

Jeanne Louise, my soul felt exalted within me; I breathed as one set free of a nightmare. I rang the bells as I had never done before, till—, suddenly the rope broke in my hand and I fell backward, through the rotten trapdoor, sixty feet to the ground. The rest you know—and yet not all: there is still something more. But tell me first, Jeanne Louise, if this confession of my sin does not cause you to hate me?

'Poor Agapit,' she said, 'only to love you better! It was a temptation of the Evil One, and you overcame it. If you had died from that terrible fall, I think you would have gone straight to heaven.'

'You are an angel, Jeanne Louise. But there is still something more. Say it again—say that you would be willing to join your fortunes with mine, cripple that I am, if your father would give his consent.'

'I repeat it over and over, Agapit.'

'It is a selfish thing to ask, but it warms my heart to hear it from your dear lips.'

Then, as she gazed at him in mute astonishment, he lifted his head from the pillow, threw aside the bed-covers, and springing, fully dressed, to his feet, he stood before her, tall, erect, well as he had ever been, moving his limbs this way and that, walking from one side of the room to the other, as he cried out:

'I am cured!—I am cured, Jeanne Louise! God has worked a miracle. The fall set in motion the stiffened springs of my body; and here I am, please God, ready at any moment to measure the distance between Garlau and the farm, to ask Pierre Mevel for the sweet dove of Kergoz!'

At High Mass on Pentecost Sunday the people of Garlau were advised of the publication of the banns of marriage between Agapit Quosseveur, of that place, and Jeanne Louise Mevel, of the Farm of Kergoz.

'If there is any person here present,' added Pere Navagoll, 'who knows of an impediment to this marriage, let him come forward and declare it immediately; otherwise he will incur the penalties of Holy Church.'

That no such person presented himself is evident from the fact that for the last ten summers the writer of this story has spent his Brittany vacation at the home of Agapit and Jeanne Louise, the pious, respected, and well-beloved proprietors of the Farm of Kergoz.—'Ave Maria.'

AN ALIEN INVADER.

The train from Leeds to Harrogate was just about to start when the quiet of a certain compartment was broken by the entrance of a pair of tall, good-looking damsels and a young man sufficiently like them to be recognised as a brother. Of the two previous occupants, the sedate, white-haired old gentleman who had been nodding in a corner merely opened his eyes and closed them again, but the other, a stout, stylish lady, effusively greeted the girls, who seated themselves with a swirl and swish of skirts and chatelaines, talking all the while as if they were under a vow to utter the greatest number of words in the smallest possible space of time.

'Just getting home like ourselves, Mrs. Hopkins?' said the elder. 'Amy and I have been shop-shop-shopping until we were ready to collapse, and Cyril threatened to leave us to our fate. It's too awfully cold for anything.'

'"Cold" you mean, Hilda,' corrected Amy; and the compartment rang with their mirth.

'Could, then—awful could awa,' gasped Hilda; and the old gentleman in the corner repeated his former movement, the young one slightly frowned, whilst Mrs. Hopkins looked mystified.

'What is the joke?' she asked.

'Oh, well, you know Aunt Latham is always doing something queer!' began Amy. 'And last summer she was touring in Scotland—'

'And she met some Miss Baird,' interposed her sister—'a native, an aborigine—don't you know?—to whom she took one of her absurd fancies.'

'And she invited the girl and her father to visit her,' continued Amy; 'and they are coming, and we are trying to learn the language so as to be intelligible to the foreigners.'

'It will be rather an affliction, I dare say,' agreed Mrs. Hopkins. 'But why does Mrs. Latham burden herself with such persons?'

'Oh, I expect they forced themselves upon her!' said Amy sagaciously. 'She is too communicative, you know; and they would soon find out that she had a well-to-do young bachelor of a nephew, and they would toady to her to serve their own ends. She is always advising Cyril to marry, so I think the object of the invitation and its acceptance is beautifully clear.'

