftly plied the strands, neatly drawing one over the other, she began repeating the ancient formula: He loves me; he loves me not. Funny! She wondered how it would come out. As she drew near the end of her weaving something told her the plait would end upon the negative. Her thoughts kinked themselves into a pun. She laughed softly. Of course every braid must end in a knot. So should every love affair.

But now, seriously, she must see how the thing really came out. She would deal in strict honesty by that braid. No juggling, no tricks. No unfair manipulations. Straightforward dealing; an equal strain upon each strand. . . . Unequivocally, the last turn synchronised with . . . he loves me not.

Oh, but that wasn't quite fair. Some of the plaiting had been done before she began with the formula. The braid must be done over again. She plucked at the folds and separated them. Once more she arranged the strands for weaving. Now! We begin close to the head and proceed with deliberation. He loves me: he loves me not. . . . Incontestably, the result is the same. He loves me not.

She would see what the other braid had to say about it. In case of a disagreement the one verdict must neutralise the other. Gathering the loosened hair and flinging it forward over her right shoulder, she looked at it for a moment and shook her head at it. Then she began to plait. She started a trifle further from her head than before and wove more loosely. Punctiliously she carried

the braiding downward, at each turn repeating the formula aloud. There was no mistaking the result. . . . He loves me not.

Well, it served her right for indulging in such feeble foolery. It was a stupid childish proceeding. She didn't care what all the braids of hair in the world might say. He *almost* loved her, anyway. She knew it. And if it should turn out that they loved each other really and truly, what then? . . . Between two young persons love is supposed to lead to thoughts of marriage. . . . Was it conceivable she should marry Mark Woodburn? Certainly she would not be marrying beneath herself. Let that be said at the outset. Already he was filling a more responsible position than any young man of his age in Beddington. Ten years from now he might be the most influential man in the county. He was marked for rapid advancement. Everybody said so; Doug and her father and O'Leary and Charlton. She had heard them talking. She knew what their prophecies were. And where was there a match for him in appearance, in courage, in native brilliancy of mind, in greatness of heart? She would always be able to look up to him. He would make everybody look up to him.

Why should she not marry Mark if they loved each other? Even now—notwithstanding all the disadvantages he had laboured under—he was a gentleman in speech and manner. Nature had bestowed upon him an easy grace and a charm of address such as many could not acquire in a lifetime. He was keen of observation and sure in intuition. Soon he would be able to shine in any society.

Only too well she knew where the great hindrance lay. The Church would forbid it unless Mark became a Roman Catholic. She could feel the shadow of the Church falling upon her now—a shadow dark, frowning, cold, inescapable. It would be a moving shadow. It would follow her relentlessly. It would dog her steps through life and rest upon her even in death.

But that shadow could not destroy her peace of mind, once she found her conscience in harmony with her heart. When she found it chilling she would know where to turn

for warmth. When it darkened her way she would know where to look for light.

She had always been a sincere and devoted Catholic. She had no thought of becoming anything else. To incur the disfavour of the Church would be unspeakably distressing. It might involve family complications. It would certainly impose some social penalties. But, if God sent love, and love called, should she not answer?

Then she dismissed her troubled thoughts. Mark would see the whole situation. He would view it from every standpoint. He would take care of it. If he truly loved her he would spare her the anguish of a break with the Church. It would be so easy for him to do that. Everything was in favour of his doing it. He had no Church of his own and he was Father O'Leary's adopted son. He had shown respect for her Church and reverence for the religion of the priest. With his warm nature he must be yearning to cast in his lot with that of his friends, in religion, as in other matters. She had no need to worry. There was no room for misgiving.

And now the dawn was whitening sky and earth. She would say a prayer and get to bed.

XXVIII

It was a month before Lena saw Mark again, and then only for a hurried moment on the street. Another month went by before he came to The Elms. He came with O'Leary on a Saturday afternoon.

Doug assailed him with vigorous reproaches.

"I say, you are an unsociable cuss! Treat your friends like dirt! The summer's half gone and you've never troubled to give us a look in! Here we've been straining the eyes nearly out of our heads looking for you every Saturday afternoon, and never a sign of you till now! Shabby treatment, I call it! What the blazes do you mean by it?"

"You know my time isn't my own. It has taken some doing to get those rafts out. Couldn't have done it if the men hadn't worked like tigers. But they're a rattling smart lot of fellows and they've saved me from falling down on the job. I've been wanting to get here for weeks but couldn't manage it. I'm keen to get hold of tennis. Got the shoes here. Are these all right?"

"Sure, and you're just in time. We were wanting a game ourselves and needing a fourth player. Old Len isn't playing this summer. His heart has kicked up. Valvular trouble. In a bad way generally. Tuberculous. Rotten shame! Only twenty-six and doomed! Devilish plucky and cheerful! Still sticks at the bank. Spends most of his leisure scribbling something, heaven only knows what. Secret as the grave about it. One of the best ever. Grace worships him. Great favourite with father and all the family here. He may come sauntering along by the time we finish."

The young people were soon at their game. Doctor Durston and O'Leary betook themselves to reclining chairs and pipes. The priest was full of enthusiastic talk about the progress of his new church.

"It's comin' on fine, Charles. Made great headway since ye saw it last. The walls are up and they're framin' the tower. Shure, it mounts up nobly. I'm thinkin' we'll have the outside finished before winter sets in. Me little old buildin' wears a pathetic look beside the new one now. Och, but I'll be sorry when the day comes for pulling it down. The little place has somehow got itself builded into me affections and it will be like tearin' me heart asunder when I have to see it go. Manny's the time I've met God there. True, it has had its day and presently must cease to be. But one may be allowed to pay it the tribute of a sigh. It's that way we feel toward all the worn-out things we've been used to and that have served us well. We feel the regret with reference to our mortal bodies, and no sin to us for doin' so. But all the while we should be ready to welcome the better house of the soul that's in buildin' for us." Then dropping his voice he repeated softly the well-known lines :

"'Through the deep caves of thought I hear a voice that sings :—
Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
As the swift seasons roll!
Leave thy low-vaulted past!
Let each new temple, nobler than the last,
Shut thee from heaven with a dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea!'"

For a time there was no sound except the whing of the tennis rackets and the exclamations of the players. At length the doctor said :

"Yes, Michael, I suppose we'll soon have to begin to realise that we're getting on a bit. I never thought much about it until Doug got engaged. That seemed to bring me up with a sharp turn. Made me think that I may soon be in the way of becoming a grandfather. Sounds funny, doesn't it?"

"No. I get something of the same sense of the passin' of time from Mark. Not that he's likely to get engaged for a good while yet. Probably hasn't begun to think about it. But by contrast with him I sometimes realise that I'm no longer young. He forces me to see how manny things youth can do with ease that middle age can't

do at all at all. There's the prompt receptivity toward new interests. There's the faculty of swift adjustment and adaptation. There's the power of immediate and continued concentration. There's the dauntlessness in facin' difficulties. There's the tirelessness, the enthusiasm, the *flaire*. Shure, it's a brave sight, but it has something to say to us iron-greys about ourselves."

"I'm glad he's getting on so well, Michael. It must be a big comfort to you. Do you know, I often think he was just what you needed to fill up and round out your life."

O'Leary looked down at his huge body and smiled.

"Was it the tender heart of ye that pitied me for lookin' so slim and slack before he came on the scene?"

"Yes. I could see on the inside of you. Always could do that. You had a hungry heart. The walls of it were fairly knocking together for want of something to fill it up and round it out. Nature intended you for a family man. An unborn family of sturdy children were robbed of a good father when you turned priest. It's good to see the latent paternity in you getting a bit of a chance at last."

Something like a shadow passed over O'Leary's face. He smoked on in silence for a while. At length he said:

"I fear it's a sin in me that I'm so proud and happy to father him. A priest has no right to indulge what you term his latent paternity except for spiritual ends. He's only to be a Father in God. I often fear the feelin' I have for him may turn to me condemnation. It must be much the same feelin' as ye have for Doug. Shure, and I've no right to that."

"Stuff and nonsense! It's a virtue in you and a heavenly grace. Queer that the clergy must look to the laity for instruction in spiritual matters. But you can just take it from me that what I'm telling you is right. Set your mind at rest! Perhaps you'll win him over to the Church and then all the saints and martyrs of the bygone ages will be applauding you. See any signs of his conversion?"

"Not anny signs at all at all. And I never shall see anny. He has great respect for our religion, but he goes

his own way in the matters of the soul and nothin' will ever change him. Shure, and he's a strange mixture: humble and gentle, almost worshipful in his attitude to me, yet lettin' me see clear enough that he's out to do his own thinkin'. He seems to have great regard for the influence of the Church and none at all for its authority. He cheerfully repudiates all authority over one's belief. Thinks it a stupid and wicked thing for the Church to lay down what one must believe on pain of penalty. Says it's an old maid's game. An old maid aunt trying to dictate to her grown up nephews about their choice of footwear. What do ye think of that? "

"Better not press the question, Michael, or you may feel in duty bound to press for my excommunication. It's rather late in life for me to have my Church relations disturbed."

"Begorra, then ye have some sympathy with that view, eh? Is that what ye're after sayin' to me? Ye'd be sayin' it to me very face, would ye? "

"Good Lord, no! I wouldn't dare. Please don't scare the life out of me! I haven't said anything."

"Shure, and ye've said enough to show me that ye still hold to your old heresies. I was flatterin' meself I'd knocked 'em out of ye long since. Didn't I make it clear to ye, ages back, that the Church has the authority of Christ, seein' She's the continuation of His Incarnation? Didn't I make that clear to ye, ye fat head? "

"You certainly *told* me about it. I distinctly remember you *telling* me about it on more than one occasion. I don't feel warranted in going beyond that."

"Shure now, it's the impudent creature ye are! Would I be after tellin' ye annything that wasn't so? Did ye ever know me to do such a thing? "

"No, Michael. So far as I've been able to follow you with my faculty of verification, I've always found you absolutely reliable."

"Faith, and if your faculty of verification breaks down in this instance, ye'd best be wakin' up your faculty of spiritual appreciation. Isn't it certain that ye're bound to think more of the Church when ye think of her as the Body of Christ? "

"Possibly. But what if it made me think less of Christ?"

"Charles Durston, that's the remark of a scoffer and an unbeliever."

"No, it isn't. Unfortunately the Church, being an imperfect thing, with many a blemish and many a fault, does often miserably misrepresent her Lord. You know that even better than I do. Moreover, when you claim that she is the incarnation continued through history, you go a step too far. You press the biblical analogy—it is only an analogy—to an unwarranted length. The Bible distinguishes between the Body and the Head. The Church is never represented as being the Head over anything. Christ is the Head and all authority is His and His alone. If that is heresy, then may I burn!"

"Charles, ye're a simpleton. The Body is one and it includes the Head. The Church is a livin' organism because united to Christ the Head. From Him she derives her authority, and having derived it she *has* it."

"Doesn't follow at all. Things often go wrong in different parts of the human body while yet the head remains all right. A man's hand may exercise authority at one period of his career, and then it may cease to be either a symbol of authority or an instrument of power. And since you make so much of the figure of speech, let me show you where it breaks down. Let me point out to you how easy it is to run into fallacy by following a figure of speech too far."

"Well, go ahead. I'm waitin'."

"The brain is in the head, isn't it? And the brain is the organ of mind—the instrument of intelligence, of thought, of will. But the heart is in the body lower down. Yet it is the heart that feeds the brain and keeps it alive. It's a case of the head being dependent upon the body and receiving all its life and power from the body. The brain is subject to the heart. Take that fact and press it as an analogy, and where will it land you?"

"Och, ye babe and sucklin'! It would land me deeper than ever in me dependence upon the Church and in the desire to keep the heart of her pure and strong. If your words have anny sense in 'em at all at all, they're tendin'

to prove that Christ can do nothin' in the world apart from His livin' Body, the Holy Church. Shure, and His heart is in her, and that's the truth ye've been supportin'."

"Well, Michael, now that you've settled that to your own satisfaction, I'd like to hear a little more about the boy. Do you still find him shaping up to your expectations?"

"In every way. In the matter of business he's fair astonishin'. It's genius there, Charles. Nothin' less than genius. Ye should hear the lingo he talks. Full of plans for forest preservation on the one hand, and for the development of output on the other. Thinks his Company should carry its scheme of operations much further than it does now. He'll have them makin' furniture before long, if not buildin' organs and pianos. Believes the trees have souls. Transmigratory souls. They were things of beauty on their native heath; they should be wrought into forms of beauty again, to complete the circle of their existence. They made music in their lives; they should make music after death. It sounds like business, poetry and artistic feelin' all jumbled together, yet it's all good business, I'm thinkin'."

Durston looked away to the tennis court for a moment. Then he looked earnestly at O'Leary.

"I don't wonder you feel toward him as you do. Evidently there is close affinity between his mind and your own. I must say I like that lingo of his. I like it immensely. He's getting at the essence of things. He's finding life. He'll make a success."

"Faith, and I think it would be nearer the truth to say he *is* a success. He's a proper sort of man. He has a clear way of viewin' things and a fine firm attitude to life. He has already builded something into himself that is sound and beautiful and I'm thinkin' will prove abidin'. To have done that is to have achieved success."

The game was now ended and the young people came crowding around the doctor and the priest.

Mark put his hand on O'Leary's shoulder and said: "I think we'll have to be going, Father."

"Begorra, now, do ye hear him? And me not havin' anny tea yet! Shure, and I'll not stir me stumps an inch

out of this till we've paid our respects to the refreshments."

"Good business. That's the way to talk. I want a few buckets of tea myself," said Doug, as he sprawled out on a bench and fanned his face with his hat.

"I'll hustle the tea along," said Lena. "It's time it was here."

She flew to the house. Mrs. Durston, who had been sitting apart under the shade of a tree, rose and followed her.

Meanwhile the doctor was remonstrating with Mark.

"What makes you in such a deuce of a hurry to get away? You've been long enough getting here. So far as I know, it's the first and only little breakaway from that blessed boom you've had in six weeks. Must think a mighty lot of your importance up there."

"It's like this, sir. I must be back there by seven o'clock to see about starting the next raft. To-morrow being Sunday, I shall only have part of the crew at work. If I don't get everything well arranged this evening we won't be able to carry out our plans."

