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CASTLE DALY:

THE

Story of an Irish Home Thirty Years Ago.

(Continued.)

Thornley turned, and walked slowly to the house, and Ellen followed a few paces behind; but when they had nearly reached the open door, she hurried forward, and, coming up to him, touched his arm.

"I am afraid I have vexed you more than I need. I ought not to have been so vehement; forgive me for that, please?"

"No," John said deliberately, after a pause of thought; "I don't forgive you for that, I thank you. I believe you might have said it in a way that would have given me yet more pain. I can't take it all in yet, but I believe the energy with which you have refused me will save me from absolute despair. I think there must have been some pity in your heart, something pleading for me, however faintly, or you would have been less vehement. I shall not quite despair."

"Indeed you had better; but we are friends. When we knelt in the chapel yesterday, and I felt that you had forgiven me for my conduct about that essay, I was so glad. Let us be friends."

"No, we are not friends. I am your lover. There is no use in calling things by false names. I am the more sorry for your determination against me, because I promised my sister to return immediately to England, if I found I could not be of the use to you I hoped to be. And next to you, I owe most to her."

"Your sister will be glad to get you back, and thank me."

"She loves me too sincerely, and understands too well what the disappointment of my hope will be to me, not to be bitterly sorry. I could tell her what it was to me in better words than I told you. Will you read a letter she sent by me? She wished me to give it you, whatever was the result of my speaking."

"If you like I will."

"Of course I don't expect it to influence you in any way. I only want you to know how you are thought of, and what friends you might summon to your side in a moment if you wanted them."

Ellen ran up stairs when they entered the house, and John turned into the turret-room, where Anne was still lying on the sofa by the turret-window. She carefully avoided looking at him as he entered, but he went straight up to her sofa, and stood before her.

"You were right," he said, slowly; "it was no use. Yet I am not sorry she knows."

Anne held out her hand to him. "Well, I suppose there is nothing more to be said, except that I am disappointed. A year or two ago, when I did not really know you, how very much surprised I should have felt at myself for saying that."

"Of course, you understand that I should not have asked her if circumstances had been with me as they were a year or two ago—if I could not have offered her such a home as her father would have thought fit for her."

"Circumstances—I was not thinking of circumstances, but of the change in my feelings towards you. I hope you did not say anything of the kind to Ellen."

"No; but why?"

"I should have despaired of your ever understanding each other, if you were capable of making such a mistake as to suppose that you could tempt her from starving Ireland by talking to her of a comfortable English home."

"There is one thing I should like to ask you. Do you suppose—have you any reason to think—that I have a rival?"

"Only the 'dark little Rose' of whom Murdock is singing out there, and the wrongs of its people that fill her heart to the exclusion of anything unconnected with them."

"Unconnected with them'—yes, I understand. If I had chanced to be a rebel—if I had written mischievous incendiary verses, she would not have disconnected me from all that interests her. She would have believed in me then; she would have thought more of that than of all."

The sound of Ellen's approaching step stopped the complaint, and to afford himself a semblance of occupation and an excuse for keeping his face concealed, John snatched up from the floor the sheet of paper written with D'Arcy O'Donnell's verses and signed with his name in Ellen's handwriting, and for the quarter of an hour that elapsed before Anne and Ellen retired to bed, he sat by the sofa reading and re-reading the poem, with as dark and bitter thoughts in his heart as the poet in his angriest moments had ever desired to evoke in an English bosom.

Anne had a restless night, and during the early part of it Ellen sat by her side, to be at hand to satisfy her when any anxiety about to-morrow's arrangements, or sudden recollection of something omitted that ought to have been done, flashed into her over-active mind. It was while she was dropping asleep at last that Ellen opened Bride's letter and read it by the flickering light of the night lamp, glad that Bride's clear bold writing made it possible to decipher every word.