'Less obvious is the charity that thinketh no ill,' remarked Cyril quietly.

'I think you are capable of protecting your brother,' said Mrs. Hopkins, affably addressing the girls.

'I quite agree with you that my sisters are likely to prove an efficient safeguard against matrimony,' said the young man, with some dryness.

'I have met Scotch people who were really very nice,' declared Mrs. Hopkins, vaguely endeavoring to cast oil upon troubled waters.

'That is within the limits of possibility,' he replied. 'But Amy and Hilda have made up their minds beforehand to dislike Miss Baird, and to see in her and her father only what is absurd or objectionable. I am not sufficiently up-to-date to enjoy ridicule of strangers, especially when one of them is a lady.'

'Oh, Cyril is always a wet blanket: he can never take a joke!' cried Amy; whilst Hilda pronounced him 'long-faced enough to be Miss Baird's father.'

Possibly there was a good deal of earnestness in their jesting, as both girls were in an alliance with each other to prevent their brother's marriage, which event would make a considerable difference to themselves. To keep Cyril a celibate until they had made 'good matches' was the chief end and aim of their existence; but so far no eligible youth had shown any inclination to spend his life listening to the discourse of either one of the Thurston girls.

A few days after this conversation the Thurstons were sipping tea in their artistic drawing-room, a replica of an eighteenth-century apartment, with great-grandmother Thurston gazing from a frame of leather roses and foliage at the distant spires and gilded domes of Harrogate. A carriage had stopped at the big white porch, and presently the maid announced:

'Miss Baird!'

'She has positively called without being invited!'

'And without our having called upon her! Oh, this is a little too barefaced!'

Amy and Hilda had just time to hurl those remarks at Cyril when the visitor entered; and she was so much worse than they had hoped that their breath was taken quite away. She was attired in a costume of red and white tartan, crowned with a huge white Tam O'Shanter; here and there a pebble brooch the size of a muffin indicated her taste in jewellery; her hair, shining with oil, was 'dog's-eared' round a face painfully high in complexion; and gamboge boots, that illustrated the theory that feminine feet are increasing in size, shone resplendent above the subdued tints of the Thurston carpet.

Hilda was the first to recover from the shock of this apparition, tossing her chin upward and making the most of her height.

'Where is Mrs. Latham?' she asked, freezingly.

'Awa to Leeds. She didn't ken I was coming here, but I was kinda anxious to see what like you were.'

'You had no difficulty in finding your way to my brother's house,' said Hilda, deep and deadly meaning in the remark.

'With a gude Scots tongue in ma heid, I'm no likely to loss mysel anywheres,' was the off-handed reply of the stranger, whom Amy was eyeing from head to foot with a dazzling smile.

'You are quite sure that you are Miss Baird?' she asked suavely.

'Oh?' queried the other, perplexedly.

'Oh, nothing! Only I thought she had sent her maid to represent her, perhaps. Scotch manners and customs are rather peculiar,' said Amy, her cool, deliberate, smiling stare unrelaxed.

Cyril interposed a chair and a—

'Won't you sit down, Miss Baird? Shall I ring for fresh tea, Hilda?'

Hilda murmured something inaudible, but performed her duty as hostess.

Amy set down her cup and walked to the piano, with an air of withdrawing herself from inferior surroundings. She began to play 'Bid me good-bye and go!' whereupon Cyril's face flushed, but Miss Baird remained unmoved.

'But can you no play something cheery?' she asked.

Amy looked round her ear to answer:

'Can't you? You look musical!'

Miss Baird responded with alacrity.

'I'll give you one o' the auld Scots songs,' said she, and thumped forth an accompaniment to the following:

Haggis broo is bla' and brow',
Kittle kail is a' awa,
Sound the spleuchan o'er the Stane,
Philabegs are a' their lane,
Hech the pibroch, hech the pladdie,
Hech the sonsie fannam haddie—
Hoot awa, Hoot awa-a!