

The Democratic Advocate.

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\$2 PER ANNUM.

FOR SALE.

111 Acres prime limestone land near New Windsor, 7 miles from Westminster; fine buildings all in good condition; a very desirable farm; price \$12,000—half cash, balance on 3 years time.

Farm of 553 acres, 43 miles from Westminster, 23 miles from Patuxent Station, W. M. R. R. Buildings fair. Price \$25,000.

Choice little farm of 553 acres, half mile from Westminster; good soil; brick house; large barn; all in good condition; price \$11,000.

Nice little home, 2 acres prime land; 4 miles west from Westminster; brick house; bank barn; more land if desired; price \$2,800.

Plaster and bone mill on W. Md. Railroad; buildings new; best of machinery; 14 acres of land; good water power; a splendid opening to engage in a profitable and growing business; terms easy; price \$2,000.

2250 Acres prime timber land on Cheat River, West Virginia. Heavy original growth of poplar, red oak, ash, walnut, cherry, &c.; land valuable for grazing purposes after timber is off; price \$7 per acre.

Machine shops at New Windsor, Md.; all the necessary buildings for the manufacture and repair of machinery. This property will be sold; a bargain at easy payments; price \$4,500.

8 or 9 acres of woodland, near public road from Westminster to Mt. Airy, 4 miles south-east from New Windsor. Price \$2,800.

A small home, 4 acres, on road from Westminster to New Windsor, 1 mile from former place; good house, good stable, good water, extra fine fruit, &c. Price \$12,500.

Fine brick house on John street, 9 rooms, conveniently arranged, all in first class condition. Quite a bargain at \$2,800.

300 Acres near Finksburg, Md.; 6 miles from Westminster, 1 mile from Railroad Station; land in fair condition; 100 acres in timber; stone house, bank barn; will be divided if desired; \$50 per acre.

32 Acres prime land, half a mile from Westminster; large bank barn, fine orchard, splendid building site for houses; price \$6,000.

Large brick lot in Westminster, on Main street, near Railroad Depot; price \$14,000.

Farm 45 acres, 2 1/2 miles from Westminster; land good; buildings good; orchard choice fruit; price \$80 per acre.

Farm 73 acres, 8 miles from Westminster, 2 miles from Hanover, near R. R. Station, good house and barn; 33 acres cleared land in good condition; \$35 per acre.

Nice Little Home, one mile from Westminster; 60 acres of prime land, good brick house; price \$8,500.

Twenty acres good land, good buildings, near Westminster. Price \$2,800.

One hundred acres, best quality of land, 2 1/2 miles from Westminster; buildings only fair, good water, &c.; price, \$8,500.

Brick house and lot in Westminster; \$1,200.

Double brick house and lot in Westminster; \$2,500.

Also, some fine pasture lots, ranging from 2 to 6 acres, adjoining Westminster.

For particulars call on or address
E. L. LYNN, Westminster, Md.

Select Story.

ONE OF THESE DAYS.

One of these days it will all be over. Joy and laughter and love and pain. Meetings and partings of friend and lover. Joy that was ever so edged with pain.

One of these days will our hands be folded. One of these days will the work be done. Finished the pattern our lives have molded. Exiled our lot beneath the sun.

One of these days will the heartache leave us. Never again shall we be burdened down. Never again shall a hope deceive us. Never again will our progress stop.

Freed from the blight of the rain endeavor. Winged with the health of immortal life. One of these days we shall quit forever. All that is vexing in earthly strife.

One of these days we shall know the reason. Happily, such that perplexes now. One of these days, in the Lord's good season. Light of His peace shall adorn the brow.

Blessed, that out of tribulation. Lifted to dwell in His sun-bright smile. Happy to share in the great salvation. Well may we tarry a little while.

Select Story.

THE BRIDAL OF SOLLAS.

From Belgravia.

A bleak, low-lying shore of the Outer Hebrides, with a stealthy tide flowing and ebbing over tangled rocks. Only here and there a patch of white shell sand driven in by the eddy of the Atlantic surge breaking to the westward. It is only a nook of the land, this, after all—the dullest part of all that hungry shore fringing the island of North Uist on the east and northeast—with no bold frontage to the ocean such as the other coasts present, but with just a glimpse of the open sea, beginning at Valley Strand and ending where the peaks of Harris are rising, with the isles of Bernera and Borera midway guarding the entrance to Harris Sound.