"I do not put any formal beginning to my letter," she read, "because I do not yet know whether the person who will read it is the woman in the world I congratulate most heartily, or her I feel most sorry for. You will know when you read. I do not expect you will rejoice as I shall for you; and certainly you will not grieve as I shall grieve for you, because you don't know yet, as I do, what the heart is worth that you have either accepted or thrown away. It is not exactly about that I want to write to you. I write because whatever happens I send my warmest wishes across the sea with John, for his success in winning you to be his wife; and if you ever come to understand what he has been to me, since at a very early age the troubles of life began for us both, you will know what an amount of admiration and love for you that wish implies. I will be candid, and tell you at once, that this affection does not spring from any knowledge I have of yourself, but from the reflection in John of what his love for you has done for him. Till this last year I used to think that he could not be better or more than he was; but I have now seen that loving you has made him much more. It has been like the sun, bringing out the rich and delicate shades of character that had been concealed under the frosts of our old life. I believe now that people don't grow up and get to be all they might be, till the deepest and strongest love of which they are capable is called out; and that is what has happened to him since he has seen you. For being that to him whose good is my nearest care, I thank you, whatever else happens, and shall thank you always. If you love my brother, and are generous enough to be at all sorry for me, for losing the most intimate place in his companionship, I say to you heartily, never mind; it is better with me too now than when I thought I had it secure. The opposite roads of getting and giving up lead to the same ends with those whose feet God sets in them. Don't answer this letter unless you can write yourself at the end, what in hope I venture to sign myself—'Your sister, Bride Thornley.'"

A movement in the bed made Ellen look up as she reached the end of the page. Anne had started up in bed, wide awake from her uneasy doze, and looked so alert and ready for confidence that Ellen could not resist the temptation to light a candle and give her Bride's letter to read.

"It seems a great pity to drive such people away from us. Don't you think so?" Anne remarked, as she handed the paper back to Ellen kneeling by her bed.

"Oh, Anne, don't; don't be against me."

"Against you, dearest?"

"Yes. When a thing can't possibly be, what is the use of looking back to it, and reproaching oneself?"

"If you don't love him, of course it cannot be; but, Ellen, I must tell you this now, however angry you are. Once or twice this summer you have said, or left unsaid, little things that disposed me to think that you did love Mr. Thornley."

"But you must have been mistaken; and Anne, even if I did—mind, I am not confessing it—but even if I did love him, it would still be impossible for me to do as he asks. So many obstacles rise in the way that I have not the heart to trample down—promises to Connor, old recollections of painful scenes in my childhood, old jealousies over my father when I thought the English half of the family looked down on him. It would be with half a heart I should come to an English lover; and the half I turned my back upon would be so indignant and so sore. For Mr. Thornley's sake, as well as my own, I must not do it."

"Not in this mood, certainly."

"All the time he was talking, and since, a verse of one of Sullivan's poems, which Connor is always quoting, would come into my mind and ring like a warning in my head—

> 'A separate race, distinct, apart,
> And so till life itself shall end
> The English and the Irish heart
> No human power can fuse or blend.'

I am afraid I should always suspect him of looking down on me for being an Irishwoman."

"Give me Miss Thornley's letter then. I shall take it quite away, or some day, when you are as old as I am, you might read it over again, and take its generosity very bitterly to heart, contrasting it with your own suspicion and prejudice. I did not know that your mind was so full of dragon seeds or that you had such baneful harvests to reap still, my poor child."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

> "Let us strike hands as hearty friends;
> No more, no less; and friendship's good.
> Only don't keep in view ulterior ends
> And points not understood.
> In open treaty. Rise above
> Quibbles and shuffling off and off;
> Here's friendship for you if you like; but love,—
> No, thank you, John."—CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

"Bride, dear, you won't very much mind the trouble of taking Mrs. Joseph Maynard out shopping this morning, will you? She has set her heart on going to some sale in the Tottenham Court Road, and I have ordered the carriage at twelve; and you had better take your purse with you, for she is sure to forget hers, and wants to buy lots of little things. And, oh, by the way, there's Johnnie and Bobbie and Wattie; could you drop them at the Polytechnic on your way, and call for them some time in the afternoon, when you think they will be tired? Something must be invented for them to do this morning, and I really don't think I dare leave them to plague John again."

"So your hospitality has arrived at the vicarious stage already, Lesbia, has it?" John himself remarked from the end of the drawing-room he had just entered with his hands full of letters. "It is sooner than I expected. I gave you an entire fortnight for the glory of patronizing your old tyrants to overweigh the trouble of entertaining them, and here at the end of ten days you are rolling the burden on Bride's shoulders, who has no old grudges to balance it with."

Lesbia, who was standing before Bride's writing-table attired in a riding habit, and with the most becoming possible little feathered hat on her head, turned round quickly—"Now, John, the Maynards have been here three weeks at least, and I am sure if you were not so absent you would have seen how I have devoted myself to them—giving up two operas and one singing lesson, and playing at draughts with Dr. Maynard nearly every evening."