"He's a perfect glutton for work," remarked Doug. "We want him to join us for the evening in a little canoe party on the river. But he won't hear to it. He's a stubborn beggar. We'll have to see if we can't drag Len in. Thought perhaps he'd be coming along about now."

"I'm sure Len won't go this evening," said Grace.

"Then mebbe we may run into Fred Reynolds. He's got an elegant new canoe, and I know he'd like to take Lena for a paddle."

She had returned in time to hear the last remark.

"No you don't, Doug Durston! I wouldn't go with Fred Reynolds in a barge of gold. I despise him."

"Indeed! Why?"

"I don't know. I just know that I can't bear him near me. And I won't have him near me. So that settles it."

"Shure, and ye may take it from me—without askin' me anny questions—that she's settled it in a wise and proper manner."

O'Leary knocked the bowl of his pipe into his left hand.

Then he threw the ashes on the lawn and trod them in with his heel.

The doctor smiled, as he said :

" Can't you be emphatic in your statements without doing damage to my property? I don't want my lawn punched full of holes just to serve as exclamation points !"

" Begorra, I'd punch annything full of holes at the mention of that name. I made a hole in the river with him once, and I'll do it again if I ever find him steppin' a foot into me parish ! Och, the spalpeen ! "

" Whew ! Thereby hangs a tale, I'm thinking," said the doctor.

" Talk about hangin', he'll hang by the wretched neck of him one of these days ! But there, ye're not to ask me anny questions ! I've finished ! Thank ye, me dear ! Three lumps, just to sweeten me up a bit. Shure, and if ye just smiled into it, 'twould need no sugar at all at all. Faith, and it's the sensible girl ye are."

He patted Lena on the hand and glared at Doug in a threatening way.

" You needn't murder me with your eyes, Father O'Leary. I was only teasing Lena a bit. I'm not much struck on Reynolds myself."

" Faith, and ye'll not be teasin' her in that way anny more. It's no joke. It's an insult. Ye heard what I said. Ye'll not be mentionin' his name anny more in her presence."

" By Jove, you make things pretty awkward for a fellow. But since those are your instructions, I'll do my best to obey."

Doug winked at his father.

" Begorra, ye needn't be winkin' the eyes of ye behind me back. I can see ye."

" Say, Mark, stand between me and harm ! I want to live awhile longer."

" Och, shure and I'm gettin' to be a terrible man in me old age ! But ye'll pass me them scones, Doug, and I'll let ye lengthen out the brittle thread of your existence a bit longer. Thanks ! It's a pair of charmin' children ye've got, Charles."

Lena hovered around among them all and Mark again

thought of the humming-bird. Once, as she passed him a cup of tea, he whispered :

" Plumed gem all athrob ! "

She turned away on the instant and lowered her head. Then she stooped down and tightened the strings in her shoes. It was but natural that she should show heightened colour when she next raised her head. After a little she met Mark's eye and frowned. He shifted uneasily on his feet.

The priest noticed it.

" Begorra, ye needn't be gettin' fidgety about the boom ! We can stay five minutes longer and then Dolly will land ye there half an hour this side of seven."

XXIX

When at length they found themselves alone Durston and his wife drew their chairs a little nearer to each other. He leaned his head back, looked about him and breathed deep breaths of satisfaction. Between these two conversation was not essential to companionship. Each felt a sense of completeness in the presence of the other. They were not without their individual opinions and yet their opinions never came to clash. As Durston put it, there was plenty of sea room, and Madge was an expert steerswoman. During all their married life they had avoided bickerings, escaped misunderstandings, and maintained a happy unity of interest. In truth, they were lovers still. If slightly less demonstrative, they were, if anything, more devoted to each other than in the days of their youth.

After a considerable silence, Durston said, and it must have been the ten thousandth time he said it during the last dozen years:

"Do you know, Madge, I think we really are to be congratulated on our children. I'm pleased with Doug. He's going to make an excellent doctor. Going in thoroughly for his Anatomy, the foundation of everything. Shows good form in Diagnosis, too. I gave him the symptoms of half-a-dozen cases this morning, and he named the trouble correctly in each instance. Something of a gift, I take it. And I think he's fortunate in Grace. Of course, we know she isn't brilliant. But she's capable and sensible and affectionate. Just the right combination for a doctor's wife."

"Yes, Charles, I've often been thankful that I wasn't brilliant. But I was surely sensible, oh, most remarkably sensible when I married you."

"Whoa, there! No jumping on me like that for a mere *lapsus linguae!* Anyhow, my wife is not under discussion at the present moment. When that theme arises,

I shall have something to say. Then, there's Lena. Where can you find the like of her? "

"I don't know, Charles. But, you see, I'm prejudiced. We both are. I dare say we would admire our children just as much if they weren't half as admirable as they are. It's the way of all parents."

"Don't believe a word of it. We should have the same tender affection for them; but admiration—that's a different matter. Jove! Didn't Michael flame up when Doug mentioned Reynolds in the same breath with Lena! Glad he did, too. I never liked the cut of that chap. Wish we could get at that story about the ducking. A lot of unwritten history has been made up around Otnaby in Michael's time. If the story got about, I reckon Reynolds would want to go on an extended holiday. But of course none of our crowd will ever mention it."

"I think we can both surmise pretty correctly the general lines on which the story would run. I'm sorry for Fred's mother. She should never have married John Reynolds."

Again for a time there was silence between them. Then Durston turned suddenly to his wife and somewhat abruptly asked:

"Have you noticed anything going on between Lena and Mark? "

"Do you mean . . . ? "

"Yes. Do you think they're getting fond of each other? "

"Yes, I suspect so."

He sat up straight in his chair.

"Well then, what about it? Got something on our hands, haven't we? In for something serious, aren't we?"

"I suppose so, if it comes to be an affair."

"Hardly the sort of thing we counted on, eh? "

"Charles, I don't remember that we've done any counting on Lena's matrimonial prospects or possibilities. I think we've just left that matter out of reckoning, believing the future would be kind to her . . . and to us."

"But, Madge, would you be willing for her to marry Mark? "

"Really, I don't think we have any right to discuss that question yet. There'll be time enough when we have some solid ground to go upon."

"My dear, if there's any seed sowing to be done, hadn't we better be about it before the ground gets too solid? Later on it may be only seed cast upon the wayside. In other words, if there's any nipping to be done, hadn't we better deal with the thing in the bud?"

"I don't know. We might only make ourselves ridiculous and offensive. One doesn't want to do that with anybody, least of all with one's own children. We want to retain their respect for our . . . sagacity and . . . self-restraint."

"Hum. Of course you remember that he has no real name. Only an accidental combination of a day and a place."

"We are all dwellers in time and space, aren't we, Charles? To derive one's name from those vast realms might possibly be regarded as a distinction. It's something like taking one's name from two huge estates."

"Well, I'm stumped! So that's the way you've got the thing laid out in your mind! Not concerned about our ignorance of his family tree, eh?"

"A tree is known by its fruits. Seeing the fruit we needn't worry about the tree."

"I wasn't worrying. Not the least little bit. I was only wondering. Wondering how you would view the matter."

"Nonsense! You knew well enough how I would view it. The trouble will arise from another direction. The problem will be of a different nature."

"Meaning . . . ?"

"The religious difficulty. If they fall in love with each other she'll be bound to strike up against that barrier. It will be there, right across the track, and no avoiding it. I have been hoping that Michael's influence would remove it. I have been looking to see Mark come over to the Church. I believe he will do so before long."

"Well, I don't believe any such thing. Michael doesn't believe it either. He told me so this very afternoon."

"Strange he can withstand such strong influence from

one he is so fond of. I don't see how he can hold back from the step that would make everything so beautifully all right."

"If you studied carefully the shape of his head and the set of his jaw I think you would see. But the fact of her being a Catholic won't make any difference to him, if he's really in love with her. Why, Madge, I would have made a dead set for you if you had been a Mohammedan or a Buddhist or a Fire Worshipper."

"Don't be absurd, please! You would have done no such thing. But even if Mark should ignore the religious difference, Lena couldn't. It would be a serious matter for her, an exceedingly serious matter. She would have qualms of conscience. She would have misgivings, dreads, fears. It is a terrible thing for a girl brought up in the Roman Catholic Church and saturated with its teachings to be placed under the ban. Oh, I hope she isn't doomed to the terrible ordeal of having her conscience come into deadly conflict with her heart! If her love and her religious convictions go to war against each other, it will be ghastly. It will be simply killing. However the matter might be finally decided it would be a tragedy. I don't want to talk about it. I hate to think about it. It distresses me beyond words. It's a nightmare. I . . . I don't know what is to be done."

"Madge, it seems to me the best thing I can do is to get a pistol, go up to the boom and shoot Mark Woodburn. That would solve the difficulty. It would cut the Gordian knot."

"A brilliant suggestion. With Mark murdered and you hanged, Lena and I could live happy ever after."

Durston felt in a pocket for his tobacco pouch. In a leisurely meditative way he filled his pipe, emphatically tapping the layers of tobacco into the bowl. He took a match and struck it fiercely across the sole of his shoe. It ignited but broke off in the middle, the burning end of it falling to the ground. He struck another match with a similar result.

"Curse these matches! They're no good. Got no timber in them! Break off short! Quick enough to take fire, but no stamina! Slimsy slivery things! Even

matches should have a backbone to them! There, burn ye beastie!"

He put the lighted match to his pipe and puffed out dense clouds of smoke.

"Funny," remarked Mrs. Durston, "that when a man wants to clear his mental atmosphere he immediately proceeds to obscure the outward view. Hem! You're choking me."

"Sorry, Madge! But now, I say, what's to be done about this? I'm not going to stand by and see Lena's life ruined. I won't have her knocked about in rough water and against sharp rocks, if I can help it. I won't stop at any small measures, you may be sure. If you see anything I can do, I wish you'd tell me."

She lowered her head for a moment and then said very gently, as her hand touched his:

"There's only One who can help her. Only God. There's nothing we can do but pray. I'm praying all the time about it. If you meant what you said just now, you will do the same."

It had been long since his wife said anything that so embarrassed him. He felt a heat wave passing through him.

"I say, Madge, I guess you're on the right track. I've occasionally regretted that I was not a man of prayer, but I never regretted it so much as now. The fact is I'm not a deeply religious man."

"Yes you are, dear. You're quite a religious man and a very good Catholic."

"Very good hypocrite, more like. I neglect my devotions and I'm not a submissive son of the Church. I'm an odd number. Don't seem to belong to any religious catalogue or fit into any ecclesiastical pigeon hole. Can't even label myself in my own mind."

"You're certainly not a Protestant, Charles."

"No, God forbid! I couldn't hold to their ways and views. They have some of the best people in the world among them, but they don't get their goodness out of their Protestantism. In its essence Protestantism is a purely negative attitude. You can't get substantial goodness out of mere negations. I may do a little protesting

on my own but that doesn't bring any real virtue into my life. No, the catholic idea is the right one in the main. Whatever has goodness in it has catholicity. Whatever is truly catholic is good.

"If you think about it a moment you'll see that all the Atheists are Protestants. Not that all Protestants are Atheists. But many of them are and a lot more of them are utterly irreligious. Now, I'm a nominal Catholic. That isn't saying much. But it's saying more than that one is a nominal Protestant. The nominal Catholic has a little religion; the nominal Protestant has none at all. I reckon half a loaf is better than no bread."

"I quite agree, Charles. Our Church recognises our religious life in all its stages and provides for it. It doesn't make sharp invidious distinctions between what those other people term the converted and the unconverted, the saved and the unsaved. She mothers us all impartially. I think it's a terrible thing the way those so-called evangelical Churches bar people out of the fold. Unless you have so much religion that you have no need of their Churches they don't admit you to membership. That is why such a large portion of the Protestant world is adrift, un-churched, un-shepherded. I think it is pitiful for the Protestant masses. Our Church wisely looks upon us all as being of her life and belonging to her care."

"Yes, there you put your finger on the weak spot of Protestantism. But I see another ugly feature jutting out prominently in the way they 'run' their Churches. They are often cruel to their parsons. Look at young Ashfield there in the Queen Street Church! Excellent fellow. Good preacher, good worker. But not a crowd compeller. That settles it for him. That's the unpardonable sin. He's got to go. Because he can't achieve quite as much of what they term success as they want to see, they conspire against him so that he shall not achieve any success at all. They cheerfully set to work to break his heart. They hope it won't take them long. And it won't. They've done it already, indeed. Just by withholding sympathy and support and dragging back on the wheels. The poor chap is a nervous wreck. I saw him to-day. He's not only broken for this job but for the

next one as well. He didn't tell me. He tried to cover it all over. But I know the lobsters he's had to deal with. When they've managed to destroy him, then they'll piously announce their desire to invite as his successor a man of the Holy Spirit's choosing. I tell you, Madge, a doctor gets to know the inside of these tragedies. But we're digressing. At least, I am. Lena is our theme, and by Jove, she's more to us than all the churches in Christendom, eh? "

"You have an emphatic, not to say a fierce way of putting things."

"Even so. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by storm. It's well to know where you're at, what you mean and what you want. Now, in case there's to be a love affair between Lena and Mark, it is most desirable he should have O'Leary church him. That would regularise their marriage and make everything O.K. for her. But there's a question I want to ask you. Would you have refused to marry me twenty-five years ago if I had been a Protestant? "

She flashed her eyes up at him and frowned.

"You do ask the most stupid questions of any man I ever knew."

"How is it a stupid question? I don't see it that way."

"Because." Durston smiled. "You're all woman, aren't you, Madge! "

"But you were *not* a Protestant. It is simply dragging in a far-fetched supposition. Now, if you'll excuse me, I'll go and look after the supper."

He put out a gently restraining hand.

"I'll not excuse you. You will just sit there indulging a quiet season of meditation and self-examination until you are ready to answer my question. Would you have refused to marry me if I had been a Protestant? "

She fidgeted her fingers for a while before she said:

"At the time you refer to, Charles, I had little discretion and poor judgment. I was easily led. I wasn't as strong-minded as Lena is. But what an awful picture to conjure up before one's imagination! I was mercifully spared."

"But you don't think Lena will be spared."

"No, I fear not, poor child! But we must hope for the best."

"I could hope more hopefully if I got a definite answer to my question, Madge, and the answer that I want. Would you have refused me if I had been a Protestant?"

"Charles, dear, you drive too hard. How do I know? How can I tell? I can only say that I was all swallowed up in love of you, and my love has been my life."