The unfenced fields lying close to the shore are nearly bare, showing irregular trap rock breaking through the surface and some scattered piles of newly roused sheaves erected at intervals. Even when the harvest of coarse barley and oats was waving here in the Summer breeze this place scarcely looked more fruitful than now, for the crops are always poor and thin in this the most barren district of the island. The low crowded cottages a little further inland are poverty-stricken and tumble-down. Hemmed in by hills—low, rounded, and grassy—to the west, the Sollas district consists of this hamlet, set on a narrow strip of oozy plain among peat bogs, rocks, and water.

This is the "place of the curse"—at least, it had been freely described as such by many of its inhabitants. These sons of the soil were not, as a rule, complimentary in their language toward the particular spot of mother earth in which they resided. Who would be after the blighting influence of such a patrimony was presumed to rest upon them?

It had been a time of suffering and want in Sollas. In some ways matters became worse than ever as "the forties" drew near their close; the climate seemed to grow bleak, the land more pitifully sodden than before. True, the potatoes were better than formerly. The fresh seed obtained after that terrible "year of the famine" had done wonders in this respect. But if another bad season were to come the people would be as poorly off as before, and were less able now to stand privation. All the "relief money" subscribed in the south had been spent; the wages of many a hard day's work, paid to those in utter need for the construction of a road across the middle of the island, could not be carried again. Another road would not be needed. What was left?—the poor fruit of hopeless toil, the "sickness" once more, that low fever bred of insufficient nourishment, perhaps the dread potato disease again, more feared than any epidemic among the inhabitants, for did it not affect strong and weak alike?

And there had been unfortunate misunderstandings also in regard to the "holdings." The great proprietor of the land had acted according to his best judgment, no doubt; had forgiven hopeless arrears of miserable rents, had urged emigration, and afforded assistance—even a safe conduct abroad—to those willing to leave the place altogether. The difficulty was that the aid was given only on condition of leaving! Anything to leave! And it was just this one thing that the people of Sollas—poor, ill, half-fed—resisted almost to the death; or, at all events, to its near likeness, semi-starvation. The place was dear to them, however bleak and barren. Home always is, even though it be a home with a curse brooding over it. Why wish them to go? Was it not that others—rich "tacksmen" from the south perhaps—might be put in possession of their holdings?

Others! Certainly no islander from any of the other districts would ever come here of his own will. Those who lived on the western shore had more or less of a kind of rough plenty, with a pinch, it might be, in a bad season; but there was better fishing of a kind to make up for it, and better shores for gathering sea "ware" for the potato land. No! the poorest would never come to Sollas. The only two-legged animals resorting thither by choice were the seaweed, and they came in great numbers, but yet with them it was doubtless only a place of call at the best. There was a curse on this one district assuredly. In Gaelic idiom the dwellers in it were wont to reproach each other on slight occasion as "sons of cursing," with special allusion, no doubt, to their joint inheritance afore-said.

Yet, under this malevolent destiny, whatever it might be, they persistently elected to remain year after year—those that were left, that is to say, for a shipload of them had lately been dispatched, half bribed, half persuaded, to seek a change abroad. Many of the cottages were accordingly empty, would be roofless in time, gretted it. It was about the only thing he possessed—this grievance—in addition to

Those that were still tenanted were mostly close to the beach; the remaining dwellers it would seem clung to the sea—that most hopeless of things in that hopeless place—as if they imagined that its lazy, creeping tides might yet bring in some wave-borne treasures for their benefit.

The house nearest to the shore was that of Roderick MacDonald—"Big Rory," as he was familiarly called—one who had experienced a full share of the hardships and suffering of the people. He did not repudiate the idea; in fact, it might be thought, upon close observation, that, if deprived of his part in the general lot, he would somehow have missed, and, after a fashion, he his small stock on the croft, and if he had been suddenly transplanted into a position of comparative comfort there would have been something lacking in his eyes.

Upon the never-varying theme of their joint sufferings and hardships, and also regarding the extreme folly and purposelessness of seeking to flee from them, Rory was expatiating to a select circle of hearers this dismal, rainy evening at dusk, inside the one room forming the larger portion of his dwelling. He had been fifty years in Sollas, man and boy—ten years had elapsed since his wife died and left him with an only child; he accordingly knew his subject thoroughly; so did his hearers, having listened to it all before, times out of number, as they sat on low stools round the peat fire, placed, as is the custom here, in the centre of the floor. The smoke from the glaring embers drifted hither and thither among them, until it heaved and swayed out of the open door, the only available exit. Their talk was in Gaelic; at that time little was known here.