"Ah, yes, while the novelty of dazzling them and consciously heaping coals of fire on their miserable heads lasted, I allow you played your part to perfection; but I don't count the week while Dr. Maynard stayed, for I observed you devoted yourself solely and singly to his subjugation, and there you were simply following your instincts and annexing another province to your conquered territory in the Hays-des-tendres. That does not count."

"Dr. Maynard, indeed!"

"Well, I know he is a not a novelty; but he is a man, and *not* a brother, and therefore in a degree worth pleasing. I have no doubt you had made inroads on his heart even in your Cinderella days, and gained little occasional victories from the cinder-heap; but that must have made the pleasure of walking over the ground fully armed all the greater."

"I can't think what you mean, John. I wish you were not so fond of puzzling me. Whenever I want you to go anywhere with me, in the morning, you say you are busy, yet you can always find time to come into the drawing-room and say disagreeable things."

"That is to countenance you, Babette, in making Bride do disagreeable things. If I did not set you an encouraging example of unamiability, I don't see how you could answer it to your conscience to inflict the Maynards upon her for a whole day, after asking them here yourself, and promising solemnly to be answerable for their entertainment."

"Never mind, John," said Bride, looking up from a letter she was sealing, and nodding cheerfully, "I am really very glad to take my share. I approved of Lesbia's sending an invitation to our cousins this spring, so I ought to be ready to give up a little time to their amusement; and I am not arrived at such a pitch of self indulgence as to consider it a great hardship to sit in an easy carriage for an hour or so while other people make bargains. I shall keep clear of that part of the business by taking a book with me."

"Oh dear, I'm afraid that will only half satisfy Mrs. Maynard," cried Lesbia; "She will want you to look on and advise, and buy, as a present to herself or one of the children, everything she particularly admires and says she cannot afford to pay for. That is what I had to do when I took her out shopping last week."

"You shall have all the popularity such admirable behavior as a shopping companion deserves, then," said Bride, laughing; "I cannot undertake to imitate it. I have other ways of spending my money. Mrs. Maynard will console herself by remarking a little oftener than usual, this evening, how singularly good for you was your bringing-up at Whitecliffe, and how much more amiable and agreeable than the rest of your family you became under her care."

"I can't help their flattering me," said Lesbia, pouting a little; "but of course I know that whenever anybody says anything at all complimentary to me, you and John only laugh at it."

"My dear, we would not if we could possibly help it," said John, stooping down and kissing the pretty flushed cheek. "If you will only manage to pick up admirers who can flavor their compliments a little more delicately, we will undertake to swallow them without so much grimacing; but at present, between Maynards and Pelhams, the incense offered is too coarse and overpowering for bystanders not to choke over it now and then. You certainly have not hitherto been fortunate in the intellect of your adorers."

"Ah," thought Lesbia, "if they only knew! There are people who can say and write flattering things of me in a great deal better words than John ever uses—real poetry; and they said and wrote them too long before I was rich, and admired me in my poor old washed out muslin dresses: for whatever Mrs. Joseph tries to insinuate now, I never will believe that any hint of what was likely to happen had reached the Dalys when they sought me out and made so much of me."

She half turned her head away from John towards the open window, through which the March wind blew, freshly laden with the perfume of the hyacinths and violets in pots that filled the balcony; and as these thoughts arose the pouting lips parted and trembled into a smile, and the eyes grew very dark and glistening, and her hand involuntarily let fall the folds of her habit and strayed upwards to touch a little bunch of green leaves that just peered out from the bosom of her jacket.

"What have you got there?" asked John, on whom the sudden softening of the face had not been lost. "Let me see—shamrocks! Where did you get them? And what on earth put it into your head to ride out with a bunch of shamrocks in your bosom on St. Patrick's Day this year? You will be taken for a Chartist."

"I don't care—there's no harm," cried Lesbia, startled, and blushing furiously. "I bought them of the old Irishwoman who sweeps the crossing at the end of Eaton Place; and, John, I've seen you give her a shilling yourself, though you do always say it's so wrong to give to beggars."

"An inconsistency in my behavior which you think justifies you in getting yourself taken up by a special constable or cheered by a mob of Irish bricklayers. I hope your escort—that is he riding down the street, I presume will enjoy the charge of you under the circumstances."