"Well, I guess that's near enough. And I say this: my love has been my life. It should be that way with all men and women. And, by God, so far as my influence can count for anything, it's going to be that way with Lena. You may go now and look after the supper."

XXX

Joe Therrien boasted that he could beat any man on the St. John River in a fight . . . until he fell into the hands of Slade Lamond.

There came an evening when Slade went looking for him. It was because of something that Julie had said to him. She had said:

"Joe Therrien mus' mak' de marry wit' Florine plenty soon, else dat be bad job."

"Youm be sure 'bout dat, eh?"

"Oui! She tell me. When she spik she cry on de eye and all go choke. She say, me jump on reever now, if Joe no mak' de marry."

So Slade went forth on his errand. He found Therrien lounging by the river bank.

"Me want spik wit' you, Joe Therrien. When youm mak' de marry wit' Florine Laramie? Pretty soon, eh, das so?"

For answer he got a volley of oaths.

Slade could be patient and gentle when occasion called.

"Me no like you vaire moch, Joe Therrien. But youm come now wit' me to Curé and spik for marry Florine, den me no hurt you. Das so, eh? Slade Lamond, me."

In another instant the battle was joined. They grappled fiercely. For a moment they swayed, then fell. Joe beneath. Slade's hand felt its way to his opponent's throat. His fingers found the windpipe and closed over it.

"What you tink now 'bout make de marry? Eh?"

Joe struggled and writhed for some seconds, then grew quiet.

Slade removed his hand. Joe recovered his breath. "Me no like dis vaire mooch. Mebbe youm git up now and fight like man," said Slade.

Slade sprang to his feet, Joe following him. Therrien aimed a vicious kick but Slade evaded it.

"By gar, das bad for Florine when she haf to marry skunk like you, Joe Therrien! But . . . !"

Slade's fist shot forth. Therrien went down like a log. He got up shakily, the blood streaming from his mouth. His hand went to his belt, but before he could draw his knife he received another smashing blow. It was some time before he could get to his knees. It was longer before he coud get to his feet, and even then he owed something to Slade's assistance. He was thoroughly beaten and cowed.

"Youm bes' haf leetle wash on reever now. Youm not look vaire good for spik wit' Curé. Me no like Florine see you jus' now. Mebbe she tink youm not look so nice."

For some minutes Joe bathed his face in the stream. At length he said:

"Me go now for spik de Curé. Me mak' de marry."

Taking nothing for granted Slade accompanied Therrien to O'Leary's house.

"Begorra, and what does this mean? Have ye been fightin', ye divils?"

Joe looked down at the ground. Slade stood and twirled his cap in his hand.

"Us not fight vaire mooch. Me tink Joe Therrien want spik wit' you 'bout mak' de marry wit' Florine."

"Mother of God! Is there trouble?"

"Oui, das so. It's time for mak' de marry. Julie tell me."

With that Slade turned and left the cowardly culprit with the priest.

O'Leary led his unwilling visitor to the back of the house and called for Florine. She came with crimson and downcast face.

"Florine, me lass, can ye guess what Joe has come for?"

"Mebbe heem come for mak' marry wit' me."

"Ought he to marry you, Florine? Is it his duty before God?"

"Oui, das so. Heem tell me plenty time us make de marry. Heem spik all time 'bout love. Heem spik soft and nice and plenty coax for me be kind."

She burst into tears.

"Are ye willing to marry him, Florine? Do ye love him? Can ye be a good wife to him?"

"Oui, if heem be kind. If heem no make me fright and shake."

"Has he been rough with you lately?"

She looked at Joe appealingly and remained silent.

"Tell me the truth, Florine!"

"Some time now he look cold on de eye and hard on de face. Den me haf de fear. Den me want jump on reever."

"Och, ye poor creature! It's breakin' me heart ye are with it all! And Darlin' dear, shure, it will be the death of her! And there's Kate at the cabin! But now, Therrien, what have ye to say?"

"Me mak' de marry wit' Florine."

"Shure, and she's worlds too good for the likes of ye! If I'm not mistaken it's a dirty dog ye are! I've never liked the look of ye. Here! Let me see the eyes of ye!"

Joe lifted his heavy eyelids and looked at O'Leary.

"Och, just as I thought. They're shifty and cruel eyes. But listen, now! Ye've brought big trouble and disgrace upon a tender-hearted trustful girl. By some divil's art of ye that's past me understandin' ye've made her love ye. It will be more trouble ye'll be inflictin' on her when ye marry her. But I'll keep me eye on ye. If ever ye're rough with her, I'll be knowin' of it. And I'll thrash ye within an inch of your life. Ye hear me, don't ye?"

He laid hold of Therrien's shoulder and shook him till his teeth rattled.

"Begorra, what Slade's given ye this evenin' is nothin' to what ye'll be gettin' from me, if ye act bad with Florine! Och, it's a miserable business! But I'll be making the first publication of the banns to-morrow."

The publication made on the following day was the first and last that Otnaby heard of any marriage between Joe Therrien and Florine Laramie. On that Sunday evening Therrien disappeared. . . .

O'Leary considered it a fortunate thing that Florine's father was no longer alive. Kate would bear her new

trouble patiently. She would be kind. Florine went home. . . .

The boom work was now finished. Mark was put in charge of the lumber yard at Otnaby. Slade was working in the plaining mill. He now took to spending his evenings at a place on the bank of the river from which he could overlook the Laramie cabin.

A week passed without event, and then, as it drew toward midnight, a night of moaning wind and lashing rain, Florine crept from the cabin and made her way toward the stream. When a few rods from the bank she sank to her knees and bowed her head. Then she sprang to her feet and ran swiftly forward. She ran into the arms of Slade Lamond. She uttered one shriek and fainted.

When consciousness began to steal back she heard a gentle voice saying :

" Youm be all right now, Florine. Youm haf de bad dream and walk on de sleep. Youm come home now to Kate. No need for worry. No need for want some ting. Be plenty for take care of you and . . . and . . . das so! . . . By gar, de rain she do come down. Mus' git in cabin plenty soon. Kate she soon be come for look. She love you vaire mooch. Youm let me be de frien' for you, eh das so? Me all time like you vaire mooch since leetle gal. Ole Marchette like you, and Julie too. De Curé, he be de beeg frien'. Youm come now wit' me, yes, like good leetle gal? Das so, eh? "

Not a word did she speak as he led her back to the cabin. Kate had wakened and put on a light. She was now at the door, with hands and face uplifted to the dark and stormy sky. She had no hope of ever seeing Florine again.

At sight of her mother Florine uttered a low cry and ran forward. Kate took her in her arms. Slade was the first to speak.

" Beeg storm, eh, das so? Storm geev Florine de bad dream and make her walk on de sleep. She be alright now, yes ! "

Kate reached out a hand and drew him into the cabin.

"What make you be dere for see my gal? Why youm not in bed?"

"Me no need sleep vaire mooch. Me jus' take leetle walk for see if moon come out. Den Florine she come. Das more better dan moon. Das like de sun come pretty nigh. But me no like see her feel bad and walk on de sleep."

Big tears oozed out from Kate's narrow eyes.

"Youm work vaire hard. Youm need de sleep. Florine no keep you out some more. Das so, Florine, eh?"

"Oui! Me make de promise. Me say so to God."

Florine lifted her eyes and made the sign of the Cross upon her breast.

Slade moved to the door. As his hand went to the latch he turned and said:

"When youm be need for some ting tell ole Marchette! Den it be alright."

As time wore on Marchette developed the habit of paying a visit to the Laramie cabin each Saturday evening. She would sit for an hour, saying little or nothing, but giving the silent comfort of her presence.

Still later she developed another habit. She would put two dollars out of Slade's wages into Kate's hand.

On the first occasion Kate shook her head and pushed the money back.

"No. Hees money be for you. Heem not my boy."

"Slade tell me do dat, and Julie too. Me say same ting. Mak' Slade feel vaire bad you no take dat. Heem reech man now. All time work for de Mark boss and no go on whisky drunk no more."

Marchette was at the cabin when Florine went down into the valley of the shadow. So long the heavy-hearted girl lingered in the region of darkness and anguish that they despaired of her coming through. But at length she emerged upon the shining plains of motherhood.

Marchette put the baby in her arms.

"Heem be fine leetle feller, Florine. Heem bring de good luck."

Florine looked at her child and touched him gently on the head. Then she began to cry.

"Be bes' if Slade not stop me when go for jump on reever."

Marchette was now fumbling at Florine's breast. Presently a little face was buried there. Tiny fingers were clutching at soft flesh. Then came a little purring sound. Light broke over the face of Florine Laramie.

XXXI

"WHAT name you geev heem de baby, eh?" asked Marchette. "Youm mus' soon take heem to Curé for be Christen."

"I dunno me. What you tink?"

"Slade like for geev heem name. Youm let heem do dat, yes?"

Florine hung her head and fidgeted with her fingers.

"Why heem want geev name for my baby, eh?"

"I dunno me."

"What name heem want? Heem say dat?"

"Oui. Heem say if Florine name dat boy Bateese, he be vaire please."

Bateese was the name of Slade's father. He held it in high honour.

"Oui, yes, I guess so. Me no care."

When Bateese was six weeks old Florine began to take in laundry work. She was a beautiful washer and ironer. The people of the little town, whose population was increasing week by week, soon knew of her excellent work. She was expert in dealing with shirts and collars. Most of all she enjoyed doing the silk and linen blouses and other fine bits of feminine wear. Janet O'Leary gave judicious hints here and there. Before long she could have her pick of the best paying work. Kate could do the rougher and harder part of it. They made good money.

Florine went nowhere. The parcels were left for them at the post office. Kate brought them home, and took them back. It was O'Leary's suggestion. He arranged that a small charge should be made at the office for collecting the payments.

When the baby was six months old Marchette said:

"Youm mus' bring Bateese for Slade see heem. Heem want see de baby vaire mooch."

Florine bent her flushed face over the child, while the tears coursed down her cheeks.

"Me feel shame for Slade see heem. Mebbe youm take Bateese for leettle while, das so?"

Marchette took the baby for an hour to her home. Slade was delighted.

"By gar, heem be fines' leettle feller as never was! Oui, das so."

"Youm like take heem for hold?" asked Marchette.

"Oui, I guess so." Slade held out his hands.

"Youm no let heem fall, eh?"

"By gar, what you tink? Not so."

Gingerly but very tenderly Slade took Bateese in his hands. He held him up and gently swayed him to and fro. Bateese cooed and smiled.

"By gar, youm see dat? What you tink? Heem jus' same like Florine. Smile on de lip, shine on de eye."

He tucked Bateese in the hollow of his arm. Bateese began to squirm. Then Slade lifted him up to his face. Bateese gave a tug at his moustache. Then he put his mouth to Slade's cheek and began to slobber over it.

"By gar, youm see dat? Heem all sweet juice jus' same like ripe peach. Gee! Heem strong on de arm, too! Heem be boss feller on de log soon."

Thereafter once a week Marchette took the baby to her home for an hour's visit. Before long he would crow with delight at the sight of Slade and throw out his arms. Then was Slade in ecstasy.

One day when Marchette was about to depart with the child, Florine put an envelope into her hands.

"Dat be for Slade."

The envelope contained fifty dollars, the exact sum total of the money that Marchette had left at the Laramie cabin.

When Marchette handed Slade the envelope, telling him it was from Florine, his face lighted up with pleasure. He felt the envelope all over. It could not contain writing. It was little Florine could write, or Slade could read. Perhaps it was a silk tie, or some other little token of friendship. When he opened it and saw the contents, he cried out as if in pain. He flung the money on the floor.

"Bah, hell! What for she do dat? She no like me, das so. She all time cold on de heart for me. Dat finish

me. Me go way now and not leev here no more. By gar, me go on de whisky drunk now."

Marchette put Bateese in his arms.

"What youm tink heem do if youm go on de whisky drunk, eh?"

Slade's lips began to quiver. He held Bateese against his face. Two little hands began to tug at his hair. After a while Bateese put his mouth to Slade's chin. Slade felt something nipping him.

"By gar, heem got de teeth. Heem bite me now. Heem bite me for what me say 'bout whisky drunk. Me no do dat now. Me jus' take Bateese and go for see Florine. By gar, me tell her some ting for what she do."

Many curious glances were cast at Slade Lamond that evening as he made his way to the Laramie cabin with Bateese in his arms. As he entered the cabin Florine gave a cry and retreated to a corner of the room. She sank into a chair and buried her face in her hands. Kate went forward to take the child.

"No, by gar, youm no haf heem! No one haf heem till Florine she spik wit' me. Slade Lamond me."

Kate was a woman of intuitions. She discreetly left the cabin.

"Now den, Florine, tell me! What you mean for sen' dat money?"

Without lifting her head Florine replied:

"Me no need tell you 'bout dat."

"By gar, youm make me feel vaire bad. All time me want work for you and leettle Bateese."

She lifted her face and looked at him timidly. In a weak voice she said: "Slade Lamond, das bad for youm say dat."

"No, das vaire good. Me like you vaire mooch. All time like you since leettle gal. Mebbe some time you like me leettle, das so?"

Her voice now gathered strength. She looked him full in the face and said:

"Kip still for lissen! Long time back me mad blind fool. All crazee on de head for Joe Therrien. Non. Me no bring de shame on you. Youm all time kind and good.

But me no kip de money. Me no let you work for me. Geev me leettle Bateese!"

She stretched forth her arms. Bateese crowed and tucked his face down into Slade's neck.

"By gar, youm see dat? Heem no leev me. Us de beeg frien'."

She sank into a chair and rocked for a while, making despairing gestures with her hands. Slade stood there in the middle of the room making high sport with Bateese. The youngster screamed with delight. At length she ceased her rocking and found her voice once more.

"Bateese all time put shame on you."

"Lissen, Florine! Me no want be cross wit' you. Me want spik all time soft. But you mak' me vaire mad now. By gar, if some one else say dat to me, me keel heem dead."

"Youm tink heem nice leettle feller, eh?"

"Oui! Fines' leettle man on Otnaby. Heem like me for swing on de foot and ride on de shoulder. Soon we play de peek boo."

Florine heaved a heavy sigh. She looked at Slade now with eyes that held in them a world of remorse and fear and . . . worship. Only God in heaven could know how she was yearning to cast her anchor into the broad welcoming haven of Slade's faithful love. Only the Bon Dieu could know what it was costing her to refuse the honour of bearing his name and the comfort of placing Bateese in his protecting care. But she must be honest and thorough in this business. She must not permit this simple hearted lover, this gracious benefactor to go forward blindly. He must have all the ugly facts before his eyes. Otherwise, in the days to come, she might be wishing she had ended her life in the river.