"And turn us out? I say never!" was the ending of his speech; "never, so long as I can hold out here." To this every one assented.

"Where is it to go to?" resumed the speaker, finding that nobody spoke, though all nodded affirmatively. "Where do they wish us to go?"

"Canady," briefly responded, in attempted English, a youth close by Rory's elbow.

"Yes, Canady," rejoined the spokesman of the evening—he had not intended to evoke an answer, but merely to make a point, after the fashion of the declamatory orator—"I know that. Well; Canady is a long way to go; as the poor people of Hirta found it—those of them that reached it, any way. Half of them died before then. Did you ever know a Sollas man or a Uist man either come back from Canady and say it was a good place—now did you?"

No one apparently had heard of any such person or report, so the argument was deemed conclusive. Their talk then ran upon the crowning iniquity of large holdings, in one of which all their thought these few hundred sodden acres were to be forthwith absorbed after they themselves had been exiled. All agreed that in this respect "the cup" of the tacksmen was already full, not in the sense of blessing.

As they talked heavily fell the Autumn rain upon a single pane of glass let into the roof of the apartment. By and by a distant peal of thunder broke on the heavy air. Instantly discontinuing his speech, Rory whistled on a shaggy dog lying in a corner, and stalked to the open door, from the outside of which he could be heard by the others directing the animal's movements as if to drive in some cattle at a distance. Grumbling, he returned to his seat. "The beast's down there in this weather wouldn't go down to-night for—"

A bright pink-colored gleam shone through the dark interior; another peal of the stillness, muttered in its echoes, and died away.

"As for the chief," continued Rory, resuming his discourse and peering forward in the firelight with his eager, strongly marked countenance—"as for the chief, I wonder at him—wishing his people away, wanting them to go off to be slaves, or worse, in a far away land. It is not like the spirit of the MacDonalds that, at all!"

"No, indeed," was the response from all in divers keys.

"I heard the teacher at Clachan telling strange things about the chief," said a huge, ungainly young fellow at the side of the fire, as he leaned backward on his stool and stretched his coarse "brogans" to the blaze. "We all know the MacDonald, and most of us are of the clan, besides being tenants under him; but, as I was saying, he would have it, this teacher, that the chief himself, or some of the old chiefs before him, that is, were not belonging to these islands at all, nor over to Skye, but came here from some place far over the East Sea, beyond the mainland, from Ber—Ber—it wasn't Bernera, at all events, but some name like that. I forget."

"Yes?" interjected Rory, interrogatively and encouragingly. "This was a new light on the grievance."

"Well, when he came over he seized all the lands and the people—though how he did it single-handed I don't know—and made them pay rent, and when he came he couldn't speak a word of the Gaelic, but only some language of his own."

Expressed incredulity on the part of the audience. "I asked the teacher," continued the lad, "if that was so, how was it with the MacDonalds, who have always been in the North Islands, and he said it was quite the same with them—that the people were all here 'from the beginning,' and, of course, had a right to the lands, but that the head man came afterward, and had no Gaelic when he came. And he said, too—that he must have been a liar surely—that the chiefs' names were different then—not MacDonald, nor yet Macloed, but something else—not Gaelic-speaking at all as we have it."

A chorus of grunts followed this speech, but no one of sufficient importance to take up the subject was found among them, else the supposition might have been hazarded that the Norse conquerors in bygone ages acquired the Gaelic with much of the same other 'from the beginning,' and, of course, had a right to the lands, but that the head man came afterward, and had no Gaelic when he came. And he said, too—that he must have been a liar surely—that the chiefs' names were different then—not MacDonald, nor yet Macloed, but something else—not Gaelic-speaking at all as we have it."

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father? say it again." The voice came from the background, behind Rory's seat, but the corner was so dark that the speaker could not be discerned.

"I will tell you—he knows," said Rory impatiently over his shoulder. "Didn't you hear him just now?" It was no time this for repetition.