"My dear Lesbia, do give up your badge, if John thinks it likely to attract attention," said Bride anxiously.

"But it won't," Lesbia answered, giving the clump of faded leaves a hasty thrust inside her jacket bosom. "No one can see it there without looking close. John only remarked upon it because he is crosser than usual this morning. I noticed it the instant he came into the room."

Bride's anxious eyes turned to her brother's face, and recognized the look of painful preoccupation and worry on the brow and in the eyes, that might always be observed in John as an accompaniment to the sharp, bantering talk that Lesbia voted crossness.

"I wonder whether there was a letter from Ireland among all those that came for him this morning," she said to herself, "and what there was in it to pain him so. I almost wish that some news would come to end it all quite. If she were fairly married to her rebel poet, he would be miserable at first, but it would be better for him in the end; and I suppose he would arrive in time at being able to see a three-leaved plant without speaking crossly and looking despair. What did possess little Lesbia to flourish the token in his face to-day? I have often enough given her hints to avoid Irish allusions as much as possible."

"There—I must go; they have all three ridden up to the door, and the groom has brought my horse round," exclaimed Lesbia, hastily gathering up the folds of her riding-habit again and running from the room. John followed to help her to mount, and caught her up in the hall, just as the servant, throwing open the door, disclosed a group of two ladies and a gentleman on horseback drawn up before the kerbstone.

"I am glad," John remarked, "to see it is only Marmaduke Pelham and his sisters for the sake of whose company you have thrown Mrs. Maynard over on Bride. I was afraid it might be some new victim, and then I should have felt it my duty to remonstrate. Captain Pelham may look out for himself; he is old enough, and big enough, and obtuse enough, to release me from any responsibility, however you may be intending to behave towards him."

Lesbia flashed an indignant look back at her brother as she ran down the steps, and before her friends greeted her found time to whisper energetically, "I would not be as clever as you are, John, for all the world, for you never can see anything else in other people but exactly how stupid they are; and you sneer—and you can't think how disagreeable it makes you."

"Yes, I can," John answered, with a sigh whose depths took Lesbia by surprise; "but don't put the sneering down to cleverness, I beg, for I assure you it savours much more of the opposite quality."

Captain Pelham had now alighted from his horse, and was begging leave to put Lesbia on hers, and John went round to shake hands with the two young ladies. While they chatted with him, Lesbia bent down from her seat to put in a word, and something fell from her bosom.

"Oh my poor shamrocks, John!"

But Captain Pelham was beforehand with him in rescuing the green bouquet from under the horse's feet, and placing it, dripping with wet from the pavement, in the hand held out for it.

"Thanks, so many. I am afraid I shan't be able to wear my poor shamrocks again; but I should not have liked them to be actually trampled on, it would have been a bad omen for to-day."

"An omen very likely to be fulfilled, I should say," John muttered, quietly.

Meanwhile intelligent glances had been exchanged between Mary and Louisa Pelham, and they turned to John with simultaneous appeal for sympathy. "Now, is it not a most extraordinary thing," they exclaimed together, "how those two always do think and feel exactly alike on every point without speaking about it beforehand? Just do look at Duke's coat. He came down stairs with a bunch of shamrocks in his buttonhole this morning at breakfast-time, and Charlie and Fred, who, you know, went yesterday to be sworn special constables, threatened to take him into custody for a Chartist, and shook their staves at him; and papa was really a little annoyed, till we explained that it must be in compliment to Lesbia's having sung 'The Wearing of the Green' so splendidly last night. Duke would not confess his reason, but now it's plain enough. I wonder which of them thought of it first."

"An interesting subject of speculation. I am inclined to believe that Lesbia's brain is capable of conceiving such an original idea as wearing a shamrock on St. Patrick's Day without resistance. You know best about your brother's."

"But Mr. Thornley, you must allow that it is a very odd fancy for them both to take up just now. You have heard, no doubt, that there is a kind of expectation abroad that something will happen to-day in Dublin like what went on in Paris last February. Troops have gone over, and constables and arms, and most likely there will be barricades and fighting. I heard an old gentleman tell papa that St. Patrick's Day was a very likely day for the rebellion to begin, and that if it was so hundreds of people would be killed in Dublin before to-night. I wonder where our cousin Connor Daly is just now; he is a dreadful rebel, you know, and papa has lost all patience with him. Do you suppose there will be any news by to-night?"