"Slade, kip still for lissen! Joe Therrien, heem vaire bad man. Heem farder to leettle Bateese. Mebbe Bateese be bad too some day."

She had expected these words to stab deep into Slade's heart. But as she uttered them his face lit up with a tender and confident smile, a smile that brought his milk white teeth and rose red gums to view.

"Me take de risk on dat."

Then Slade Lamond did a thing that made the heart of Florine Laramie melt like wax within her, and yet a thing that fortified her soul with a mighty hope. He bared the breast of Bateese. Then he put his lips to it and kissed it. He looked at Florine and whispered reverently :

" De Bon Dieu be in dere. Heem all time live in dere. Me ask Heem for live dere. Das make God hees farder. Das good enough for me. No, no, heem not be bad. Heem be vaire good. Heem all time mak' me good, my leettle Bateese ! "

Again he kissed the child upon the breast. Bateese shrieked with laughter.

" Youm hear dat? Heem like dat vaire mooch. Heem say, ' Das so.' "

Florine rose to her feet and went softly forward, with outstretched arms. She lifted her hands and placed them on Slade's shoulders. She bent her head and kissed Bateese on the naked breast. Then she hid her face in the breast of her future husband.

Kate had now returned and was standing at the cabin door. Florine glanced at her and smiled. Then her voice rang out in joyous thrill : " Slade Lamond my man ! "

XXXII

It had been a busy winter. At the beginning of the season Lena undertook to organise a big bazaar on behalf of O'Leary's new Church. She aimed at raising a thousand dollars. The project made a strong appeal to her and she threw herself into the work with whole-hearted enthusiasm. It was an undertaking that gave scope and exercise for her religious tendencies, her social qualities and her business ability. Above all, there was the joy of doing something to gladden the heart of her good friend and Father in God. For although she was not of O'Leary's parish, he had always been her spiritual mentor and guide. The priest was delighted to have her practical and powerful assistance. He also rejoiced that she should thus publicly commit herself to church work. It might give life-long direction to her activities. He declared that if she succeeded in raising the thousand dollars she would deserve to be canonised as a saint. She would put the Church under an everlasting obligation.

Lena found her work a constant pleasure. She discovered friends on every hand. Not only did she elicit the interest and support of the Beddington Catholics but of practically the whole community. It seemed that no one could refuse her anything she asked. Especially did the young men of the town vie with each other in offering contributions for her stalls. Her father had no doubt that she would accomplish her purpose. In fact, there was something at the back of his mind which, being interpreted, meant a guarantee of success. But of that he said nothing to her.

During this winter Mark was seldom seen outside of Otnaby, his occasional visits to Beddington being purely for business purposes and as brief as circumstances would allow. He spent his days in work and his evenings in reading. On New Year's Day he received a communi-

cation from his Company appointing him Superintendent of the entire Emenetta branch of their business. This caused him to feel the necessity of informing himself on a variety of subjects. He realised that he had a good deal of leeway to make up, with the result that O'Leary's den received an astonishing accession of new books. A number of them proved to be of lively interest to the priest himself, which was not a matter of accident. When it came to comparative speed in the mastery of a book, O'Leary fell behind. He submitted joyously to be outpaced.

"Begorra, it's the same old story as when we first hoed praties together. It's the divil and all ye are for hustlin'. Shure, and ye seem to envisage a page at a glance. It's an eye and a half ye must have on either side of your nose. I'm wonderin' if ye take in the full substance of what ye read."

"I think I get the gist of it. I like to crack the shell of a book and pick out the kernel, if it's got any. You see, I'm in a bit of a hurry. I'm such an ignorant fellow for my age, and perhaps, for my position now."

"Shure, and if it's a fruit-skin and not a nutshell the book is wrapped in I like to chew the rind. But there's no accountin' for tastes. Take this 'Professor at the Breakfast Table' now. It's fine foolin' and it's fine philosophy. I'm scarcely knowin' which I enjoy the most."

Preparations for the bazaar were well advanced before Lena got a chance to speak with Mark about it. She felt shy in introducing the subject. She was confident he would want to help, but perhaps he would prefer to make his contribution through O'Leary. However, she could not permit the matter to go by default. So she screwed up her courage and tackled him on the subject.

"Which of my stalls would you like to support? There'll be ten of them and I'm hoping they'll average a hundred dollars each. Some may do more and no doubt some will do less. I'm counting on the average."

"Which of the stalls will you be presiding over?"

"None of them really. Mother and I are to have charge of the fancy work, but the oversight of it will mostly fall on her. I shall have to be all over the lot."

"Well, suppose I just give you a little money and let you lay it out as you think best."

"That would be most acceptable. Better than anything. Only, don't make it too much!"

"No fear of that. I've got a cheque here. Just waiting for a chance to hand it to you. It only needs to be dated."

He brought out the cheque and a fountain pen. He wrote in the date and passed the cheque over. It was for a hundred dollars. Her eyes expanded.

"But Mark you mustn't do anything like this! Not anything like this at all. It's ten times too much. Out of all proportion to what any of our well-to-do Catholic young men will think of."

"And isn't my debt to Father O'Leary out of all proportion to theirs? And my debt to . . . to . . . God? Think of what has come to me these last two years! No, that's the minimum."

She spread the cheque out on her lap and stroked it with her fingers. After a time she said:

"So you look upon this as an offering to God?"

"Yes, Lena. Certainly."

"Then you think the Catholic Church is in favour with God and . . . and serving the will of God?"

"Why, yes. It's a wonderful institution. It has a great place and function in the world's life. It aims at doing good and that must bring it into the class you mentioned. I have a great respect for the Roman Catholic Church. I think my respect for it increases every day I live with Father O'Leary."

Her face was now beaming with pleasure.

"I'm so glad to hear you say that. You can't realise how glad I am. Would you think me impertinent and interfering if I should ask whether you have any idea of coming into the Church?"

"That's a fair question. The answer is in the negative. I don't think there is the least probability that I shall ever become a Roman Catholic. Fact is, I respect all the Churches, more or less, but one can't have membership in them all."

"But Mark, there's no real need for any of those other

Churches. We ought all to be one; one flock, one fold, one shepherd, even as there is one God and Father of us all."

"Do you think that ideal can ever be realised? Can people of so many different casts of mind, and points of view, and degrees of capacity, and varieties of temperament ever be usefully brought together into one world-wide religious organization? It sounds to me like an impossibility. It looks like a vain dream. People are what they are. The closer they are brought together the more they tend to emphasise their differences. There's a certain safety in separation. Distance lends enchantment. People may agree to disagree if they have plenty of liberty to go each his own way; but try to march them all in one direction and they'll start fighting each other."

"Well, I don't want to argue the matter. I was only hoping from what you said a moment ago that some day you might give Father O'Leary the joy of receiving you into the Church. Nothing could make him so happy as that."

"You must know how much I want to please him, but some things are impossible to us. I fear the step you mentioned is impossible in my case."

Quickly changing the direction of the conversation she remarked:

"Won't it be fine for Father O'Leary to have a commodious and attractive Church! The building is going to be a gem. It will stand as his monument. Being built of stone it will last for centuries."

"Yes, and it will enshrine his heart. Needs a good sized building for that. And, by the way, I've got a bit of something in my possession that I should like to turn into the bazaar fund. You'd never guess what it is."

"No. I'm a poor guesser. But tell me."

"A set of furs. A mink muff and scarf."

"How very extraordinary! What a strange purchase for a young man to make!"

"I didn't exactly buy them."

"Well, I'm sure you didn't borrow them. I don't like to think you stole them. You must have found them."

He threw back his head and laughed heartily.

"I see you're not a poor guesser after all. I did practically find them. Fact is, I trapped ten mink last winter on the Tobiatic. They were considered rather good specimens. Mitchell thought well of the furs and he's supposed to be a judge. Jennings the furrier liked the look of them too."

"Then they'd be worth a lot of money. Why in the world didn't you sell them? What induced you to get them made up?"

"Wanted to see how they'd look. I got to be rather fond of them. Thought I'd like to have the muff and scarf to play with. So I sent them to Marshman's of Quebec and he made a decent job of them."

She gazed at him with a puzzled look.

"I think you're playing some sort of a joke on me. I don't understand."

"No joke at all. To be quite frank about it, I thought that sometime they might serve as a Christmas present. Then I discovered that . . . that the idea wouldn't work. It's the sort of present one can only give to a member of his own family. My family is a small one."

"Yes. The only person in the world you could give them to is Granny O'Leary. But you could give them to her. They would make her feel like a queen. I believe that's what you intended."

"Unfortunately that was not my first intention. She happened to know it. So I was dished for offering them to her."

Lena had been trying for the last few minutes to avoid showing any signs of self-consciousness. But now the blood surged into her face and over her throat. Again the words came to his mind: "Plumed gem all athrob!" Presently she braced herself and said:

"The only thing for you to do is to sell those furs. Jennings will sell them for you on a small commission. Hand them over to him. You mustn't think of putting them into the bazaar. You've done far too much already. There's reason in all things. I'd be ashamed to let you give another cent. It would be preposterous."

For the best of reasons he remained silent. He could think of nothing to say. The silence lengthened and grew

more and more embarrassing. The awkwardness was finally overcome by Lena springing to her feet with a laugh and saying:

"Mark, it's quite clear that in some things you're merely a child yet. You don't know the value of money. You want to give everything away. It's an obsession with you. You must try to conquer the weakness. Money will be useful to you."

In an instant she could see that he was hurt.

"I don't think that quite describes my case. I like money. I ought to know something of its value. I've certainly known the need of it. But the money for those furs would never be of any use to me. It must go for the Church. That's where it belongs. It has been dedicated."

"Well, then, sell them and give the money to Father O'Leary!" He looked at her in a troubled sort of way. He scratched his head. Then he laughed.

"Hang it all, Lena, I seem to be up against it all around. Don't you know that Michael O'Leary, Father in God, can be a difficult person to deal with if he chooses to turn awkward? He has his own little ways and something of a will of his own."

"Oh, I see."

Then after a pause, she continued:

"How would it do to let father and mother advise on the matter? I suggest that you send the furs down and let them try to find a solution of your difficulty. For, mind you, there's one point my mind is made up on. I'll not have another cent of your money for the bazaar."

"Very well. Perhaps that will be the best plan. Your father should be able to wangle the thing through somehow."

The same evening as the Durstons sat at supper Lena remarked quietly:

"I received another nice contribution to the bazaar funds this afternoon."

"Good! What was it and who's who?" enquired her father. For answer she handed over the cheque.

The doctor read it and exploded.

"Cæsar's ghost! The boy must be dotty! Mother!

A hundred dollars from Mark! Absurd for a young chap like him just starting! You shouldn't have taken it, Lena! I'm surprised that you took it. Even if you are so keen about your thousand, you might have a little mercy on an impetuous youth. Well, I'm stumped!"

"If you'd seen and heard him you'd know I had to take it."

Durston turned to his wife.

"What do you think, Madge?"

"I think what Lena says is true. She had to take it. We know how he worships Michael. For my part, I think it's not only very handsome of him but an entirely right and wholesome thing for him to do. It is a chance of a lifetime for him. This is Michael's great adventure. Why shouldn't Mark want to be in it big? Imagine you being engaged in some enterprise that meant as much to you as that Church means to Michael, and Doug making good money! What would happen?"

"Nuff said, Madge. I'm dumb. I open not my mouth."

Then Lena told them the story of the furs and the proposition she made to Mark concerning them.

"Well, here's a go, surely!" said the doctor. "It's a delicate piece of business. You did right to leave the matter to us. If you don't mind, we'll not discuss it further just now. Your mother and I will talk it over. I daresay we can find some way out of the muddle. But he's certainly a peculiar individual."

The next afternoon a large cardboard box arrived, addressed to Lena. Doris took it to her room.

"Shall I c—c—cut the strings for you, Miss Lena?"

"No thank you! I'll open it later on. Lay it on the bed!"

As the door closed Lena flew to the parcel. With fingers that trembled slightly she hurriedly cut the strings. She lifted the cover of the box and removed several layers of tissue paper. Then a lump came into her throat and a mist into her eyes. With the pink pulpy tips of her fingers she stroked the glossy fur of the muff. Then she took it out and held it up. She gently brushed her cheek with the thick soft mass. Presently she buried her face in it. She sighed and laid it on the bed.

She took up the scarf, wound it about her throat and clasped it. Then she took the muff and held it against the scarf. She walked to the mirror and viewed herself—front, shoulders, back. Her mother was in the adjoining room. She stepped to the door, tapped, and entered. Mrs. Durston gave a little cry of surprise. Then she made a critical inspection of the furs.

"Lena, they're superb. Look at the rich dark colour of them! And the beautiful markings! And the elegant tails! Six on the muff, four on the scarf. Exquisite! I don't wonder he wanted to see what they'd look like made up. But, of course, he can't really know what beauties they are. I don't believe there's anything to equal them in Beddington."

"Take them, mother! I want to see how they look on you." Mrs. Durston proceeded to array herself. Lena stood beside her, adjusting the scarf.

"Yes. They're perfect. They're wonderfully becoming to you. I hope father will make you a present of them and manage somehow to drop the price of them into the fund. They must be worth seventy-five dollars."

"Fully that. But I should never wear them."

"For goodness sake, why not? They suit you down to the ground. You look like a duchess in them."

Lena kissed her mother on the cheek, then stood back and surveyed her again.

Mrs. Durston put her hand on Lena's shoulder.

"My dear, you know well enough why I can't wear them. We won't discuss that point."

Lena's face was like a peony.

"Well, I'll just leave them with you. I must get into the town now to do some buying. Whatever you and father decide will be all right."

The bazaar turned out to be a town affair. The big curling rink in which it was held was crowded three afternoons and evenings. The result surpassed expectations. It netted eighteen hundred dollars. In the final statement as Lena made it out, appeared the item:

"Proceeds from private sale of goods contributed by a friend—eighty dollars."