But apparently the questioner did not care to apply to the quarter indicated, for no further query came from the dark corner. The conversation about the supposed foreign origin of the chiefs was resumed—and as the principal informant's stock of knowledge on this topic was already exhausted, and his hearers were anxious for the whole matter over again—with various—from the beginning. The listener in the darkness must have been satisfied, for no further movement or sound came from that direction so long as the sitting lasted. It was only as some of the men rose at length to depart, lighting their pipes afresh at the fire as they did so, and while Ian got up to his feet as if to go also, irresolutely wavered, and finally sat down again, that something moved once more in the nook behind Rory's seat, something that glanced in the firelight gleam.

But Ian MacKay—for that was the young giant's name—remaining still, the figure in the darkness was motionless once more. Again, before the visitors had flocked to the door, there was a gleam on massy braids of yellow hair, and a glimpse of a rounded arm. The rest was in shadow.

Rory, as host, went outside with the others. Ian sat silent by the fire, the light playing upon him as he rested his head between his hands. Not a good face, (its expression of a very doubtful cast), the freckles seemed to bleach, not to lighten it, and to bring out its weak points—the faulty eyelashes and eyebrows of the fair complexion, and the flabby cheeks. The frame of the youth was gigantic, but the head, though proportionate, was ill-shapen, and the face defective—the forehead receded the chin fell back. His eyes were dull and heavy; they showed greenish in the blaze as he turned them to the dark corner at length and said, rather doubtfully:

"Mairi!"

No answer—not the silence of shyness; it was too prolonged for that.

"Are you going to the shop to-night?" queried he again. "If you are I'll tell you a secret on the way that you will want to know."

Still silence—the speaker was not a favorite of the maiden evidently.

"Well, if you won't speak I'll just tell you now," said Ian, rather put out by her lack of curiosity. "Your friend Angus and I are going away to-morrow. He wouldn't think it worth while to let you know, I suppose. We are off to the lighthouse, our way, to help build a store there for a fortnight at any rate—there now, that's news for you!" And the speaker, as if he had relieved his conscience of a burden, rose, shook himself, and glanced sideways where the maiden sat silent.

"Mairi!" he said again, impatiently this time, and made as though he would approach her.

Then she started to her feet as if either to avoid or to warn him. As she rose the freckled that moment fell full upon her, clad in her rustic dress, upon her supple yet rounded figure above the average height. It lighted up her wealth of wavy golden hair, coiled in a shapely mass behind, and with its abundance trailing on her neck and shoulders. It touched the broad white forehead, the clear-cut aquiline features, with the dewy violet eyes and the melting, tremulous mouth *Mairi's hair!*

Then the fire gleam faded, and she stood in shadow.

"Stand off, Ian, don't come a step nearer!" she cried, and her eyes, even in the shadow, flashed bright. The Caliban thought better of it, and stood still.

"You had better go," she continued in a lower voice. "Father will be here in a minute, and will order you off, if I but speak!"

"You do!" she added in a low, sudden whisper of scorn, "to speak of the *Clann-Dhonnchaidh* as you do—as if they were not better of your base gypsy tribe!"

The force of Mairi's passionate words belied her own supposition as to the unbroken Celtic descent of her clan. The Norse blood, and none other, was hot in her veins, and its characteristic vehemence cowed the craven before her. He was not of courage at all equal to his size. "Might have a knife about her," thought this despised suitor. It was the only accompaniment of physical strength of which he had any idea. So he shuffled, rather clumsily to the door, being ashamed to resent himself, and not relishing the allusion to his connection, on one side of the house, with a gypsy family. Industrious and intelligent as these wanderers often are, for them and their belongings your Highlander has the deepest scorn. It is instant contamination to associate with them.

She went to the door shortly afterward to make sure that he had gone, as if indeed he were some stray and thievish cur. Then, having closed the door, she returned and sat down by the dancing peat blaze. Was that a tear which fell bright and glistening on her shapely hand, with its strong molded nervous fingers, browned, but not coarsened, with toil? Surely it was. Could it be that Ian's "secret" had struck home? (Cowardly he that could vex that half-tearful, half-smiling face—a very April in its changeable loveliness! Certain it is that, after her father returned, she was more than once at the door, on slight pretext, looking out on the clear twilight, while the plashing waves sighed and moaned in the rock crevices of the shore.

The third time she slipped out there was a quick movement at the gable-end of the house, in the dim light. Not Ian back again? She started. Ah, no! some one else, and very different from Ian, so judge by the way she waited his coming. None other, in truth, than that "other person" (to use the delicate Gaelic periphrasis—Mairi's own) who was to assist at the build-

ing on the lighthouse island next day— Angus Cameron, that is to say, and Mairi's accepted lover.

