

The Storyteller

GLORIANNA M'GINNIS

'Andy,' said Julia Reilly to her brother-in-law, Andrew M'Ginnis, as the christening party marched up the street, 'Andy, don't raise a row before the priest about the name.'

Andy looked defiance and disgust, but maintained silence, a silence so ominous that the wily Julia was inspired to change the base of her appeal.

Andy, dear,' she asked persuasively, 'wasn't Nora always a good wife to you?'

'The devil a better,' Julia,' he agreed heartily, thrown off his guard for a moment by a wave of tender feeling towards the mother of the pink and white bundle they were taking to the church.

'Sure then you wouldn't want to break her heart. An' she says to me comin' out, she says, "If Andy won't let me call the darlin' Gloriana it'll break me heart." An' she cried that hard! God forgive me!' she ejaculated to herself.

'She cried!' exclaimed Andy, repenting his bitter opposition. 'Well, I never made her cry before, an' I won't do it now. You can give the middle name Gloriana—oh, but it's disgraceful! An' I'll give the first name Honora. But it's against me principles, Julia, an' I'll always call the child Nora. It was good enough for me own mother an' for her mother, an' it'll be good enough for me child. Ye can call her anything you want, but I never will.'

Further discussion was prevented by their arrival at the parochial house. It was well for Andy's principles that the slippery-tongued Julia did not have more time to work upon his softened mood. She might have persuaded him to repudiate the name of Honora altogether. He had accepted Gloriana though with a feeling of guilt, and now as he sat in the office, waiting the coming of Father Doyle, his heart reproached him with a thousand reasons against sanctioning the assumption of such a name. The entrance of the priest at this critical moment drove from his mind all method of argumentation, and cast an indefinable fear upon him. What would he say to such a name? Ah, there he was asking the question.

'What name are you going to give her, Andy?'

'Yes, Father,' Andy stammered, his heart beating wildly as he strove to defer the humiliating moment.

'What name? I asked,' kindly ventured the amused priest again.

'Oh, the name! Yes, Father, Honora, after me—father—mother—I mane.'

The priest wrote it down. Julia gave the excited Andy a nudge. Sure enough he had forgotten the second name.

'That's the first name, Father. An' me wife wants a second one.'

'Well, what is it?' asked the priest, looking up.

The look disconcerted Andy. His lips seemed to struggle with something, and then he blurted out 'Honora Gloriana.'

Father Doyle almost dropped his pen, and a faint smile showed upon his face—a smile that Andy felt was levelled at him for his folly in calling the child such an outlandish name.

'It isn't me, Father Doyle,' he protested, in self-excuse. 'It's them women. They would have it, an' pushed me to give it. I don't blame you if you refuse to take it.'

Father Doyle continued to smile, but wrote down the name, though in his heart he agreed with common sense Andy.

So the child was baptised, and her father drew a sigh of relief as the door closed behind them. 'I knew you'd make a fool of me,' he said bitterly. 'To bring me before the priest an' cover me with confusion and disgrace. But ye'll carry it no further. I'll never call the child anythin' but Nora, nor will the rest of ye, if I'm to be master in me own house.'

And Andy kept his word heroically, as we shall see later on.

Honora Gloriana grew as all youngsters grow. For little Nora, as he called her, Andy had planned a future of unalloyed bliss. He had already picked out the place in the parlor where, in the near future the child would be drumming scales on a fine big square piano that he had in his mind's eye. With this end in view he had applied himself more than ever to his daily toil, for the advent of the first child had taught him the great lesson of providing for the future of the charge that he in his true child-like faith believed God had entrusted to him. More than ever was he a home man, delighting in the

company of his wife and child and refraining from the crowd that was happiest over the bottle.

So it was that when Andy's Norie could look back on two sisters and as many brothers, all of them with names in no way approaching the style of Gloriana, her father's perseverance and shrewd ability had placed him in partnership with O'Malley, the contractor, and on the high road to prosperity. It was no surprise to Andy himself. He had promised it to himself and he had kept his promise. It was not the only promise he had kept, for as you passed by his still unpretentious house you might hear the sound of the piano at which the prodigy of a Norie was doing her best to try the patience of her neighbors. But Norie was really a smart child, and her success in school, as in music, would have delighted the heart of a father less doting than Andy. It was the essence of happiness to him to sit on the piazza while Norie within wrestled with a popular song or two-step. When anyone passed the house and looked towards it at the sound of the music Andy's bosom swelled with pride as much as to say, 'That's the daughter of Andy McGinnis.' But Andy's adoration for Norie was not a little due to the fact that she was the child of his victory, after what was once his miserable defeat. There was never a mention now of Gloriana. For upwards of two years the women-folks had endeavored to use exclusively the name of their own choice, but Andy was not balked by their persistency. He was fully as persistent. He had set out to win the day for Nora as against Gloriana, and he would succeed in the effort or die. And he had succeeded. He had tried everything in his power to make the name ridiculous—in which effort he was nobly seconded by all the boys in the town. With the abundance of ridicule and the counter efforts of Andy in calling the little girl Norie whenever he had a chance, even in times unnecessarily, Gloriana soon lapsed from popularity and finally became a bit of ancient history, and when Honora Gloriana was conducted to school for the first time her name was entered on the books as plain Norie McGinnis, with not even an initial letter to mark the ruin of the glory that had been. So it continued during the child's preparatory studies, a name as unpretentious as the sweet-faced little girl who answered to it; and even when she entered the high school she was still Norie McGinnis, the girl that sang like a nightingale and played the piano like Paderevski. But at this very time began the evolution of Norie.

Everything that Andy had touched became on the instant gold. He had built a new house, one of the finest in the town, and ten times better, he boasted, than the O'Brien mansion. This fact alone would have turned a more settled head than Andy's. But not so with him. He was still unpretentious Andy, respected on all sides for his honesty, and above all for his democratic manners, despite his money. Mrs. Andy, however, was more prone to social aspirations, and felt in duty bound to preserve the honor of the noble family name by the assumption of airs quite at variance with her meagre education. Andy noticed this shortly after he had moved into his new palace. He had been contented where he was, but Mrs. Andy had nagged at him till in sheer desperation, and to have peace at home, he followed out her every desire in building an up-to-date mansion of which she was extremely proud and he supremely ashamed, except for the fact before stated, that it beat the residence of the O'Brien's.

He did not feel at home there. It seemed to him to be beyond his element, even though he could afford it, and above all he feared the evil influence it might have in the education of his children, and its tendency to make them consider themselves of a superior mould and thus assume airs which, to Andy, were detestable in an extreme degree. The idol of his heart, Norie, he trusted, would keep her simplicity in the new house, although he had his fears, seeing the added airs of his wife when she came into the place of her ambition.

'Don't be having the people laughin' at you,' he said to her. 'Sure everybody knows you were poor Nora Reilly when I married you, without a cent no more nor meself. Don't be givin' bad example to Norie and the childer. I'll not be bringing them up Yankee dudes, nor sports. Now mind that, Nora, an' quit your nonsense.'

Norie was impatient at these obstacles to her social advancement. The point she aimed at was very high, so high that she almost became dizzy as she yearningly looked to it. It worse might come to worst she was not averse to being content with the social superiority of Newport, though, to tell the truth, she did not shudder a bit at the possibility of being transplanted to foreign soil and in close proximity to the throne. 'The newspapers had done this. Mrs. Andy had read so much about the fads of the wealthy, their social ways and aspirations, and she had come to think that here alone was happiness, and here alone the great destiny of the McGinnis family. To Norie she had confided her heart's desire, and though the more sensible daughter had smiled at the career marked out for her, she, nevertheless, was