XXXIII

It was June again and Sunday afternoon. Lena was occupying her favourite seat on the lawn with her work-basket beside her. Her lap was covered with the material she was embroidering and with a scattered profusion of coloured silk. Bildad, her newly acquired fox terrier, a diminutive creature, lay dozing at her feet. He was a restless sleeper. Spasmodically he snored, twitched his body, and wrinkled the skin of his back. She called him Bildad because he was so tiny. "He's named for the smallest man mentioned in the Bible—Bildad the Shuhite."

She was expecting a call from Mark. She had a right to expect it since, for once in a way, he had said he would come that afternoon. He had also significantly added:

"I hope I may have a little time with you alone, for I've something important to say."

The remark was not calculated to promote her peace of mind. On the contrary it proved to be distinctly disturbing. It had made the last three days seem like three separate ages.

It was a still afternoon with nothing but the occasional note of a bird to break the silence. Absorbed in her thoughts she was startled when Pemberton, the old gardener, who had pattered soundlessly over the velvety grass behind her, broke in upon her reverie.

"Ain't them beauties, Miss Lena! I reckon you never saw radishes like them before in your life. Prizers, I call 'em."

He held up a huge bunch of them to view.

"Yes, Pemberton, they're fine."

"Superfine, I say. Big as cucumbers, brittle as dry twigs, juicy as oranges and smooth as pippins."

He took one of the largest radishes and snapped it asunder. "Look at that! White as milk with blood red streaks! You've got quality there as well as quantity.

Only six weeks from the seed. But they had the powder under 'em. Does Mr. Doug happen to be about?"

"No, he's gone to the river, I think."

"I was wantin' to show him these. He's fond of radishes. First I've pulled from the particular bed where they growed. Been keepin' 'em for a surprise. I s'pose your mother is restin'. I notice the blinds in her room is drawn."

"Yes, she has a bit of a headache this afternoon."

"Oh well, they can see 'em later."

Pemberton pattered softly away. Lena picked up the threads of her work: also the threads of her reverie, the bright fabrils of her mind.

"I don't suppose he'll come for another hour yet. It's just three. Perhaps something may happen to detain him. How close it is this afternoon! No air about! I can scarcely breathe."

She pricked at certain stitches with a point of her scissors.

"Here, Miss Crimson, you'll have to come out! You're too irregular and . . . obtrusive."

Presently she saw him turning in at the gate. He came up the driveway with long eager strides. She put down her work and brushed her lap. Bildad woke and growled. He ran out upon the lawn and stood quivering and defiant, with ruffled back, barking excitedly.

"Come here, Bildad! Behave yourself and keep quiet!"

Shaking a protesting head and again lifting up his voice, he ran to meet the visitor and neatly nipped the calf of his leg. As if expecting praise for this valorous performance, he returned leaping and yelping to his mistress.

"You bad dog! I'll switch you for that!"

Lena now rose and went to meet her caller. Bildad trotted in front of her, just beyond the reach of her foot. She was thinking how handsome Mark looked in his elegant new suit. Presently his hand clasped hers and the music of his voice began to flow around her.

"Hope you'll excuse me for coming so early, but I couldn't hold myself back any longer."

Bildad darted at him and nipped his calf again.

"Och! You little divil! Jealous, I suppose. Don't blame you."

"Bildad! You hateful little beast! Get out! I apologise for him, Mark. He's young and untrained. He's often noisy but I never knew him to nip anyone before. Has he torn your trousers?"

"No, I don't think so."

She led the way to the bench where she had been sitting. Bildad followed and pompously stretched himself between them. Mark put out his hand and gently but firmly swept him off the seat.

"Thus perish all those who would come between me and . . ."

The rest of the sentence was drowned in the ear-splitting uproar raised by the infuriated Bildad.

It was some time before Lena could get hold of the dog, when she proceeded to carry him away and lock him up.

As she was returning Mark met her with the proposition:

"Suppose we walk a little—down the garden path and around by the cedars. You see, I'm in such an inward tumult that I feel like keeping on the move. I'm sure you . . . you must know what I've come to say."

She made no reply. They were walking slowly, she with her head drooped and her face partly turned away.

"Lena, you must know that I love you."

For some seconds they continued their walk in silence. Then she suddenly stopped and raised her eyes to his. His arms went round her. She was trembling. She covered her face with her hands and hid it in his breast. He tried to separate the hands but she held them tightly clasped.

"So you *do* love me," he whispered. "I hoped. . . . I believed . . . but . . . it's glorious to *know!*"

He waited for her to speak. He wondered when those hands would relax. Again he gently touched them. They parted. Her face flashed up to his. He stooped and their lips met.

After a time she put her hands on his forehead and

pressed as though she would push his face away. She was trying to speak but it was long before the path to speech was cleared.

"Mark! Mark! Wait! Listen! Do . . . you realize what this means for you, for me? Have you thought it out? Have you looked well ahead? Have you taken everything into account? Have you seen the bar, the barrier, between us?"

He looked at her tenderly, endearingly. He laid his hand gently on the black coil of her hair.

"Yes, Lena, I've been thinking—thinking of everything that can count in this. The difficulty is all yours. And the difficulty is enormous. I'm asking you to make painful sacrifices. I'm daring even to presumption. The thing is so tremendous that I couldn't possibly suggest it but for my conviction about the place that love should hold in life. I believe that where love is what it ought to be, it must carry everything before it."

A pensive look came into her eyes, yet she smiled.

"But what if there are barriers which have been placed in the way by God Himself? Should love sweep them aside?"

"Lena, one might spend a lifetime pondering that question in the abstract and come to no satisfactory conclusion. God is charged with a lot of barrier building that He has had nothing to do with. It is easier to be mistaken about the builder of the barrier than about the giver of the love. We *know* where love comes from. Love is of God. God is love. God is the great heartener of the world, not the grand obstructionist. But understand—I wouldn't ask you to do anything that you feel to be against conscience, or that comes between you and your fear of God."

"I suppose you know that the Church will ban me if I marry you?"

"Yes. And your parents will be distressed, and your friends grow critical and cold. Father O'Leary will be heart-broken. I've thought of it all. It's a terrible situation. Perhaps if I was to do the kind thing, I should go right away now and leave you alone from this day forward."

She looked up at him archly.

"Alone? Did you say, alone? It isn't good for a woman in love to be alone."

"But it's an excruciating dilemma I'm putting you in, Lena. I'm offering you love with pain and sorrow."

"And what if the love remains unblemished by the pain and sorrow? What if it can grow all the purer and stronger and more satisfying in that combination? What then, my lover?"

She waited for his answer but no answer came. After a little she continued:

"And what if I prefer a good fight to a poor peace?"

Still he remained silent.

"Perhaps we could be a little Church of our own—just you and I together," she murmured.

Then he broke out:

"Lena, you almost terrify me. Only a wonderful love and a perfect faith could give you all that courage. It's magnificent. But it fairly makes me tremble to think I ever dared ask you to face this ordeal. It seemed to me I had thought it all out, but now it appears more serious than I had imagined."

She put her hand in his.

"If you hadn't asked me to face it you would have done me a great wrong. You would have cheated me out of my chance of real self-discovery and self-determination. I should have remained the creature of circumstances. I should have been drifting with the tides along the coast instead of swimming to harbour. A poor flabby thing I should have been without this challenge to my heart and will."

For a time they were locked in each other's arms. He was silently adoring her. He felt himself deluged by her love. It seemed to be pouring over him in a succession of warm sunlit waves. She was communicating her entire nature to him. She was giving herself to him in the whole depth and breadth and surge of her being.

At length he said:

"Lena, this is wonderful. You make me worship you."

She sighed and her lips trembled as she said:

"It must be terrible to have a blind mind, a timid heart

and a feeble will. I . . . I sometimes feared it might be that way with me. I couldn't tell. I had no way of finding out till now. You see, I couldn't face this thing till you gave me the right to do it."

"Didn't you feel it coming? Didn't you know it must come?" he asked.

She turned her head slightly from him and looked up at the sky.

"I believed . . . sometimes I almost knew it would come. But I tried to tether my thoughts to the present and not let them stray away among future possibilities. I felt I ought to do that. I wasn't very successful and perhaps all the time I was ripe for decision."

"Is it your decision to marry me sometime?"

"Yes, Mark, if you wish it."

"My God! This is something transcendent! But dearest, you're not to be hurried. You're to have plenty of time—time to work the problem out with your people and, if possible, win them to your view-point; time to prepare the whole connection for what is coming."

"I doubt if time will prove to be a helpful factor in a case like this. I think delay would only make matters more difficult. It would be intolerable to me. I'm for going straight ahead and declaring our intentions. If we are sure of ourselves and fully decided upon our course, the sooner we grasp the nettle the better it will be for all concerned."

They strolled back to the lawn and took their seats in the shadow of an elm.

"It's a solemn sort of love-making, isn't it, Lena?" he suggested.

"Well, yes, but none the worse for that. The most refreshing waters rise from the deepest springs. Our joy breaks up from the bed rock of solid assurance."

She waved her hand toward the house.

"Now about the folk in there. Mother and I leave for the new bungalow at Lake Catherine next week along with Doug and Len and Grace. Father comes up later. We're all anxious to get Len there as soon as possible, he's so poorly. The lung trouble seems to be checked for

the present but his heart is queer. Don't you think this matter should be thrashed out before we leave?"

"I certainly do. They ought not to be kept in the dark. It's an ordeal but I must face it. Here comes your father now."

XXXIV

Doctor Durston came strolling toward them with his hands in his trousers' pockets and puffing his pipe. He was wearing a claret coloured smoking jacket and soft white felt hat. It struck Mark more than ever before what a distinguished man he looked; intellectual, benevolent, resolute.

"Well, Mark, how goes everything?"

Mark replied that the mills were working satisfactorily and prospects were good. The Doctor stretched himself out lazily in his reclining chair. Though he appeared to be glancing about him carelessly he was all the while eyeing Mark observantly. Presently he said:

"You two young people seem to be in a subdued and quiet mood this afternoon. One might think you had been discussing the deepest problems of the universe."

"We have, in fact, been discussing one of them," replied Mark. "I've been telling Lena that I love her, and she says she feels in the same way toward me. We should like your approval if you can find it possible to give it."

The Doctor bolted upright, at the same time snatching the pipe from his mouth.

"By Jove, that's interesting! Devilishly interesting! Perhaps slightly disconcerting!"

He took a few puffs at his pipe, meanwhile looking searchingly at Lena. She moved a trifle nearer to Mark, inclining toward him almost imperceptibly.

"I fear the idea may be distasteful to you, sir. I can quite understand why it should be so."

Doctor Durston could be deliberate. He was deliberate now. At length he remarked drily:

"Our disconcertions are not apt to consult our palates. But a surgeon is accustomed to face unpleasant conditions and to deal with them."

This sounded ominous. Mark's slim hope of gaining the parental consent began to glide away. At the same time he stiffened his will and braced his mind to receive his rebuff unflinchingly.

"If you think I've developed a growth that calls for the knife, sir, I hope you'll give it to me without any anæsthetic."

"The devil you do! That sounds interesting too. But I'd rather not take up the butcher business at my time of life. We shall try to avoid inflicting unnecessary pain. Lena, perhaps you'll be good enough to ask your mother to join us here. This is as much a matter for her as for me."

She hurried away on the instant. Then for a moment the two men faced each other silently. Durston was thinking that this young man had himself under excellent control. He could instinctively feel the reserve force that was in him. Mark was the first to speak. Looking frankly yet modestly into the Doctor's eyes he said:

"I'm aware of my disadvantages and the objections which must occur to you."

The Doctor smiled. "It is always wise to recognise the weak points in our case, but we usually leave it to the other people to develop them. You were not thinking of presenting the case against yourself, were you?"

"Not with the idea of obtaining an unfavourable verdict, sir. But there are some facts in this case which are perfectly obvious to all of us, and they stand at the approach to the subject. If they are to be regarded as insurmountable obstacles, I have no chance with you at all."

"Get the list of them well arranged in your mind but keep your own counsel until Mrs. Durston arrives! We shall then go into everything fully and frankly."

Casting uneasy glances about her and with many signs of perturbation, Mrs. Durston now hurried forward.

"Madge, we've got something on our hands here."

He indicated the young people with a sweeping gesture. Mrs. Durston shook hands with Mark and took a seat beside her husband.

"Is it anything serious?" she inquired breathlessly.

"You must judge for yourself. They claim to be in love with each other and want to get married."

Mrs. Durston applied a handkerchief to her forehead and looked at her husband in a helpless sort of way.

"Well, what have you got to say, Charles?"

He knocked the ashes from his pipe and removed his hat. He looked steadily at Lena. Then he looked at Mark as though he would X-ray him. He spoke slowly and with a voice vibrant with feeling.

"First of all I want to say that I think well of both these young people. I'm attached to them. I've been fond of Lena since the first moment I set eyes on her. I felt then as if a wonderful and beautiful gift had been bestowed, and I've been feeling the same way ever since. I have also much respect and liking for Mark. I think he is a fine fellow. Perhaps I speak for you as well as for myself thus far."

Big tears gathered in Mrs. Durston's eyes.

"Why, yes, Charles, certainly. It goes without saying."

"Just as well to say it, perhaps, under the circumstances, Madge. And one other thing I want to mention here. I remember that—but for what Mark did once—we should not have Lena with us now. She would be among the angels. Better company for her, no doubt, but devilish lonely for us. Next to you, Madge, I'm more in debt to Mark on Lena's account than to any other human being in the world."

Mark broke in passionately.

"Oh, I say, Doctor Durston, that's not fair! You mustn't put it that way! It might have been anybody who . . . who had my chance that day at the boom. You must leave that incident out of the count altogether! We can't get this matter on any sound basis or view it in any true light until that affair is dismissed from consideration. You must not let it influence your decision in the slightest. It would be doing a wrong to Lena. I can't have it brought in. You see, don't you?"

Lena's lips were trembling. Her eyes were wide and fixed upon her father. The Doctor coughed slightly.

"I note your viewpoint, Mark. It is worthy of respect, to say the least."

He turned to his wife as if appealing for corroboration. "Indeed, that is so. Yet, all the same, we can't forget," she said.

Lena intervened.

"You are not to think I've been influenced in this by my feeling of gratitude to Mark. I ought to be willing, and I hope I would be willing to lay down my life for any one who had risked his life for me, but I could not love and marry him if he did not appeal to me—appeal to everything in me—altogether apart from that. I should have fallen in love with Mark just the same if nothing had happened up at the boom. I love him for what he is."