It was a long conversation they had together beneath the stars. Once or twice Mairi left his side with a pretty affectation of caution—her father being only half aware of her engagement—and ran into the house, coming out again shortly in an unconcerned manner. Her father, worn out with his eloquent efforts, slept soundly on a settle by the fire.

Just before Angus left—and their farewell was a very prolonged one—it was agreed between the lovers that the old-time signal of a lighted fire should be shown to Heisker, fifteen miles to the west, next evening after dusk, as an assurance of safe arrival. Mairi was to be looking for it from the top of a neighboring hill.

"I won't fail, Mairi," said Angus, a broad-shouldered, strapping young fellow, heavily bearded, and speaking like one who had traveled from the islands. "Be on the hill a little after sunset, at twilight—half an hour after, and look out for the fire, one, at any rate—on the north point."

"And the second fire, Angus?" shyly whispered Mairi.

"Close by, to the southward of the first, darling," answered he. "What the second signal betokened it is impossible, just at this moment, to define, their colloquy at the time being very difficult to follow.

So they parted. It was only to be for ten days, but it was their first separation since they plighted their troth two years before—near the place where they stood, and by the waves.

Harsh and bitter the Sollas coast—dreary the wash of its restless waves. Little they heeded it, these two, if only they met, as now. Sadness only came home to them on the eve of parting—its spell of gloom would be broken when they embraced once more. Even here, upon this hopeless and deserted shore, God's blessing had fallen. Thank him for love!

Early the following morning a white-winged boat sailed from the western shore of the island, bound for the outlying reef-like belt which forms the seaward edge of the Outward Hebrides. The low sandy hummocks of this remote and desolate land alone break the ocean which stretches to Labrador. Nothing can be imagined more weird than its shelving and irregular shores. On the Heisker Island, which forms the larger portion—an irregular strip of sand and sandy hummocks—reside a tiny colony of crofters. A light-house tower crowns a rocky islet at the northern extremity. Saint Kild's, crazy and steep, rises twenty miles to the north-west, and the varied chain of the "Long Island" shuts out the view to the eastward.

The passage to Heisker is always a difficult, and in rough weather, a dangerous one; the sailing track lies through a multitude of reefs, and the soundings are very shallow. But as the boat left the wind was from the south, and therefore fair for the course.

Only Angus and Ian were on board. The latter, who cherished a bitter antipathy to his companion, as being Mairi's accepted lover, was discreet enough to dissemble his feelings while in the other's company. Angus, though much the lesser man in build, was reputed to be of a very determined disposition, and his compact and hardy frame had more of the matured strength of manhood.

As their boat flew before the south wind they little thought that they were closely watched from the shore they had just quitted. From a neighboring height Mairi had viewed their setting out. Soon to the eyes of this loving watcher the boat faded to a speck on the waters.

In the evening, toward dusk, the girl ascended the hill once more to watch for the signal fire on Heisker. Her eagerness was great; she had scarcely contrived to hide it from her father all day, and now, as the time drew near, her anxiety increased—for upon the fact of the fire that evening being a single or a double one depended much of the happiness of the immediate future both for Angus and herself.

One fire would assure her of his safety; that she looked for as a matter of course, for the weather was such that no reasonable dread could, in this respect, be entertained.

And the second fire? But to explain the meaning of this second additional signal we must go back for a little.

Angus Cameron had little or nothing of his own on which to marry. Himself the son of a crofter, at Tramsburgh, near Sollas, he had an aged mother to support out of the scanty proceeds of the croft, eked out with the Summer herring fishing, and some odd jobs, such as he was at present engaged in. Mairi, on her part, would, in time, inherit her father's small savings—the fruit of self-denying industry in former years. But as this was not at present available, matters were not hopeful as regards their speedy union. Any hope they indulged in this direction depended on the result, in one way, of this day's trip to Heisker. In the island resided a bachelor uncle of Angus, a saving and penurious man. It was understood that the nephew would ultimately be his heir. In the meantime it had been ascertained that the old man was not indisposed to furnish as much ready money as would procure a fresh plishing for the Tramsburgh croft, and perhaps otherwise anticipate his intentions in Angus's favor. Were this done the latter might reasonably expect claim his bride forthwith, and bring her to share his home under these improved conditions. Her father had signified his consent should this be arranged.