"I don't expect it myself; but whatever news arrives it will not, I hope, prevent your coming to us for Lesbia's ball to-night and enjoying ourselves."

"Oh dear no, thank you. We would not disappoint darling Lesbia for the world, and we are looking forward amazingly to her first ball this season. She is to wear her new emeralds. Nothing shall prevent our coming to see how she looks in them, we promise you."

"Not the deluge," John muttered to himself, as he remounted the stairs to the drawing-room. "I wonder whether it is really coming at once, or whether it is only the distant roar of the streams at the water-gates we are hearing this year. At all events, we are unready enough for anything to happen."

Bride was at the drawing-room window looking after the riders, when John joined her.

"Lesbia certainly looks very pretty on horseback," she said, drawing her head back when the cavalcade had turned out of the square; "and Captain Pelham is what most people would call a fine-looking man. He would take her to live in the country, at Abbots Thornley, and she would settle down after all her little vanities and flirtations into a very happy, popular Lady Bountiful. I wonder whether that is to be the solution of all our difficulties, the happy consummation that is to relieve us of our grandeur. This second spring will hardly pass without her fate being settled one way or another. I hardly know what to wish."

"Can you answer it to your conscience, to wish that any human creature you have a regard for, should be condemned to Marmaduke Pelham's companionship for the rest of her mortal life?"

"He is a dull, poor fellow, certainly; I was observing him at his mother's *conversazione* last night, and trying to look upon him as a possible brother. For two entire hours and a half, I calculated, he remained leaning with his back against a certain spot in the wall, and never speaking to anyone."

"There was no harm in that; I should have comported myself in precisely the same manner, if I had been let alone."

"Of course you were not, people know you can talk, and seek you out. However, I do not believe that Marmaduke is more silent than his cousin, Pelham Daly; and I used sometimes to think that *his* silence and reserve were rather attractions to Lesbia than otherwise. It piqued her curiosity."

"It is not the silence *I* complain of, but the speech—and there is this essential difference between the cousins—Young Daly's remarks, when they do come, are not unfrequently to the purpose; Marmaduke's never. I have even known a spark of actual Irish wit to have been struck out from young Daly, on due application of steel to his flint—that is to say, when his sister talks to him; but this other one is pure puddingstone—you might hammer forever and never get a light."

"But do you suppose Lesbia sees the difference? She does not value intellect as we do."

"The wiser she—it is a miserable idol to have set up."

"My dear John, at least wait till Mrs. Joseph Maynard has gone back to Whitecliffe, before you reverse your worship. I can't profess even to tolerate folly while she is with us."

"Is the coast clear of her now?—can I stay half an hour here with you in safety?"

"Most fortunately she has gone to call on a friend whom she does not consider grand enough to invite to Eaton Square, and she will not be back till twelve. To have you for half an hour's talk will be a rarely satisfactory beginning to my day."

"I don't know that I am going to talk, I feel more disposed to imitate Marmaduke Pelham, and stand with my back to the wall in silence for half an hour."

"You could do that as well down stairs. However, as you have established yourself in that niche of the window recess, put your head a little further back still, and look out. I made a discovery when I was watering the plants yesterday, and I want you to share it. Can you see out far—across the trees, over the opposite house-tops, to the sloping roofs of some buildings in a back street beyond? There is an extra tall one, with three high twisty chimneys, and four attic windows, with dark blue jalousies, all in a row."

"What of them?"

"Don't they bring recollections to your mind? I knew them again in a minute, and went out last evening to make sure. The back street is Spring street, and those attic rooms with the blue jalousies, the apartments where we lived once for eighteen months. The last year you were at Westminster, when you were head boy and brought home such an armful of prizes, and poor mother cried so bitterly because she had nothing but bread and cheese to give you that day for dinner."

"Let me see; it was the year before she died. It is sixteen years ago, then."

"It feels like a century. I remember I used to make Eaton Square my way whenever I went on an errand, for the sake of looking up to the flowery balconies of the grand houses, and wondering what the people were like who lived inside. I was asking myself yesterday how I should have felt if a wise woman out of the 'Magic Ring,' my favorite reading in those days, had shown me through one of the windows a vision of ourselves as we are now, inhabiting this room."

"Very much disappointed, I should say, if your castles in the air of that period at all equalled those with which I seasoned my bread and cheese dinners. I never doubted in those days that prosperity would come sooner or later, and I imagined her with a fairer face than she has shown me yet."