"I'm not disputing it," replied her father. "But Mark hinted to me that he considered himself unfavourably placed for asking our consent to a marriage with you. I thought it only fair to deposit something on the other side of the balances. Now, perhaps, he will be good enough to put forward his objections to becoming engaged to you."

A smile played around the Doctor's lips. Lena's face lighted up. Mark blushed. Mrs. Durston sighed and began to fan herself.

"You all know, of course, that I'm a young man without a family name. My origin is unknown. That places me on a social level inferior to yours. I haven't a relative that I know of in the world. I have nothing back of me to commend me."

"There may be two ways of viewing the circumstance you mention," replied the Doctor. "A young man's relatives—though eminently respectable and even influential—are not always a desirable adjunct when it comes to the matter of marriage. Now, in your case, there will be no need for any apprehension regarding possible quarrels between your wife's relations and your own. It really simplifies the situation considerably."

"You are most kind and generous, sir . . . but . . ."

He paused, evidently in sore embarrassment.

"But . . . what?" asked Durston.

"Has it occurred to you that I may be . . . illegitimate? Will not most people take that view?"

Lena's face went scarlet, then deadly white. Mrs. Durston plied her fan with increased vigour. Durston's face was inscrutable.

"Would you regard illegitimacy as a disgrace?" he asked.

"If disgrace means out of favour, Yes! Otherwise, No! But if it should ever be proved that I was born out of wedlock it would be a grief to me and a distress to you."

"Well, that is not a contingency with which we need to reckon at all. No such thing will ever be proved at this late day. I may tell you now that Father O'Leary and I have made every possible inquiry regarding your parents and there is nothing to be learned. We have no right to assume . . . the thing you mentioned. Certainly, no one will ever dare to affirm it."

Mark spoke up earnestly.

"I do not assume it, sir. I assume the opposite. I feel certain in myself that there was no stain on my birth. But it is all a mystery. I have not the slightest evidence to back up my conviction. Still, I hold it strongly."

"So you ought to. It's the proper feeling. And now I think we may eliminate the supposition of illegitimacy from our discussion. Is that right, Madge?"

"Yes, Charles, quite right."

"Then let the prosecuting attorney proceed with his case. By the way, Mark, have a cigar!"

He produced a case of cigars and Mark helped himself to one. He was breathing more freely now. Perhaps he had rounded the most awkward corner. When his cigar was alight he continued:

"My financial position is not as yet assured. I'm only a beginner in business. I'm hoping to get on well, and I won't think of getting married until I can properly support a wife. But there is still an element of uncertainty."

"Have you fixed in your mind the amount of income you should have before embarking upon marriage?"

Mark chewed the end of his cigar contemplatively.

"Having regard to what Lena has been accustomed to,

I think I should have a couple of thousand a year. I'm only getting the half of that now."

"Hum! I married on less than the half of it, and with less sure prospects than you have. We have no ambition for Lena to marry money. We think young people do better to start in a small way and work up together. Lena is not a helpless girl, nor is she a self-indulgent one. She can do with a few luxuries, or she can do without them. That is one of her strong points. In short, there is no financial difficulty in the way. You won't think of getting married for a couple of years yet, and by that time, if all goes well, you will have quite as much of an income as a young man can wisely use. The next point, please!"

"You are all Roman Catholics. I'm not."

"Ah, now you come to the big stumbling block. I understand you are nominally a Protestant. That will make it tremendously hard for Lena to marry you. It is asking her to make a serious sacrifice and to go through a painful experience which may last her lifetime. I suppose she must have faced it and consented to it, or you would not be bringing this matter before us. But, naturally, her mother and I would deprecate it. We don't want to see her torn asunder, her human affections in conflict with her religion. We take a strong stand there. We think it is up to you to obviate the difficulty and make things reasonably easy for her. You don't belong to any Church. There is nothing in Protestantism, as such. Christianity is the great thing. Speaking for myself, I'm not a bigoted Romanist. I believe the essential truths of religion are held in common by Catholics and Protestants. They are not dependent upon either of those systems. What hinders you from uniting with our Church? If you object to any of its doctrines, ignore them! Put them on one side as you do the bones of a fish! Eat the eatable and leave the rest! You must surely feel there are great inducements for you to take such a course."

"I do feel the inducements. I have been doing so for the last two years, but never so much as at this present moment. After all the concessions you have made and the splendid way you have treated me, I must appear a

stubborn and ungrateful creature to hold out against them. But I really find it impossible to bring myself to take that step. In order to join the Church I would need to consent to doctrines which I disbelieve. It would mean the ruination of my manhood and make me unfit for marriage with Lena. I have a conscience in the matter."

"And if Lena's conscience forbids her to disobey the Church, even as your conscience forbids you to join the Church, what then?"

"Then we must separate."

"But listen, father! My conscience does not tell me it is wrong for me to marry Mark. It tells me it is right."

"Say you so? Is not marriage a sacrament of the Church, only to be administered between two members of the Church? Are we not taught it is a sin for a Catholic to marry a Protestant?"

"We are told that, but . . . I don't believe it."

"Do you consider yourself a better judge of what constitutes a sin than all the priests, bishops, archbishops, cardinals and popes of Rome?"

"My conscience is my own. I'm willing to leave my action to the judgment of God."

"So you will renounce the Church and turn Protestant?"

"No. I don't intend to do any such thing. I shall always be a Catholic at heart; but in this matter I shall follow the light I have and let the Church deal with me as it thinks best."

"Child, you little realise what it involves. You will be setting your feet in a stony and thorny path," said her father.

"May I speak now?" asked Mrs. Durston. "I want to tell Mark that if his conscience conflicts with the teachings of the Church it is because it is not fully enlightened. The thing for him to do is to submit to the Church, which will then take the responsibility for his conscience and give him the guarantee of salvation."

Mark shook his head sadly.

"I'm in this position. I can't admit that the Roman Catholic or any other Church is able to do what you say. No Church can take responsibility for the action of my

conscience or guarantee salvation to me. The door into the Roman Church is blocked for me, absolutely blocked. But, remember, I'm perfectly willing for Lena to remain a Catholic and to observe the rules of her Church, as far as they commend themselves to her."

Mrs. Durston leaned forward and spoke with great earnestness.

"Would you be willing for her to give your home a Catholic atmosphere?"

"Yes. The only real home I've ever known—and I've found it a happy one—has that atmosphere."

"If you should have children would you be willing they should be reared as Catholics?"

"I should wish them to choose for themselves. Their minds and consciences would be their own."

"Scarcely. If they were trained in the Church from infancy their religious views would be formed and their consciences developed according to the mind of the Church. They would inevitably be Roman Catholics from the start. If you have conscientious objections to the Church, how could you agree to that?"

"I . . . I hadn't really followed the matter so far. I hadn't faced that question."

"But I have faced it," exclaimed Lena. "If we have children, they shall receive all their religious instruction from their parents till they are old enough to think things out and decide matters for themselves. They shall not receive any sectarian teaching, but only the broad truths and principles of religion. That would be due to Mark. He and I will be a little church of our own. None of you need raise any bogey along that line. I shall play fair."

"That's all very well," exclaimed her mother. "But if you remain a Catholic at heart it is bound to have a strong influence on your children. You won't be able to do what you propose in the way of giving them religious training without any sectarian bias. But, tell me, Mark, have you any real interest in religion at all? I fear it doesn't touch you very deeply."

A pained look came into Mark's face. Lena was evidently about to speak, but he forestalled her.

"I can only say that I believe in God and I worship

Him. He is very real to me. I try to do His will as far as I know it. He is the strength and hope of my life."

"Then it is ten thousand pities you don't come into the Church, where you can receive the intercessions of the saints and martyrs and have the merits of the Redeemer counted to you."

"I'm sorry to oppose your views, Mrs. Durston, but there again you touch upon doctrines which I repudiate. To my mind, the gifts of God needed for salvation are not locked up in the Roman Catholic Church. They are at His own free and unhampered disposal. To accept your view would be to let the Church come in between me and God."

"Well, so it should," she exclaimed heatedly. "It has been established for that very purpose—to bring you to God, to reveal God to you and to transmit His grace to your soul."

He was silent for a moment and then said:

"I fear all argument between us is useless. I believe that 'God fulfils Himself in many ways lest one good custom should corrupt the world.' I believe He works within and without the Roman and other Churches. He lives and works in all things and all men. The soul of Father O'Leary is flooded with light and peace through the symbols, sacraments, prayers and doctrines of his Church. My soul is rather darkened and chilled by them than otherwise. I suppose it is due to the way I am built. I've often met God in the forest and missed Him at the shrine. I can quite understand the appeal which the Church makes to other types of mind than mine. I have no wish to interfere with it or weaken it. I think it would pain me if Father O'Leary should lose confidence in what his Church can do for him. I shouldn't like to see him turn Protestant. Roman Catholicism suits him. It satisfies his whole nature. He is perfectly happy in it. I may even regret, and for many reasons I do regret that it makes no such appeal to me. But there it is. I know one way of finding God. I think it is a shorter and sunnier way than yours. I must stick to it lest I find myself in a pathless wilderness."

Mrs. Durston was in tears. Lena's face wore a

triumphant expression. The Doctor showed signs of agitation. It was he who next spoke.

"Listen to me, Madge! I'm perfectly certain Mark has more religion and a better brand of it than I have ever had. So, if you have managed to live fairly comfortably with me I don't think you need worry about Lena. What I propose is this. Let them wait a year before making any announcement of an engagement. That will give them time to study all phases of the question and to reach a mature decision. If a year hence they are of the same mind as now, I'm for giving them our full consent to go forward. They shall have my consent at least."

"I suppose I'm old fashioned and conservative," said Mrs. Durston in a trembling voice. "Perhaps I'm even a bit superstitious. I'm terrified by the thought of doing anything contrary to the Church. But I want Lena's happiness more than anything else in the world. I agree to your proposal."

XXXV

Father O'Leary had no doubt that Mark and Lena were in love with each other. His heart was singing with joy. It would mean the fulfilment of his dearest desires. He loved them both with all the strength and warmth of his ardent nature. A marriage between them would be ideal —a blessed divine event. They seemed to him so perfectly suited to one another that their union could not fail to be crowned with domestic bliss. Moreover, it would mean Mark's entrance into the Church. He was yearning for the day when Mark should announce the glad tidings of his engagement. Such an announcement must necessarily be accompanied by a request for admission into the fold of the faithful. The issue could not now be long delayed. All signs pointed to an early fruitage of their love affairs.

For a considerable time he had given up hope of Mark's conversion, so tenaciously did his protégé hold to his preconceived religious ideas. But that was before his love of Lena had become the dominant influence in his life. Everything would be different now. Mark must see at once how impossible it would be for him to marry Lena without first getting in line with the requirements of the Church. It followed that the one announcement must include the other. O'Leary's cup of joy was full. Presently it would be running over.

"Shure, and it's a big man ye're gettin' to be in your Company now, me son. Ye'll soon be holdin' shares in the Concern and goin' on the Board of Directors. There's all that in the wind and more. It's no tellin' what ye'll be up to now; gettin' married, like as not, and settlin' down in a home of your own. Faith, and it's the happy man I'll be to see ye well settled in life. I'm often dreamin' of the joyful day when I can take a little one of yours into me arms and pronounce me blessin'."

"So you would like to see me married! But of course

you would want me to marry the right girl, wouldn't you?"

"Shure, me son, just the one and only girl in all the world for ye! Faith, and I'm not worryin' about that at all at all. It's clear I'm seein' where your heart is set and it's firmly I'm persuaded that your love is fully answered. And ye must both be knowin' how the pair of ye are wound about me heartstrings. It will be the gladdest day of me life that sees ye and Lena made husband and wife."

"Well, Father, I believe that day is likely to come if all goes well with me. Lena and I do love each other and she has promised to marry me."

O'Leary threw out his arms and drew Mark to him in a mighty hug.

"Shure, me son, it's the pride of me heart and the light of me life ye are! It was a blessed moment when ye came to me all fresh and glowin' from the river—a gift of God to gladden and comfort me lonely life! Faith, and I must have been unconsciously waitin' for ye'! Me heart went out to ye then in a way I've never been able to understand. And ever since that minute I've been seekin' to braid your life close in with mine. I've coveted your companionship for meself and your soul for the Church. There's been times when I had me doubts and fears lest the union might never become the perfect thing I've prayed for day and night, but, Glory to God, me dreams have all come true!"

Released from the embrace of the priest, Mark sank into a chair and covered his face with his hands. O'Leary watched him silently, his huge frame quivering with delight. When Mark at length looked up he showed a troubled face. He was finding this an excruciating moment. His throat felt dry and tense. He opened his lips but no words would come. Noting the struggle, O'Leary cried:

"Shure, and I can understand, me son, how hard ye find it to speak! Your heart is too full of utterance. It's the tender and lovin' deeps of your nature that's been up-heaved by this two-fold joy—the joy of findin' satisfaction for your heart and rest for your soul, to say

nothin' of your joy in makin' me so happy. Faith, and it isn't anny word ye need to be sayin' at all at all! Your silence is more eloquent than speech."

"Father O'Leary, for God's sake, wait! I've got to say something that will hurt you. I've got a disappointment for you."

O'Leary's face beamed and he tossed his head.

"Shure, and there's nothin' can greatly hurt me now since things have come to this pass. With you about to marry Lena and to enter the fold, I can snap me fingers in the very face of fate."

"But . . . I'm not coming into the Church."

O'Leary gasped and stared. For a moment he felt bewildered and dazed. He staggered as he made his way to a chair.

"Then ye'll not be marryin' Lena," he said.

He looked at Mark in a piteous sort of way as if beseeching that he might be spared a mortal blow.

"Yes, that is our expectation. She thinks she can conscientiously marry me as I am. Her parents have also given their consent. We have discussed the matter from every viewpoint and have reached that agreement."

"Shure, it's the most amazin' thing I've heard of for manny a long year. There's only one condition on which the Church can at all countenance the marriage of a Catholic with a non-Catholic, and that is that anny children resultin' from the marriage shall be claimed by the Church and brought up in it. I take it ye must have agreed to that."

"Not exactly. If we have children I shall be willing for them to become Catholics of their own free choice; but not that their Church shall be chosen for them in advance and their minds prejudiced by sectarian teaching in their early years."

"Sectarian? There'd be nothin' sectarian about it. The Church is the Church, the Body of Christ, and she knows nothin' of sects. The sects are all outside her."

