

"Ha! Frank—well, are ye come, ladies—is this you—where were you these seven weeks? Really well you rode the Fawn, my boy—give me the hand."

This was Mr. Baker's salute to Frank, the moment he made his appearance.

"Well, are you come, lad; I thought you weren't going to come home any more," said his father.

His mother kindly looked up, with his hand in hers, and gave it a kiss, and whispered:

"Welcome, my dear boy."

"That will do, now," said Mr. Baker; "leave your gun there; a nice day for shooting this, though I think your bag isn't very heavy; when I was like you, a young stripling, I often had two men loaded coming home. Ay, upon my soul, often three, often three!"

"You must have shot a sheep, or a dog, or, perhaps, a lot of turkeys then, to load so many?" said Frank.

This was a sly bit at Mr. Baker, for it was said that he wasn't very particular whether it were wild or tame fowl he met; in fact preferred the latter, as being in the best condition, and the more easily got at.

We will leave Mr. Baker for the present, and will now introduce some new acquaintances to our readers.

Mr. O'Donnell was a man about fifty years of age—perhaps something more. He was very handsome in his youth, and was still a fine portly man. His figure was erect, his large eye bright, and the ruddy glow of health was still upon his cheek. There was none of the sternness of age upon his brow, nor was the smile of love and friendship banished from his lips. He was warm-hearted and affectionate, and with merry laugh and song he joined the plays and pastimes of his children. His parental authority did not chide their innocent amusements, so he was to them the kind, loving father and playful friend. He was a man of wealth and respectability, too. He farmed large tracts of land, and had lately set up a discount bank in the village. His wife was a pale, tall woman. There was something subdued and melancholy in her appearance. This was owing to the death of most of her children, by that most insidious of all diseases, consumption. She was a woman of warm affections and deep love; and it is no wonder, when she saw her darling children droop and pine away one by one, that the rose fled her cheeks and the smile her lips. Even now she sighs as little Bessy sits beside her on the settee and nestles her head in her lap, for there is something in the fire that sparkles in the eye, and in the hectic flush that mantles on the cheek, and then leaves it deadly pale as before, that wrings the mother's heart with anguish for her pretty darling. So frail, so gentle and retiring was Bessy O'Donnell, that she seemed some ethereal being embodied in a frame of mortal mould. She was the only one of the family that possessed the golden hair and light blue eye of the mother. She was a frail, gentle, loving child, Bessy O'Donnell was. Though twelve winters had not passed over her head, yet she was tall—tall for her years—for the fire was burning within, and building its structure to consume it again. And Kate O'Donnell; she was in herself a wealth of love and beauty. Though she had imbibed from her mother a tinge of her chaste sadness, still she was sometimes cheerful as a child, with all the devotional nature of true piety.

Hers was that beautifully moulded character of intellectual taste, rare enjoyments, and good sense, seldom met with, but which is no ideal after all, dear reader. How many a Kate O'Donnell have we met with in life? But I must describe her more minutely to you. Her beauty was of the highest order; she was tall and stately, without a particle of pride or affectation. Her beautiful oval, but rather pale, face was enlivened by a slight blush, and encircled with long braids of raven hair. A broad forehead, white as alabaster, a nose of extreme delicacy, but rather *retroussée*, dark blue eyes, bordered with dark lashes—such was Kate O'Donnell.

There was an elegance of symmetry, a correctness

of form about her, that I have seldom seen surpassed in statuary. How often, dear reader, do we see a living Venus, with life and animation, with the rich blood circling through her veins, with animated and sparkling features? What is all your soulless statuary, your dry Venus de Medici, to her? Nothing; it is merely a beautifully chiselled ideal when compared to the real. Such was Kate O'Donnell, as she moved around that tastefully furnished parlor, that black velvet riband around her neck, contrasting so finely with the purity of her skin, and that rose-bud braided in her dark hair, looking out so wantonly from beneath the folds.

We know little, as yet, of Willy Shea, but that he was an orphan; Frank had met him at College. There was something so retiring and gloomy about that poor student, that he won on Frank's good nature to seek his society and fellowship.

Willy Shea seemed to avoid associating with any of the students. He was dressed in black, with crape on his hat; all the others knew about him was that he had lately buried his father, and was now left alone to battle against a rough world.

Frank, after a time, gained his friendship and his confidence, and when the fatal disease of his family—consumption,—threatened, and when recommended to go to the country, alas! he had no home, and Frank wrote to his father, and there came in reply a welcome invitation for the student to make his home of Mr. O'Donnell's house until his recovery. He hesitated, yet Frank pressed him, and said so much about the kindness of his dear mother and his fair sister, that at length he consented. For something said to him, "though death has left you without kith or kin, though you have no fond mother, or gentle sympathising sister—no one to love you, no one to feel for you, there is no use in feeling dismal and weary; go, there are loving hearts in the world that will love you," and something within him whispered, "go, there are loving hearts in the world that will love you,"—and he did go.

Willy Shea was then about twenty. He was rather tall and gracefully formed. His studious, pale-looking face, shaded with dark curls, possessed almost a womanly delicacy. There was a mine of thought in his dark dreamy eye. As I said, he had neither kith nor kin, and he tried to forget the past in deep reflective study. His thoughts and life were pure and unallied; his aspirations noble and lofty.

At length the poor suffering student accompanied his new friend to his home in the country. Here every comfort surrounded him; the nicest attention was paid him, until his improved health testified that the change was indeed beneficial.

Mrs. O'Donnell thought of her own dear children and sighed, and was a mother to the suffering orphan. He was so exhausted from his delicate state and the fatigue of travelling, that he was confined to bed for several days. Kate was his principal nurse, and her low soft voice, her gentle step, and the cheerfulness of her presence, were a balm to his weary spirit. How he did wait and listen and long for her coming; what sweet emotions danced in his dreamy dark eyes, as she quietly glided into his room.

One day in a feverish sleep, as dreams of the past flitted across his mind, he exclaimed, "Oh, mother dear! oh, sister sweet! will you not come to me? but alas! I have neither mother nor sister—no one to love me."

He thought he felt a tear trickle on his brow; he looked up, and Kate was standing over him, her large eye dim with pity and compassion. "So you have neither mother nor sister, poor youth; I will be to you a sister."

"God bless you, God bless you, Miss O'Donnell, for these kind words, and he pressed his lips to her hand. She blushed and timidly withdrew her hand.

"Forgive me, Miss O'Donnell—"

"Kate, if you please, as we are to be brother and sister."

"Well, Kate—how dear a name—I am grateful