"I believe I would have been somewhat disgusted if I had seen myself as I look now; for a girl's castles in the air generally presuppose a little beautification, let her have in sober earnest ever such a poor opinion of her own looks; but, John, I think I should have been satisfied with what the years have done for you if I could have seen it then and understood as I do now. The outside circumstances, the riches and display, we two have very little to do with, and shall soon give up, but all that really graces our position, all the consideration worth having, is what you have won. I don't think that even when you first began to feel your own powers and be ambitious in those Westminster days when your first little triumphs were won, that you could have expected greater recognition and literary success than the two last years have brought you. Reasonably, or unreasonably, you could hardly have expected more."

"No, but I expected something different from what the reality of this sort of success proves to be. It's the character of the work itself I am disgusted with—my own powers, as you call them—not what they have brought me. I believe it is the experience of those three years' active work in Ireland that makes book work, now I have come back to it, seem tame. I can no longer, as I once did, consider it the most glorious occupation in the world to put words judiciously together."

"As if that was what you do! but, however, I dare say it is best for you to be dissatisfied with your own doings. I am sure I would not have you

> 'Bow before the little Drop of Light
> That dim-eyed men call praise and glory here.'

"It's a very dim little drop in my case."

"Oh, John, that's ambition, not humility."

"Or perhaps nothing more dignified than ill-humor and discontent."

"Will you own at once candidly that the discontent has a cause in the shape of a letter from Connemara among that bundle in your hand?"

"I have not had a line from anyone in that region of the world for months, I was going to say, but it is weeks. Anne O'Flaherty is much too ill to write, and there has been serious illness, too, at Eagle's Edge."

"Not Ellen?"

"No. The mother and Pelham—but both are recovering."

"How do you know all this, since you say you had no letter?"

"If you choose to have particulars I will tell you. Yesterday I had to attend a committee of the House of Lords, where some evidence about the management of the funds employed in public works in Ireland was being heard. Among the witnesses a very quaint-looking old man attracted my attention by his odd likeness to Peter Lynch, and hearing him called Dr. Lynch, and finding he had come straight from Good People's Hollow, I introduced myself, and finally brought him home to dine here, and kept him for the evening while you were at the Pelhams."

"Ah, I noticed that you shirked all but the last half-hour; but we had not left the house when you came in yesterday; why did not you introduce Dr. Lynch to me? I should like to have seen him. Is he Peter's brother?"

"No, a cousin. He was very communicative, and confided to me his whole history, beginning with a romantic boyish devotion to Anne O'Flaherty, that had sufficient strength to make him struggle up, step by step, from being the poor scholar and genius of a hedge school in Good People's Hollow, till he had succeeded in getting a doctor's degree in a Scotch University. The rest of the life does not correspond with the successful beginning. There was, I suppose, a great downfall of hopes, and a failure of purpose, when the devotion that had been such a spur failed of its object; and after that the man's talent and energy, of which he certainly has no common share, seem to have been exercised fitfully and very erratically. He has practised his profession in all parts of the world, in Japan, China, and the South Sea Islands, and was only settled in England six years ago by a chance meeting at some seaside place with Mr. Daly, that revived all the old associations. He determined never to go beyond hearing of old friends again, and with the savings of his live bought a practice in Liverpool, which he threw up last autumn, on getting a letter from his cousin Peter, imploring him, as a last hope of the people of the Hollow, to come back and save Anne O'Flaherty's life. They don't, he says, believe anything to be beyond the skill of the boy who left the place a poor scholar and comes back to it a traveled doctor, and Anne herself seems to trust him, and to have revived to a certain extent under his care. The famine fever gives plenty of exercise for his medical skill, and I suppose he has some funds left, at all events he does not seem to have any hesitation in obeying the call that brought him back to end where he began. A faithful old spaniel, crawling back to die at his dying mistress's feet; one would not mind being such a spaniel oneself——"

"John!"

"You were wondering just now what the effect of seeing yourself as you are now would have been on yourself as a girl. All the time Dr. Lynch was talking to me I had an uncanny kind of feeling, as if it was the spectre of my own future self—myself of fifty years' hence—that was talking with me, telling me the story of a restless, disappointed life, with one strong feeling in it, supreme to the end."

"I don't believe you will let disappointment spoil your life. What brought the old man to London?"