"Well, then, I'll put it this way. I should not agree to have our children counted either as Protestants or Catholics until they come to years of understanding and make their own choice."

"But if their mother is a Catholic and has obtained the consent of the Church to her marriage, the children belong to the Church from their birth and their baptism; they are in the Church from the beginning. It is only a conditional consent the Church can give for one of its members to marry without the fold, and even that consent carries with it certain penalties. The Catholic who is a contractin' party to such a marriage temporarily forfeits a full standin' in the Church. Lena and her parents know about that. Ye must have led 'em to believe ye would consent to such an arrangement as I've mentioned."

"No, we all understand each other quite clearly. Neither Lena nor I give any guarantee that our children shall become Roman Catholics."

"Are ye soberly tellin' me that Margaret Durston gives her consent to the marriage without that guarantee?"

"Her consent is to be given at the end of a year providing Lena and I continue as we are. She has promised to do that, though naturally with reluctance and misgivings. You see, Lena and I have made up our minds what we shall do, so, isn't it best for all concerned to withhold opposition even though expressing disapproval?"

"Me son, do ye realise that ye're speakin' to a priest, who's sworn to maintain the honour and authority of the Church with his very life?"

"Yes, but nothing can be gained for the Church by opposing our marriage."

"That remains to be seen, me son. I'm bound to oppose it with every ounce of influence I possess. It's me duty before God, even if it tears the very heart out of me. I'll fight ye on this to the last ditch. Then we'll both abide by the consequences."

"And do you think it possible for us to remain friends while that is going on?"

"Och, me son, ye're surely not wantin' to give me a poor opinion of ye now. 'Twill be a fair fight, and haven't ye got powerful forces on your side? Haven't ye got the full love of the girl and all the strong stubborn Durston will of her? Faith, and haven't ye got that sinful man, Michael O'Leary, on your side? It's only the priest in me that's left to do the fightin' single handed.

Shure, and I've got mighty weapons though not the full strength of me heart to wield 'em. And the mightiest weapons break against defences of granite. It's not a fight to me likin', and ye'll please not to be makin' me sick with your foolish talk about the breakin' of friendship."

"Father O'Leary, you're a grand man!"

"Me son, I'm a tremblin' and a fearful man this very minute. I'm tremblin' and fearful for ye. I'm dreadin' great trouble and sorrow for ye, whether ye marry Lena or not. If ye don't, it's well I'm knowin' your heart will be broken. If ye do marry her, I'm fearin' a curse may fall upon ye both. Och, I'm speakin' from a sad experience. It was the trouble of me life that came to me through the like of this takin' place in me own family. I never thought to tell ye of it but the time has come.

"'Twas me brother, me twin brother David, him whose picture is in your room. Shure, and I loved him as me own life. He was the bonnie boy. He was far superior to me in intellect and refinement and in the purity and tenderness of his heart. He graduated from the University with highest honours when he was but twenty. At twenty-four he was a barrister. He fell in love with a Protestant girl, Jessie MacDonald, a teacher in a seminary. She was Scotch and an orphan. She was everything that could be desired except in her religion, which was Presbyterian. She was beautiful, lovable, and cultured to her finger tips. David defied the Church and married her. At the end of six months he took pneumonia and died. In another six months his widow died in child-birth. I went on to Boston and brought the child home. From the first we could see it was lackin'. Darlin' dear gave it every care. It lived a feeble life, never showin' much intelligence, till it was two years old, and then God mercifully called it away. So they were all blotted out. Do ye wonder that I tremble and am fearful when I think of another marriage like that?"

"But, Father O'Leary, the case proves nothing. Misfortunes fall on many families. I could probably find for you, if I set about it, a thousand instances in which Catholics married Protestants and lived happy ever after,

rearing families of healthy, happy, prosperous children."

"That may be so, and I may be touched with superstition, but I can never lift me heart out of the shadow that fell across this home. Och, I could wish meself in me grave this very minute! Be good enough to excuse me now! Mebbe God will give me a little comfort if I go into the Church and pray."

XXXVI

Within the sacred stillness of the Church O'Leary gradually regained a state of mental calmness. He braced himself for a period of concentrated meditation. Certain favourable points began to project themselves before his mind. Mark was not an anti-Romanist. He was no enemy of the Church. On the contrary he had given repeated and abundant evidence of his respect and even his reverence for the faith and functions of the priesthood. In case of his marriage with Lena there would be no determined effort on his part to thwart the triumph of Rome. Mark was a free-thinker, with some rooted objections to certain Romish dogmas, yet on the whole kindly disposed toward the general work of the Church. As for Lena, he had no doubt she would always remain a Catholic at heart, keeping herself in touch with the Church as far as circumstances would permit. The prospect was much brighter for the Church than it would have been had the woman, instead of the man, been the Protestant.

He was glad that Mark was not uniting with the Church merely as a preliminary to his marriage. Better far his present attitude of firm and convinced aloofness than any trifling with his conscience or any truckling for human favour. He could still be proud of him even though he must grieve over the present condition of affairs and tremble for the future. Indeed, notwithstanding all the disasters which had followed upon the unsanctioned marriage of his brother David, he had never ceased to cherish a pride in his manhood. These thoughts brought some alleviation to his heart. Yet the burden still pressed heavily and the pain was still acute.

He knelt and prayed. He recalled the night of the miracle, as he regarded it, when The Virgin spoke to him

in the little old and now demolished Church. Had he been faithful to the vows of that solemn midnight? Could he still hope for the "full reward" which had been promised? Around these points gathered doubt and darkness. He could only pray for forgiveness and strength to struggle on.

Hour after hour passed and now the evening was closing in. He was still kneeling when he heard a step at the door. He looked up and saw Slade Lamond. Rising to his feet he strode down through the Church to meet him.

Slade jerked the cap from his head and held it in his right hand. His left hand was thrust under his belt. O'Leary could see at a glance that something unusual was astir.

"Shure, and I'm glad to see ye, Slade. What do you think of me new church? Isn't it comin' on fine!"

"Oui, das so. Us be vaire pride for Curé haf de fine church. Youm sure be boss foremen for Jesu Son of Mary now."

"Och, Slade, me boy, ye mustn't talk like that! Shure, it's only a humble priest I am. I'm only a lowly shepherd tendin' his flock. But Glory to God, there's some fine sheep among 'em, and I'm thinkin' ye're one of 'em yourself. It's proud I am of your faithful kindness to poor Florine."

Slade fidgeted with his cap and shifted his standing.

"She all time one nice leettle gal. All time spik nice to ole Marchette and Julie too."

"Yes, it's well I'm knowin' the tender nature of her. She was a treasure in our home. Her downfall came as a fearful shock."

Slade opened his eyes wide and looked steadily into the eyes of O'Leary.

"Some time when me fall down me not stay down, eh, das so? One time when me fall down whisky drunk, de good Curé pick me up. Youm not member dat, eh, das so?"

O'Leary put out a hand and patted Slade on the shoulder.

"Shure, and them old bad days are long since past.

But are ye thinkin' that Florine may rise above her trouble? It's doin' well she is, livin' the life of a decent and industrious woman. But, of course, she s badly crippled by her fall."

Slade shifted his standing to the other foot. He drew his hand across his forehead.

"Some time de cripple heem get heal, ain't it, das so?"

"Why, yes, Slade, me boy. And I'm hopin' time may heal her hurt."

Slade looked down at the floor for a moment. He withdrew his hand from under his belt and pulled at his moustache. Then he replaced it.

"Me want to mak' de marry wit' Florine."

The news was startling.

"But, Slade, do ye know what ye're sayin'? Do ye clearly understand what ye're about?"

"Oui, by gar. Florine all time one nice leettle gal. Jus' like bright flower on gardenne till Joe Therrien come round. Den head droop down like flower wit' stalk all bruise when big dog knock it. All time look sad and cry on de eye. Leettle Bateese, heem all time laf' and kick hees heel."

O'Leary put his arm around Slade's shoulder and drew him to a seat.

"So it's feelin' sorry ye are for Florine, and ye're wantin' to marry her out of pity? That's a mighty serious matter, Slade."

Slade hung his head in silence for a moment. Then he looked into O'Leary's face and said:

"She no care for me one time. She all for Joe Therrien. But she take me now. By gar, me soon mak' her head lif' up! No one geev her de black look; no one spik her de rough word when we make de marry. Slade Lamond, me."

"Well, Slade, I'm not goin' to stand out against it. It will mean salvation for her, and I believe she will make you a lovin' and faithful wife, as ye deserve. And ye'll be after givin' her child your name, no doubt."

"Oui. Heem be Bateese Lamond."

"A mighty fine stroke of luck for him, Slade! A name to be proud of!"

Slade blushed through his dark skin.

"Das be great leettle feller, Bateese! All pink on de toe. Smart too. By gar, heem beat me. Me mos' go bus' when try put foot so high like heem. Bateese do dat and never grunt."

"I'm hopin' he'll be a big comfort to you, Slade."

A smile like summer sunshine broke over Slade's face.

"Funny ting 'bout Bateese when Marchette bring heem in. Heem no sooner dere when kettle on de stove make such fuss as never was. Den, what you tink? Why, de robin he not sing some more. He jus' stop for lissen. Heem come peekin' t'roo de door jus' for lissen on dat leettle boy Bateese."

O'Leary's arm now stole around Slade's waist. He drew the half-breed close to him and held him there for a space. He put his head on Slade's shoulder and let his tears have their way.

After a time he said:

"Slade, me boy, ye're in the way of tastin' one of the deepest joys of life. Shure, and there's manny that might envy ye."

"Oui, by gar, das so, eh?"

It was arranged that the banns should be published.

Then Slade rose and looked with careful eye around the building. He advanced to the place of the altar. Presently he pointed to an opening where a tiny window would be placed.

"Heem shine on de altar when de sun come up, eh, das so?"

"Yes, Slade, me son."

"Youm no like me put dat leettle winder on, das so? Leettle winder wit' nice picture?"

O'Leary was dumfounded.

"Do you mean a stained glass window?"

"Oui, das so."

"It's out of the question, Slade. They cost a lot of money."

"How mooch one leettle winder cos'?"

"Och, me son, it would cost a hundred dollars, and not a red cent less."

Slade fumbled in his pocket and fished out a big black

leather wallet. He counted out a hundred dollars and handed the money to the priest.

O'Leary drew his sleeve across his eyes.

"Slade, me lad, do ye know what ye're doin'?"

"Oui. Me feel vaire please on de heart. Oui, das so."

"But it's a great and beautiful gift. I never dreamed that anny of me village lads would do a thing like this."

Slade looked up at the opening in the wall.

"Us be all vaire pride for our good Curé. Oui, das so."

They stood together silently for a time, side by side. At length O'Leary asked:

"Have ye anny notions about the picture ye'd like painted on the window?"

Slade's eyes flashed up brightly at the priest.

"Oui. One leettle picture of Jesu, Son of Mary, when he hol' Bateese in hees arms. Mebbe you mak' heem, yes, das so?"

XXXVII

O'Leary lost no time in going upon his mission on behalf of the Church. He found Lena in a gentle mood. She listened respectfully to all he had to say about the lofty dignity and sacred authority of Holy Mother Church. She expressed the hope that she might always be regarded as a member of its fold. But on the one point she was adamant. She could not admit that it was wrong for her to marry Mark.

"Dear Father O'Leary, if we can't trust our own hearts and consciences when we have diligently and prayerfully tried to discover what is right, then there's no moral guidance for us in this world. You are really asking me to throw overboard my chart and compass and to let go the rudder of my will."

"Yes, I'm askin' ye to let Our Blessed Lord do the steerin'—Our Blessed Lord as He speaks through His Church. It's the path of duty and the way of safety."

"Do you think He wants me to become a nonentity?"

"He's your Redeemer, me dear. He wants to save you."

"And in order to save me must He destroy me? Must He reduce me to personal nothingness? I should call that process by another name, the opposite of salvation."

Realising that she had reached an ultimate decision he discontinued the argument, saying, as he left her:

"It's one of the heaviest troubles of me life. But ye'll always be knowin', me dear, that as far as Michael O'Leary can be your friend, he's yours to command."

There was a stormy interview with Lena's father. O'Leary upbraided him for life-long lawlessness in his methods of thinking and his confirmed habit of defiant speech. He traced the attitude of Lena to her father's influence. The Doctor rejoined that the priest was making matters worse by his interference. His arguments must

appear atrocious to an educated modern young woman. Lena and her children—if she should have any—could be held for the Church and Mark retained in a relation of friendly neutrality if O'Leary would but keep his musty mediæval theories in the background. Otherwise they might all become permanently alienated.

O'Leary bowed his head in defeat—bowed it sadly but proudly. Thereafter he became less hilarious, though a note of still deeper tenderness crept into his speech. During the following year he noticeably aged. His hair whitened. His face grew more spiritual. He spent many hours a day in prayer. All the while Mark's affection for him increased. He showed him the finest courtesy and deference.

There came a day when O'Leary awaited Mark's home-coming with strong but suppressed excitement. The cause of this had been divulged to Janet, who was now sitting quietly in her own room with a seraphic look upon her face.

As Mark came in O'Leary handed him a letter. "I'm wishin' ye to read this, me son, quietly and by yourself. When ye're wantin' to speak with me about the contents of it, ye'll know where to find me."

He glanced toward the Church.

The letter ran:

"Father O'Leary of Otnaby.

"The child I handed over to you twenty-four years ago, after the death of your brother's widow, was not their child. It was my sister's illegitimate child. She was in a dying condition and we were all poor. My earnings as a nurse were scarcely sufficient to provide the necessities of life for my mother and sister. The child was delicate and needed more care than we could give it. We saw our opportunity to secure for it a good home where, if it lived, it would be well brought up. Your brother's child was strong, giving promise of being able to make his own way in the world, even if reared in an orphanage. I left him on the steps of the orphanage at Woodburn on St. Mark's Day, twenty-four years ago. As you know, he was to be named for his father and for you: David Michael O'Leary.

"I dare not hope to receive your forgiveness for this wrong. But that matters little, since I shall soon be in the presence of the great Judge of all. I loved your brother's widow, and the thing I did has been a torture to me ever since. It has been an inward fire slowly burning me to death. This will not be posted to you till after my death and burial. I entrust it to a friend. I enclose a photograph of your brother's widow.

"HARRIET WHEELER."