Should the old Heisker crofter, however be unwilling to advance the capital the marriage must be postponed indefinitely. This day would probably decide the question one way or the other, and in these circumstances by the significance of the second fire being displayed or not. If lighted close beside the one denoting safe arrival—in other words, if there were two

fires instead of the customary one, the result of Angus's interview with his kinsman was a successful one. If only one light was shown the reverse was the case—either Alastair MacAlay had refused the assistance, or required further persuasion before consenting.

As no intelligence of the result could be otherwise conveyed to Mairi before the completion of the work at the lighthouse, this plan had been arranged between the lovers.

It was with a beating heart that Mairi that evening reached the top of the hill commanding a view of the sea to the Heisker land in the distance. One fire or two? The wind had been light, but perfectly fair all day, and the sea quiet. There was no fear in her heart regarding the first fire, but would there be a second?

As she rested on the heather, her eyes straining into the gathering dusk, a brilliant blaze suddenly shot out from the North Island. But that was not the expected signal, as Mairi well knew, only the first flash of the revolving light from the summit of the lighthouse tower. The looker-for fire would be further to the southward and much lower down. She knew the exact spot of that long black outline, independent now against the sky line, where the first flicker from the lighted driftwood would shine through the gloom. An hour slowly passed, still another; no light to be seen. The girl's brave heart sank. Had some disaster overtaken the boat? It was too dark now to scan the sea in search of a lingering sail. The stars shone out brightly, yet she stirred not, but waited with a sinking heart.

Late that night Mairi, pale and ghost-like, entered her father's house. She had waited till all hope was gone for the night. Still hoping against hope, however, the next evening would bring the signal, she did not disclose her fears as to the boat's safety.

The following day her watch commenced earlier in the evening. Long before the lighthouse tower showed its nightly flame, and while its crystal dome was yet sparkling in the western sun, she was seated on the top of the hill to watch. A long and weary survey. At last the watchers in the tower kindled the warning blaze.

Was that a spark beneath, on the north point? A glint that flashed and faded? Alas, no! nothing but gloom and the mist of tears in her eyes.

"Mairi!"—a voice behind her. She turned quickly. Angus was standing behind her. It was too much for her strained nerves. She tottered and would have fallen. He caught her in his strong arms.

"Angus!" Oh, how quietly she rested her head upon his breast!

It had been lurking treachery on Ian's part, he explained to her when she grew calmer. With maddened jealousy and passion raised in him by Mairi's contemptuous dismissal Ian had probably listened and overheard, the night they parted, their arrangement regarding the fire signal. Careless of results, he had inwardly vowed that, for that night at all events, no fire would be kindled, if it could prevent it. Circumstances had favored him. Angus, who was fatigued when they embarked, had left the conduct of the boat in his companion's hands. When he awoke after a brief slumber, the boat had gone hopelessly to leeward, they were as far north as the Seal Skerries, and the wind so light that with adverse tide there was nothing for it but the oars. By hard effort they only reached Heisker at early morning; hence the signal could not be displayed. Arrived at the lighthouse they had learned that the building of the store was necessarily postponed. There was nothing then to be done but for Angus to see his kinsman and return.

"Oh, Angus! and what did Alastair say?"

Her lover's look was sufficient answer. The advance had been granted.

Leave them to descend the hill together, these two loving ones. What though the night was falling and the western ray no longer touched heather and bracken, loch, stream, or shore with its living gold—did it matter to them? Was the lapping surf on the gloomy shore beneath them ominous in its sound, a death hush upon the voice of life? They knew not of it; they were with each other and that sufficed. Ere they parted that evening at the cottage door all had been arranged. In a few weeks they were to be united.

During this interval Ian's disappointed rage, helpless though it was, knew no bounds. Forsaking his work, almost his nightly rest, he prowled about the neighborhood of the MacDonalds' cottage, picking up, in the adjoining houses, such scraps of information in regard to the approaching marriage as the gossips of the place could afford him—words which he eagerly listened to hear, and which yet maddened him when uttered. Rory's cottage he avoided, at least when alone. The girl, he knew, disliked and shunned him. Angus was in no humor to be troubled by him, perhaps harbored a grudge against him, in the matter of the Heisker trip. Altogether Ian's position was not to be envied. As a well-known unsuccessful suitor the many gibes and hints at his expense, in which the neighbors indulged, fell upon him like whips; nor had he sufficient control over himself to avoid showing that he winced under them. Unknown, during those swift-flying weeks, he had dogged the footsteps of the betrothed pair in many of their rambles together among the hills or by the shore. His huge bulk did not favor him in this capacity of spy, but those whom he watched, and felt a singular fascination in watching, were far too much engrossed in their own company to heed him, even if they had discovered that he followed their movements.