"Anne sent him to give evidence of what he had seen during the winter in Connemara, hoping that his honesty and energy would be useful in clearing up misrepresentation. For my part I am glad I have spoken with him. Since I have taken to write on Irish politics I must seize every opportunity of getting at information such as a man like this, trusted on all sides, can give."

"Hum!—of course he gave you news of the Dalys?"

"Pelham Daly has had a touch of the fever, and Mrs. Daly has been seriously ill, but both are recovering."

"And how is Connor going on?"

"There was a little reserve in speaking of him. Dr. Lynch avoided public questions, so I suspect, old as he is, he is secretly in sympathy with Young Ireland, and I am a little afraid he is influencing Pelham Daly and Miss O'Flaherty to be less decided in their opposition to Connor's politics than is advisable for their own safety. That cousin of the Dalys, the poet whose verses you admired and who is now editing one of the most rabid and dangerous of the Young Ireland newspapers, has, I find, been staying for weeks at a time during the winter with Miss O'Flaherty at the Hollow, and on one occasion he and young Daly and the two O'Roones had a serious quarrel, which ended in a duel between Daly and Darby O'Roone, in which O'Roone was slightly wounded."

"They are very disreputable people, are they not, both father and son? Were they not concerned in that disgraceful case of ejection, where a whole village of fever-stricken people were turned out to die on the roads? You wrote a leader in the *Times* about it, did you not?"

"Yes, it occurred on some property which once belonged to the Dalys, and which old O'Roone purchased probably with money he cheated them out of in times past. I don't wonder at Pelham Daly's disgust and anger, but considering that he was brought up at Pelham Court, I should have thought he might have found some less Irish way of gratifying his feeling than by shooting young O'Roone's little finger off."

"Was O'Roone's cruelty to his tenants the cause of the quarrel?"

"Not the final cause: I imagine there had been a great deal of irritation occasioned by Pelham's remonstrances and by O'Donnell's newspaper tirades attempting to stir up indignation against them throughout the country, and at last the three young men met accidentally in the coffee room of the little hotel at Ballyowen, and some insolent speech of young O'Roone's provoked a blow from Pelham. It is most unfortunate. It secures the Dalys a vigilant enemy in their own neighborhood, who is certain to seize the first opportunity Connor's imprudence gives him to gratify his revenge against the household at Eagle's Edge, while at the same time he will be furthering his own interest by making a display of zeal for Government in hunting out rebels. I wish I was there to keep an eye on events. I certainly should not have allowed the duel to have taken place if I had been at Castle Daly, and I think I could have prevented the ejectments."

"I think you over-rate your influence. My sincere belief is that we should do more harm than good this year at Castle Daly. Young O'Roone was always hanging about Lesbia—calling at the Castle, and contriving to meet her on her rides. It was hinted to me once or twice that he would give himself airs as a favored suitor."

"Why did not you speak to me?"

"I hardly thought it worth your notice; and to confess the truth, I did not like to acknowledge to you—as I must in honesty have done—that there has been something to blame in Lesbia's manner. She is a born coquette, poor child, and never can help playing off a complacent lover against a tardy one."

"By the tardy lover do you mean to allude to Pelham Daly? I thought you were convinced that there was no sort of attraction between him and Lesbia."

"My good friend, it was you who were *convinced*. If you will be so kind as to remember, I warned you about both brothers from the first. Lesbia has, I am sorry to say, so many ways of flirting that one is long in finding out what are the genuine symptoms in her case; but I am afraid this story of the duel throws considerable light on some vagaries in her behavior that are puzzling me just now."

"But can she have heard of the duel?"

"I suspect she knows a good deal more of the rights of it than you do. Ever since we left Ireland she has kept up a fitful correspondence with the youngest of those tall, gossiping Miss Joices, who live in the ivied house just outside Ballyowen, and who in spite of all my efforts managed to establish a good deal of intimacy with Lesbia while we lived at the Castle. The fire of letters backwards and forwards has been very active lately, and on one occasion I noticed that Lesbia came down stairs from the perusal of a thick budget with eyes positively swollen up with crying. Ever since there has been a change in her manner; she is snappy to her most obsequious adorers, and sings Irish songs with a greater degree of enthusiasm than the pleasure of provoking Sir Charles Pelham quite accounts for: and then the shamrocks this morning; how came she even to know that it was St. Patrick's Day?"

