

MARY DWYER'S PRESENTIMENT

High up the hill, within the shelter of a friendly rock, nestled the cottage of James Dwyer, a tidy home, much better than those of his neighbors. The threshold was well worn from the tread of the large numbers who gathered regularly to assist at the 'Stations,' for the Dwyer home was a house of prayer, wherein gossip was never allowed, and all were encouraged to be charitable to their fellows.

James Dwyer was a conscientious worker, devoted to his wife and only child, Mary, and was always ready to lend a helping hand to those in distress. Far from being well off, he was thankful for what God had bestowed upon him, and made good use of his bit o' land, raising enough to provide for his family comfortably. His wife was, as the neighbors were wont to declare, 'A loving saint.' She came of a proud family, the Cuffes of The Castle, as they were familiarly spoken of, and although her father parted with his ancestral home and estates rather than give up his religion, the proud blood still flowed in the veins of his children, and poverty seemed to strengthen their faith in God's sight. They seemed to live wholly for the faith for which their forefathers suffered much. When Eily Cuffe bestowed her hand upon plain and sterling James Dwyer, she recognised in him qualities akin to her own—he was religious, generous-hearted, and patriotic. Their only child, Mary, reared in such a wholesome atmosphere, grew to womanhood, a blessing to her family and a ministering angel to her neighbors. She willingly assisted her parents in all their plans, and when not at home was to be found attending the altars of the little chapel, three miles down the road, or reading to the sick of the neighborhood, from books loaned her by the Sisters.

Her life-long friend and playmate, Nellie Meehan, who, the neighbors declared, never seemed a bit religious like Mary Dwyer, had bidden adieu to the world two years before and joined the community at the Lough. Many a wisacre shook her head and said that Mary would soon follow her, but the latter kept at her daily tasks, a consolation to her parents, whom she loved devotedly. She was not good enough for the convent, she would laughingly say when questioned as to her intentions, and she owed a duty to her parents for awhile yet, but she could pray in the world as well as in the cloister and be an example to her neighbors, as she was.

Then a change came into her quiet life! Visiting at Father Dillon's one sunny May day, she was introduced to his nephew, Gerald O'Brien, a handsome lad of her own age, who had come to spend a brief vacation with his uncle. He was from Dublin, and for some months had been studying for the profession of civil engineer. Gerald became fascinated with the beauty and gentleness of his uncle's guest, and before many days he was a daily visitor at the Dwyer cottage. How the hours seemed to fly for this innocent lad and lass! Hand in hand Gerald and Mary clambered over rocks in quest of hidden flowers, and for hours they would tramp the seashore, building castles in the air, and enjoying every minute spent together. Sometimes they would look wistfully across the broad Atlantic and wonder as to what the new Ireland, which lay beyond it looked like. Again they would plan as to the day, when Gerald would be successful in his profession, and they would buy back part of the ruined estate—the home of Mary's forefathers.

And sometimes they would speak of their dreams to good Father Dillon, who would jocosely raise his knotty blackthorn and make pretence at laying it on Gerald's back, declaring 'that castles were not bought with dreams and there were plenty of Ireland's best sons in America. Gerald must remain in Erin and be content with an honest living in a comfortable cottage.'

But youth is impulsive and Gerald was no exception to this rule. As his vacation drew to a close he chafed at the thought of parting with Mary. He could not bear the loneliness, he said. It would simply break his heart to be absent from her for long. To these

remarks Mary would gently reply: 'Hearts do not break so easily, Gerald, and when you get lonely, study more diligently, work hard, and the blues will soon drive away.'

Gerald bade good-bye to Mary, promising to write faithfully until Christmas, when he would be down and bidding her to bear him constantly in mind—that his ambition henceforth would be to labor hard, in order to make a home for her soon. His letters came frequently. At first they were cheery, then Mary noticed that Gerald wrote in a morose strain. He seemed discouraged and although he encouraged her not to fret, grew more despondent himself. One letter spoke of bitter disappointment his father had recently, and which he said weighed heavily upon the family. Mary would learn of it all later. Then for weeks the poor girl heard not one word. She grew restless. Divers thoughts flew through her mind, especially when Father Dillon wondered as to Gerald's silence and she became a daily visitor at the little chapel. She had no fear of Gerald's love for her waning. She knew his manly heart beat for her alone, but she feared something was amiss. Every day she dropped into Father Dillon's, and they confided their doubts and fears to each other, Father Dillon always saying, 'Gerald is lost in his Christmas examinations. Maybe his idleness all summer made him a dullard and he had to make up for his pleasure.'

But Mary knew differently. She knew that Gerald studied hard during vacation and hours and hours were spent in study at night, of which Father Dillon knew nothing. Gerald was ambitious to finish his studies, so that he might make a home for her and he had to study if he wished to succeed. Coming from the chapel early one morning, Mary found the kindly pastor watching for her—a letter in his hand. He bade her come into the kitchen. Molly, the housekeeper had a strong cup of tea ready, and whilst she sipped he would tell her the news.

The letter was from Gerald, now in far-off America, the land of their day dreams. He was compelled to give up his studies owing to his father's failure and the only hope he had was in going to the New Ireland, where every man had a chance and where he hoped to succeed despite the new customs, and the hard work he was yet unused to.

He trusted that Mary would bear the news of his disappointment bravely and he would write often to cheer her heart. After this news Mary spent her spare hours in the chapel, at Father Dillon's, but more often was she to be found sitting on the rocks staring wistfully over the broad, blue sea. From the first she seemed to feel a heavy weight at her heart as though she had seen Gerald for the last time. 'Oh, America is so far away and I will never leave the old people, who need me now more than ever,' she would cry despairingly, and despite Gerald's splendidly written letters of love and comfort, she would droop and moan with sorrow. Dear Sister Rose, her old friend, Nellie Meehan, tried to console her and would chide her gently for allowing her affection for Gerald to depress her so. She would urge her to visit the convent and sew for the poor and thus find relief from sorrow.

Up and down the road Mary would glide to and from chapel and unnoticed by herself she grew thin and haggard. Her mother spoke gently to her of the future when she and Gerald would have a cosy home in Erin or America and with true Spartan courage would laugh heartily at the prospect of her crossing the ocean to visit them in the land of the free. To all of her sallies, Mary would gently shake her head. She declared sorrowfully she had a presentiment from the first hour that she would never meet Gerald again.

The swish of the waves, as they beat near her home, seemed to sing a Requiem in her heart, the very birds that hovered about the rocks had a sadness in their song, as they flew from bush to bush. She would write Gerald how she sat directly under Cove Rock, their old trysting place, and imagined it was even with the harbor at New York. In her day dreams he seemed to be walking just a wee bit beyond her vision. 'The cruel sea, quiet and peaceful in its cruelty, rolled