Day after day passed. The following morning was to be usher in the wedding day. It was to be a very simple affair—this rustic union. By crofters' custom the pair, attended only by one or two friends, were to attend the nuptial at Tramsburgh, when

the marriage ceremony would be performed by the minister. The customary festivities were to take place at the MacDonalds' cottage, and, at a late hour, the bride and bridegroom were to leave for Angus's house, where he had arranged to bring his young wife home.

Even up to this, the eve of the wedding day, nothing would satisfy Ian but to watch Angus and Mairi during the last stroll the two would have together as betrothed lovers. Their way, that evening, led by the seashore, at the borders of the fields, where a little grassy track separates the rocks of the beach from the cultivated land. Knowing that they frequented this quiet path by preference, and that Mairi would likely choose it for her last evening in the old cottage, Ian had, with some difficulty, secreted himself in advance in a hiding place among the rocks—a strange, gloomy satisfaction the disappointed youth indulged himself with in watching the movements of the happy pair.

He had not long to wait. It was a quiet evening, the sea sobbing itself to rest among the creeks and inlets of the shore. All nature was still and peaceful. Down the path from the cottage came the two close together, Mairi tearful in her happiness, her lover gazing tenderly at her as they walked. They had been speaking of the unlighted fire on Heisker, Mairi half playfully calling it anything but a good omen for their joint happiness, and he trying to laugh away the idea from her mind, as only the foreboding of some "omniblack" of the place.

When they came to the spot where the road ended at the rocks they stopped for a moment, as if irresolute to which hand to turn. Did something whisper evil at that moment in the turning of the way? Surely not, for, after hesitating for an instant, they struck in the northward track, leading by the edges of the field, where some stray sheaves of grain were yet piled. Their faces being now away from the direction where lurked the stealthy watcher, they strolled along the path together, Mairi leaning on her lover's arm, and their talk coming fitfully in the pauses of the light breeze. Further and further they went, but still within sight of the spy. Along field and meadow they passed unheeding all around them. Then they paused.

"The field of the curse!" muttered Ian between his set teeth, as he peered from the rocks. "That field indeed—God strike him!"

He did not cease the girl, his love was not turned to hate—he had loved her—he loved her still with all the fervor of which his low nature was capable, but to see her the bride of another ere another sun had set, it was more than he could bear. "The curse of the place on him!" he hissed.

Does the curse causeless ever come? What ban or blight could fall upon these two in their youthful happiness? What danger lurk by their innocent footsteps among the wilding flowers? Enough was theirs of love and youth and hope. There surely was nothing in an hour like this to mar such happiness.

Even the dull shore by which they strayed was glorified that night, for the sun was yet above the western hills, and that rays bathed rock and seaweed, and simple Autumn flowers, with its quiet spell. There was a breathless hush in the air, broken only by the faint murmur of the waves. The clouds above were colored saffron with the sunlight—dull saffron in the setting blaze—with heavy purpled edges, and the depths of the heavier banks, lowering over Bernera, hid soft showers in their dim breasts. There were light rain-falls upon the offing, shadow lines lit with rippling glimmer on the nearer waters.

Still they lingered, the two lovers, then they sat down together by one of the sheaf piles, the nodding withered popples over their heads as they leaned back against the sheaves.

"They will not leave before an hour is out," thought the watcher to himself, as he became cramped in his crouching position. "And coming to rain," he added, as a few heavy drops fell upon his lurking, feverish face. Over the fields floated the sound of Mairi's rippling laugh. Was that its echo that followed quickly after—the sound of sweet music echoed, somewhat loudly, from the nearer hills, or only the roll of the heavy, distant surf? For a moment the air darkened, a trembling gust shook all the scanty harvest sheaves and the withered petals of the poppies, a heavy dropping of rain for an instant, then the sun shone out once more.