"If she reads the newspaper ever so carelessly, and interests herself at all in public events, she could not help knowing this year."

"But public events only interest Lesbia when private people she cares for are likely to be affected by them. That bunch of shamrock does not represent a political party in her eyes, you may be very sure, but that one of the young Dalys—whichever it may be—who occupies her thoughts at present. If by chance it was a boast concerning her favor on young O'Roones' part that provoked Pelham Daly's blow, then you may be sure he is the reigning hero. I am sorry to say it of her, but I am very much afraid she belongs to the order of women who feel themselves glorified by being quarrelled over and who, if pierced hearts were tangible things and could be strung together into ornaments like scalps, would like nothing better than to appear in chains and bracelets of them."

"Are not you judging her harshly?"

"I think not. I am perhaps putting the case strongly to counteract a purpose that I see growing in your mind. You are longing to carry us all back to Castle Daly, and I am determined you shall fairly see all possibilities such a course involves."

"I could go there alone."

"Yes, but I want you to help me through the rest of the London season in looking after Lesbia. How solemnly you spoke at first about guarding her from fortune-hunters. Don't you remember?"

"Yes, and I think it was you then who put in a word for giving fair play to her affections, and not interfering with her choice when it came to the point of her making one for herself. You know best how it is with her; but for my own part I wonder sometimes whether we did wisely when we took her from a place where she had some rational pursuits, and might have turned her money to some useful account at this time, to plunge her into the aimless dissipation she is following now. Is the advantage of her ending her career by marrying Marmaduke Pelham so very manifest?"

"I think we were bound to show her something more of the world than that little corner of Connemara, before she was allowed to choose her future husband; remember she will have to keep him for life."

"I hope the choosing process won't go on indefinitely; she seems by some occult affinities to draw all the most insane young men in London together to choose from."

"They don't come to court you, sir, that's why you find them so insane. If you grumble I shall attribute your impatience to the same cause that made Goldsmith indignant with a crowd for looking at a pretty woman in a hotel window instead of at himself."

"I should not have thought, madam, that you would encourage the pretty woman to gather the crowd to look at her."

"Well, be patient, the dissipation is working its own cure. She is tiring of it herself. I can give you a proof. She has not said one word to me about her dress for this evening, or so much as looked at it, as far as my knowledge goes, since it came home."

"You call that something to be thankful for; and last year at this time she was content to lead a rational life without a thought of balls and ball-dresses, and had grown so fond of country pursuits that you found it hard to drag her away. You ought to be ashamed of your work."

"Hum!—if country pursuits *had* been the attraction—but I know you choose to be blind, so where is the use of arguing? Let me have sufficient time for my experiment in my turn, and if I fail I will yield with a good grace. Give us your countenance for a few weeks longer, and then if Lesbia has not meanwhile become engaged to Marmaduke Pelham, and if she continues to give little wistful hints about wanting to return to Castle Daly, I promise to leave off throwing cold water on her plans, and frowning down her flattering attempts at confidences."

"She has been giving hints, and you have been frowning her down with a 'little hoard of maxims'—you strong-minded worldling."

"Yes, for the present; and I am sure I am right. If I had any confidence in the stability of her preferences, or if I knew for certain which of the young Daly brothers her thoughts turned to, I should be less implacable; but while, so far as I can make out, she is undecided between the two of them, and when one is such a hair-brained young fellow as Connor, I am sure I do right in preventing her from giving her feelings shape by speaking of them. Imagine what it would be to have her engaged to a man, or rather a boy of two-and-twenty, who was involved in a conspiracy, and liable to be taken up and tried for treason, and hanged, or transported for life. She would think it very romantic for a month or so; but it would hardly be for her happiness. She had better be safe and dull with Marmaduke Pelham."

"But is it really a toss-up which of these three men she marries? I must say I don't profess to understand such gossamer feelings, and must leave the management to you. In such a case I should think it signified very little what happened."

"It signifies that she should get the most reliable man of the three for her husband; and in justice to Lesbia, I must ask you to remember that I am not describing her feelings, only my own state of puzzle about them. Perhaps she herself could give us a much more straightforward story of her heart if she chose. I wish to-night, for once in your life, you would come into the drawing room to notice what is going on, instead of to draw a knot of men into a corner and talk politics. I want you to tell me your impressions of Lesbia's manner when we are alone."

(To be continued.)

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