Long did Mark sit there gazing at the picture. It was such a face as he had often dreamed of, a sweet young face with eyes that seemed to hold in their depths a world of yearning love.

"So this is you, dear little mother that I've always longed to see! . . . And you've been in heaven all these years—just as I believed! . . . And father, too! . . ."

He left the Den and went to his own room. He placed the picture of his mother beside that of his father and knelt down.

He trembled and the tears coursed down his cheeks.

"Father! . . . Mother! . . . We're all here together! . . . For the first time we're all together! . . . We all understand now! . . . And we are all happy! . . ."

He heard a soft step behind him. Looking around he saw Janet standing there. He sprang to his feet and folded her in his arms.

It was long before either of them spoke. Then she said simply:

"There's no more curse! All has ended in richest blessin'. Deep down in his heart your Uncle Michael feels the same about it. Go to him, me dear!"

He found the priest kneeling at the altar. Quietly he crept up the aisle of the Church and knelt beside him. Then their arms stole round each other. O'Leary turned and kissed him on the lips.

"I want your blessing, uncle!"

The priest's eyes swam with tears and his voice was shaky as he said, slowly, solemnly, joyfully:

"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee:

"The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

"The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

"So shall they put my name upon thy children; and I will bless them."

XXXVIII

As they emerged from the Church O'Leary said:

"Shure now, I'll just be hitchin' Dolly to the buggy and askin' for her best foot forward while she takes us down to The Elms. We've news for the people there, I'm thinkin'."

He was striding off to the stable when a thought struck him and he suddenly stopped.

"But mebbe ye'd prefer to go by yourself and have a quiet talk with Lena."

There was a wistful look in his eyes which Mark was quick to observe.

"Certainly not, uncle! This is a family affair. We'll descend upon them in full strength. We'll make it the march of the O'Leary men."

The priest's ear caught the tone of pride in which the words were spoken.

"Och, there's more joy in the sinful heart of me this day than I ever thought to know on earth," he cried.

Half an hour later they were in the Durston drawing-room. The Doctor joined them from the surgery. By the proud poise of O'Leary's head and the flush on Mark's face he judged that something unusual was afoot. Before he could say more than a cheery "halloa," O'Leary enquired if the ladies were at home.

"Why yes, I believe so. Shall I summon them to presence?"

"If it's entirely convenient, Charles, we should like their company for a few minutes."

Durston eyed him keenly. "You look colossal and imposing, Michael, and you speak portentously. Has anything gone wrong? If there is any matter requiring discussion perhaps you'd better first open it out with me."

"Begorra, ye're the last person in the world I'd be after discussin' annything with if it was enlightenment I

was seekin'. Shure, and ye're much too fond of argumentation, Charles; ye'll like enough lose your soul by it before ye finish. Ye could argue pips out of a seedless orange and then prove them to be plum stones. No, it's not annything requirin' discussion that we've come about, nor yet to break anny bad news. We're on a mission of elucidation. Be pleased to call the ladies!"

Lena was the first to appear. She gave a hand lightly to Mark, then turned and held out both her hands to the priest. He took them in his own and pressed them. He opened his lips as if about to speak but no words came. She looked at Mark enquiringly, then went and stood beside him. His arm stole round her waist.

"Has anything happened, dear?" she asked.

"Yes, something wonderful and beautiful. You will know about it in a moment."

At the door Mrs. Durston halted for a second. O'Leary drew from his pocket the momentous letter and handed it to the Doctor.

"Be pleased to read that to the assembled company, Charles!"

Slowly and distinctly the Doctor read it. At the first disclosure of the truth regarding Mark's parentage Lena trembled and closed her eyes. Presently she lifted wet lashes and smiled to her lover. The reading was followed by a tense silence. Durston's face was a study in repressed emotion. His wife was quietly weeping. O'Leary towered above them like an heroic statue. Lena was gazing into Mark's face with a look half glad, half sad, but wholly sweet and tender. Mark's lips were trembling.

"Isn't it glorious?" he whispered. "Speak for me, dear, for I can't find any words!"

She lifted her head and said simply:

"I congratulate you all!"

The elder people now gathered close around the lovers.

"Isn't it heavenly for Mark and Father O'Leary!" ejaculated Lena's mother.

"Yes. I'm so glad."

"Faith, and I'm hopin' it means a new element of satisfaction in your own life," added O'Leary.

She turned to him with a mischievous twinkle in her eye. "Shure, and it's the proud girl I should be feelin' now, to be gettin' His Reverence, Michael O'Leary to me uncle. But begorra, there wasn't anny room left in me for more pride than I had in the prospect of marryin' the man I love under the name he always bore."

"That's the stuff to give the troops!" cried her father, as he took her in his arms, kissed her and patted her face. "Good little girl! A thoroughbred, by gad, even if you are a Durston!"

Holding her with one arm he put the other around Mark.

"We're glad for you, my son; mighty glad! But we're not a damn bit more proud of you than we were before."

Waving a hand he said, expansively:

"Madge and Michael, do your duties and come away!"

With that he strode from the room.

For a time the lovers did . . . what lovers do, in silence. At length she said:

"Promise me one thing, Mark! That you won't let this come between you and me in any way! You won't let it rob me of anything!"

"I . . . I don't understand, Sweetheart," he replied, in evident perplexity.

She nestled close and hid her face against his breast.

"I'm on the verge of being jealous, Mark. I . . . I wanted to be so much to you. I wanted to be everything to you . . . wife . . . and mother . . . and all."

He gathered her in his arms and smothered her with kisses.

* * * * * *

The discovery of his relationship to Mark went far to change the trend and colour of O'Leary's thoughts. It enabled him to view his brother's marriage in a new light. The marriage had bequeathed a legacy of comfort and honour. He held that Mark had been brought home to him and Janet by a direct act of God. No longer need he feel any misgivings regarding that strange awakening of the parental instinct which he had experienced. It was natural and right. It was according to God's will. It was the call of the blood.

He also had now a theory to account for the strength of Mark's religious views. Might they not be partly traced to tendencies derived from his mother? He had often wondered at the tenacity with which Mark held to them, but now he could see that they represented a deep mysterious urge of his inmost being. They were an unconscious expression of filial loyalty. It was fitting that he should hold persistently to the faith of her who had given her own life to bring him into the world.

It now seemed to him, indeed, that the sweet young mother, dying among strangers, had given up her life that Janet and he might reap a harvest of love and joy. By her death they had been redeemed from loneliness. He had always held her in high regard for the six months of married bliss she had given David. But now he would encircle her memory with a halo.

Under these conditions O'Leary's heart rebounded swiftly from its recent depression. He became his old boisterous hilarious self once more. As congratulations poured in upon him his heart swelled with pride. Daily his sense of good fortune increased.

Presently the question arose as to when and how Mark should assume his rightful name. They agreed that an announcement should be made in three successive issues of all the leading newspapers of New Brunswick. But Mark expressed a further desire. He had never been Christened. Might he not now be baptised and named as though he were a little child? Would Father O'Leary perform this service? Could he be baptised by his uncle without being churched? He desired the ordinance as a pious tribute to the memory of his parents. His mother, being a Presbyterian, would have had him Christened, had she lived.

When the proposition was made to O'Leary, the priest closed his eyes and clasped his hands across his breast.

"Shure, it's a peculiar situation entirely, that one that's probably unique, I'm thinkin'. Do ye mean that ye want the Sacrament of Baptism to stand by itself alone and to involve no commitment on your part regardin' a followin' on into the full faith and life of the Church?"

"Yes, that's what I mean. I don't wish to ask any-

thing irregular or equivocal on your part in relation to the rules of the Church. But if the thing can be done without compromising your conscience or your standing as a priest, I should like it."

"Shure, and I wouldn't make a farce and a mockery of a Divine Sacrament to please either the livin' or the dead. The matter must not be determined by sentimental considerations. All me heart cries out to do the thing ye ask, but I'm not clear about me duty at the moment. Ye must give me time for reflection and opportunity to communicate with the Bishop of the diocese."

O'Leary assiduously pondered the problem which had been set him. He studied it from every viewpoint. The thought which most profoundly influenced his mind was that of the Grace which Baptism was calculated to confer. Might it not result in such a burst of illumination that Mark would suddenly behold the beauty, harmony and truth of the whole Roman Catholic claim? Or, might it not work gradually and progressively towards such an end? Would it be right to withhold from him the possibility of experiencing such a Grace?

He wrote to the Bishop, putting all the facts in order. The reply was unfavourable. The law of the Church was plain. O'Leary could not be permitted to baptise an adult in whom the required "dispositions" were lacking. The first of the needful dispositions was that "the candidate must sincerely believe in the Catholic Faith as resting upon God's unerring authority." He must first accept the Roman doctrine *implicitly* in order that he might afterwards accept it *explicitly*. The Bishop quoted from "Letters of Christian Doctrine" by Zulmetta: "Where the proper dispositions have been wanting the spiritual effect of the Sacrament is suspended and remains inoperative until such time as the receiver conceives those dispositions. *Then, and not before, the latent force of the Sacrament is set free and the soul is regenerated.* It is, however, sinful to confer the Sacrament in the mere hope that the right dispositions may be developed later on."

O'Leary was grievously disapppointed. He showed the letter to Mark, who read it with uplifted eyebrows.

"And do you take the view of Sacramental Grace that

is here expounded by the learned Zulmetta, whoever he may be? Can a spiritual grace lie in the soul after the fashion he describes? What is it we have here, materialism or magic?"

"It's the teachin' of the infallible Church, me son."

"Uncle, tell me plainly! Do you *believe* it? Is it *believable* by any thinking mind?"

"Millions believe it, me son. It is there, enshrined in the creed of the Church. It is not for me to pick and choose among its doctrines. I . . . I accept it."

"Well, uncle, that settles the matter. We'll drop the subject and say no more about it."

XXXIX

SHORTLY after these events Doug and Grace were married and went for their honeymoon to the bungalow at Lake Catherine. Three weeks later Len and Lena joined them there. Len had a glorious fortnight of it, ending in an evening of triumph at Black Rock where he caught three lusty trout while Doug sat grumbling in the boat with never a nibble at his bait. Len wrote to Mark about it.

". . . Excitement ran high at the bungalow on our return. I waited impatiently for someone to ask who caught the fish. It wasn't for me to volunteer information. Doug tantalisingly kept his mouth shut. Lena, at length, came to my rescue. She has always been kind and considerate where I am concerned. . . . Always gentle and pitiful. . . . In a whispered aside she asked Doug if Len had caught either of them. He then told her that the old fraud had caught the lot. She seemed pleased with that. Turning to me with a merry twinkle in her eye, she said:

"'It seems that the lines have fallen unto you in pleasant places.'

"Well, Mark, so they have. And unto you. May your luck continue!"

Len sat writing late that night. He felt tired when he had finished. He couldn't remember when he had felt so dog tired. He wished himself in bed but it seemed too much of an effort to get there. He spread his arms out on the writing table, lay his head down on them and went to sleep.

In the morning Doug found him still in that position. He touched him on the shoulder. . . . There was no response. . . . Doug did not like the feel of that shoulder. He put out his hands to lift the head, but even before he saw his face he knew that Len would wake no

more on earth. . . . The lines, indeed, had fallen unto him in pleasant places.

* * * * * *

The time came round for the other wedding. It was to take place on Doctor Durston's lawn, with the Reverend Arnold Ashfield, now of Woodstock for the officiating clergyman. No personal invitations were issued but it was announced through the press that any friends who cared to witness the ceremony would be welcome. A considerable crowd of men was expected from the mill and boom, the Company having proclaimed a half holiday in honour of the marriage of their new Assistant General Manager.

"And will you come to my wedding, Granny?" asked Mark.

"Shure, and I'll be there if I have to crawl on me hands and feet! I'm not holdin' with the objections against your bein' married in the Church. Not at all at all! If I had the ear of the Bishop for a minute, faith and I'd give him a piece of me mind for his silly haverins."

"Gently! Darlin' dear, gently!" said O'Leary.

"Begorra, I'll be gentle with them as is gentle with mine, and beyond that I'll give 'em as good as they send. For me own part I'm thinkin' that all priests and bishops should be married and all the nuns have husbands. It's nothin' less than an outrage upon humanity that it must get religion from men that was never fathers and women that never held a child to breast. What can they be after knowin' about the heart of the Eternal Father?"

"Hush, Darlin' dear, ye're talkin' wild!" protested the priest.

"I'll not be hushed! It's a declaration of me faith I'm makin' once for all and ye can just do what ye like with it. I know what I know. I know what God whispered to me when I was sucklin' ye at one breast and David at the other! I'm a daughter of the Church as far as it suits me to be, but when Popes and Bishops begin to contradict the word of God that's in me heart, the divil fly away with the lot of 'em!"

O'Leary looked horrified, but Mark pulled Janet down on his lap and held her there with an arm about her waist.

"And what about you, Uncle? Won't you come?"

"Shure and I don't know of anny ecclesiastical law that forbids me takin' a cup of tea on Charles Durston's lawn at anny hour of the day or night that's agreeable to him and me. And I'm not thinkin' it will spoil the flavour of the tea or the soft feel of the grass beneath me feet nor yet put any blot upon the blue of the sky if a couple of young people happen to be there and goin' through what they term a marriage ceremony."

"Good boy, Michael!" shouted Janet.

After a moment of silence, O'Leary continued:

"Shure, it's the man and the priest in me that's been fightin' each other for manny a long year and I'm thinkin' they'll keep it up till the day I die. Sometimes there's brief seasons of truce between 'em and then they just fall foul of one another again. Och, it's a battlin' time I have of it entirely, but I'm still hopin' to save me soul."

"Ye was a man before ye was a priest, dearie," said Janet tenderly, "and shure, the soul is the man."

* * * * * *

O'Leary's gift to the bride was a chain and crucifix of gold. Among the presents from her father were an elegant mink muff and scarf.

It came to the question who should sign the register. Lena was consulted. She nominated her father and Slade Lamond.

Though Slade had learned to scrawl the letters of his name he was still a novice at "de ink sling." Patiently and laboriously he traced the letters. At the conclusion of his task a big drop of ink fell from the pen upon the parchment.

Lena held up a threatening finger.

"Naughty boy! Father O'Leary will give you penance for that!"

"By gar, das too bad! Me all time mak' some black mark for heem wipe out. But heem no be hard on me. Das be all right me jus' mak' de confess. Slade Lamond, me."

THE END

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