

to take good care of Alice on the way, "for good people are scarce, you know, Mr. Richardson."

"Oh, never fear, Mrs. Malone, never fear; we'll get along well, I promise you." So off they went, Alice leaning on her father's arm, and Richardson walking by her side. On the way, he gradually turned the conversation to his own affairs. It appeared he was the son of a widowed mother, who was "at home in Ireland," as he said, with two young daughters, who were yet but mere children. "My poor mother," said he, "was left a widow when my sisters were only infants, and since then she has had some hard times, though in my father's lifetime she was very well off. She strained every nerve to give me a good education, and it is now four or five years since I came to America with the intention of bringing out my mother and sisters, as soon as I had a good way of doing. Every year since I came I sent home some money: last year I sent thirty pounds."

"Thirty pounds, Mr. Richardson!" said Cormac; "why, you must have good wages."

"Yes, I have now eight dollars a week."

"Well, and do you still think of sending for your mother?"

"That depends on circumstances," replied Richardson, with some hesitation. "In her last letter my mother told me she had got into business, and was beginning to do very well. I think she would just as soon stay where she is, and have me send her money, as I have been doing. She would like me to go home; but—but I don't think I shall go—at least for some time."

"How did you come by your un-Catholic name, Mr. Richardson?" said Alice; "was your family always Catholic?"

"No," replied Richardson; "my father was a Protestant and an Englishman; but as he died when we were all quite young my dear mother was enabled to bring us up in the true faith. I owe everything to my mother," he added, in a tone of deep feeling.

"God bless you, Mr. Richardson," said Cormac, fervently; "it does my heart good to hear you speak that way of your mother. There's no fear but you'll have a blessing. Are we near home, Alice?"

"Very near, father," said Alice, in a low voice; "we have only a block or two farther to go. Mr. Richardson, it is getting late; had you not better turn back?"

"Not till I see you safe at home—that is, provided you have no objection. If you have just say so, and I'll be off at once."

"Oh, not at all," said Alice, quickly. "I'm sure we're very much obliged to you, and very glad of your company; but then the trouble—"

"I am very glad to hear that you're glad of my company," he rejoined, taking her up quickly; "as to the trouble, that's my affair. Suppose the trouble, as you call it, were only a very great pleasure—what then?"

"Why, I suppose we must not deprive you of it, that's all," said Alice, laughing. "But here we are at the door."

"Well, good-night, then," said Richardson; "as my services are no longer needed, I'll be going."

"Won't you come in?" said Cormac. Richardson hesitated: he was evidently waiting for Alice to second the invitation; but she did not; so he hastily excused himself, saying that if Miss Riordan would permit him he would come some evening during the week, and spend an hour or two. The permission was given, and Richardson walked away with a light heart, humming as he went, the refrain of "The Days When We Went Gipsying."

Late as it was when they got home, Cormac lit his pipe and sat down to "take a draw" before he went to bed. "Alice," said he, "will you just get 'Thomas à Kempis' and read me a chapter; you always happen on something in it that seems if it was every word written on purpose for me. There's a deal of consolation in that book, my daughter."

"So there is, father, for those who need it; I'm thankful that neither you nor I stand much in need of consolation. God is so good to both of us that we don't want either Thomas à Kempis, or any other writer, to comfort us—at least I can say that much for myself." She watched her father narrowly as she said this, and she saw that he was making an effort to imitate the cheerfulness of her tone.

"And I, too, Alice dear; I'm sure between God and the Blessed Virgin, and my dear daughter, they leave nothing undone to make me happy: an' I am happy. Oh, indeed, an' indeed, I am happy! God knows I am;—an' why wouldn't I? I have everything that my heart could wish."

"I'm delighted to hear you say so, father dear," said Alice, still keeping her eye on him; "for, do you know, I have sometimes feared that you were not happy, after all."

The blood mounted to Cormac's face as he replied quickly. "Why, then, you were wrong Alice, all wrong; I'm as happy as the day's long, and full of gratitude to God and you; but, then, I can't help thinkin', now and then, that I must be goin' some of these days, and—"

"Going, father!—going where?" said Alice, affecting not to catch his meaning.

"Why, to the kingdom come, my daughter; in the course of nature my time can't be long now. I must follow them that are gone before me; an' if I could only hope to take my place among them, I'd be well pleased to go when God sees fit to call me. But then it's hard, hard, to think that one must lie down an' moulder into dust where there's not one belongin' to us—among the black strangers."

By this time the tears were running down poor Cormac's cheeks, and to say the truth, Alice's own eyes were not dry, but yet she rallied her energies to make light of her father's trouble.

"Why, then, what in the world puts such thoughts in your head, father dear?—you never used to have such thoughts, an' I'm sure you ought to have more sense than to be disturbing your minds about such things. With God's help, it will be many a long year before you'll want a grave anywhere; and, for my part, so as it's consecrated ground, I don't care where I'm buried. It's all one to the poor body, and I'd just as soon lie in the French burying-ground there above as in Kilshanaghan. I'm surprised at you, father dear."

"Well, I can't help it, Alice; I know myself it's foolish; but, as I was just sayin' to Harry this evenin', I can't get it out of my head, do what I will. But don't be cast down, Alice dear; I didn't mean to tell you anything about these childish notions: I suppose it's beginnin' to do to I am," he added, with a forced smile.

"At any rate, father," said Alice, as she took out her handkerchief and wiped her eyes, "it's just as well for me to know all about it; you know very well that your trouble is my trouble; and even if these fancies of yours are somewhat childish, we must do our best to get you over them. Let us say one Rosary to-night with that intention; and as we'll both be going to Communion on Sunday next, let us offer it up for the same purpose. You'll see it will be all right very soon, and that you'll get rid of these notions."

"God grant it, Alice, God grant it! I'd be glad and thankful if I did. But," he added, with a sudden change of manner, "isn't that Mr. Richardson a fine young man?—I believe he's a Catholic, isn't he?"

"Oh, dear, yes, father," said Alice, quickly; "I used to see him regularly in St. Patrick's Church before ever he went to my aunt's—long before I knew who he was. Oh, indeed, he is a Catholic, and a good one too."

Cormac smiled, and took a draw or two of the pipe without saying anything, and Alice, not noticing the smile, supposed the matter was ended. But not so: after a little while Cormac resumed the subject. "I'm well pleased," said he, "with his kind remembrance of his mother;—a good son is sure to make a good husband."

Alice laughed as she replied: "Very likely, father; but let us leave that to whoever it may concern. He said he'd come some evening this week to sit and chat awhile. I'm glad on your account, father, for he has seen a good deal of the world, and read a good deal, too."

"And I'm glad on your account, my daughter," said Cormac, quietly.

"On my account, father?" cried Alice, with a start and a blush.

"Just so, Alice, just so. But I think it's late in the night; let us get our prayers over and go to bed."

On Tuesday evening Richardson made his appearance, and though Alice was at first somewhat embarrassed, remembering her aunt's avowed scheme and her father's