"Will they never go?" thought Ian, impatiently. He was out of earshot, however. Yet he could not rise to go without betraying himself. To all appearance they did not intend to move away. Close together they were sitting, side by side, her head bent a little forward as if she stooped to listen to his tender words; his, as if whispering in her ear. Their hands were clasped together, one of his arms around her as they sat. Aye! clasp together while ye may—his arm around you. *Mairi's hair,* as if to shield from harm. Nevermore to either of you, now, shall come the shadow of hurt or dismay, the time of trouble or heart-sickness; never more shall threaten the swift arrow that flyeth by day.

Suddenly the watcher's face grew deadly pale. Was something unawares stealing over him, as silently he gazed upon the youthful pair sitting yonder? Was a ghastly mist coming over his eyes, or some creeping, lingering shadow encircling the pile of sheaves where Angus and Mairi were resting? Yet they moved not from it, nor stirred. A smoldering, smoke-like wreath; rising on the evening air? Why are they so still?

Palsied with horror, so that he could scarcely drag his limbs from his hiding place, Ian fled that moment with his shriek half uttered on his shy lips. Still they moved not, these lovers, nor heeded his loud outcry. Has some fatal spell fallen upon them and dulled them with its lethargy?

Alarming the people of the hamlet with his distracted cries, it was long before Ian

could make himself understood. At last a crowd of men ran with him to the shore. How earnest the lovers' colloquy that they did not hear the neighbors coming! Still he bent beside her drooping head, her face downcast, their hands still clasped.

"The curse! The curse of Sollas!" shrieked Ian, raving wildly, as they neared the spot and knew the truth, every one of them, long ere they reached it. "It is the curse come down. I prayed it for him, God help me—for him, but not for her, Oh, no! not for her!" Then his voice died away to a gibbering wail, as if some lost spirit.

Both the lovers had been smitten, as in a moment, by that sudden blighting curse—stricken by lightning as others had been, on this thrice-cursed plain—the very field of death and harvest ground of the last enemy, sown in its dark depths with some hidden magnet, which draws the Levin-brand. Even as it had not sundered their embraces, it had not marred them, this swift messenger—though the ground near them was torn and riven. A shadow of a smile yet lingered on Mairi's parted lips, and their hands—they had not unclasp that tender clinging ere they bore the sad burdens home.

In death they were not divided. They were laid to rest, together—not in any field of death, storm-vexed and blighted in every blade that springs from its dank soil, but in that hallowed ground which, at the Resurrection, shall bloom and blossom with first-fruits of immortality.

Over forty years have passed since that ill-fated eve. The place which once knew the lovers is now well-nigh deserted. The cottages of Sollas are mostly in ruins.

But the dwellers on the broader, brighter western shore of the island are not any fewer in number in these latter years.

They still aver, these people, that during the dread gales of the autumn equinox, when their harvest fields, far inland, are drenched with spray from the Atlantic, when the lochs are white with driven foam, and when the sea breaks high on every reef and rock of the unsheltered coast, throwing a white, ghastly veil over all that broken shore, the far distant low-lying Heisker land, as seen from the hills, shows a signal fire leaping, nightly, on its northern point. First one bright flame over the wandering sea, and then a second, "close by it to the southward."

These are the "death fires," say they, lit by unearthly hands on the eve of "The Bridal of Sollas."

The Country Editor.

There is an idea in the minds of many who ought to know better that the "country editor" stands on the lowest platform of the profession, and that he who is employed in any capacity, no matter how humble, on a metropolitan journal is his superior. There is no greater mistake. An editor who has held important chairs in metropolitan offices, and who has the reputation of having been successful, remarked: "I do not hesitate to write the leaders of the most important journals, but I would tremble to undertake the management of a village newspaper." There is no place in the profession so difficult to fill as that of a country editor. In cities a man who can do one department well bothers himself about no other. Nor need he; he gets the knack of his specialty, and continues at it. But the country editor must be good in all departments; he must be well read on all subjects; he must be able to discern the trend of the public mind in politics, religion, and social topics; he must discuss agriculture and industry with equal precision; he must be fluent on polemics and politics; he must write of the President and pumpkins; he must mind men of high degree and descend to things of low estate; in short, he must be an "all-round man."

It is this that makes the position of a country editor so hard to fill. It is this training that makes the good country editor such a splendid manager for a metropolitan daily. There is no place, except in a country office, where such all-round training can be had. The position of a country editor is not held in the esteem it should be. Country papers are not respected as they ought to be. If a family can afford only one paper, let that be the home paper; for it concerns a family more to know what is being done in its own country than it does to know the news of distant places. The city paper cannot give, and does not pretend to give, the local news that its country readers