# MARY LEE;

OR.

## The Yankee in Ireland.

—BY—

PAUL PEPPERGRASS, ESQ.,

Author of "Shandy McGuire," "The Spae-wife," etc.

CHAPTER IV.—Continued.

For reasons such as these, and others quite unnecessary to mention, Lanty soon became a constant and welcome visitor at Araheera Head, and indeed finally grew to be so special a favorite with the light-keeper that he could hardly prevail on himself to take his boat or his gun without Lanty at his elbow. He even offered him a salary larger than his limited means could well afford, to live with him altogether; but Lanty invariably refused, preferring a free foot on the hill-side after his dog, and a ramble on the sea-shore with his rifle, to all the inducement he could offer. These rambles, however, often brought him into trouble; but if they did, he always depended on Mr. Lee to get him out of it. On such occasions the honest light-keeper would bluster and swear as stoutly as a Dutch burgomaster never to speak another word in the villain's behalf should it save him from the gallows, and often even went as far as to order the members of his family never to let the scoundrel inside his doors again; but somehow or other these resolutions never held out—all his indignation seemed to vanish in his sleep; and before the sun got up on the following morning, he was sure to despatch a note to Tom Petersham, or some other gentleman of the neighborhood, to beg their interest in the unfortunate fellow's behalf. Lanty, in fact, was never out of scrapes for a week together since Mr. Lee first saw him. He had fallen foul of a bailiff, or beaten a policeman, or cudgelled a game-keeper, or spread a salmon by torchlight, or stole a game-cock, or—something was always sure to be wrong, whenever he was absent three days at a time from Araheera light-house.

Intimate, however, as Lanty was with the family, he knew nothing of their history save what he picked up from an odd word now and then between Mary Lee and the light-keeper, or between himself and Roger O'Shaughnessy, when they went up the tower of an evening to chat and trim the lamps together. What he learned from the latter, however, was never very satisfactory, for Roger considered himself too respectable and important a parsonage to hold much confidential intercourse with a light-headed scatterbrain like Lanty Hanlon. But whilst Roger said little of the family connections directly, he indulged frequently in little sneers at the pretensions of the Donegal aristocracy, wondered where in the world they found the arms of the carriage panels, and if they didn't one and all inherit their gentle blood from "Shemus Sallagh" or Oliver Cromwell. This contemptuous way of speaking about his neighbors was plain enough, and Lanty understood it. The nobler families of the south was a subject on which Roger loved very much to descant in a sort of soliloquial tone, when he sat down of a summer's evening in the lantern to burnish up the reflectors, with Lanty at his side. Many a long sigh would he draw, talking over the old times, when real lords and ladies used to throng the halls of a certain castle in the south (surrounded by their servants in splendid liveries,) to drink the choicest wines or dance to the music of the old family harp; and if his companion ventured to inquire the name of the castle or of its owner, little information would he get from Roger O'Shaughnessy. Still, stupiously averse as Roger was to the revelation of family secrets, he could not hide from his quick-witted companion the conclusion warranted by his frequent though indirect allusions. Besides, Roger always wore a curious old-fashioned coat when serving dinner, which contributed more, perhaps, than anything else to enlighten Lanty as to the antecedents of the family. This coat was one a bottle-green of fine texture, as might be seen by those shady little corners here and there, where the sun had not been able to peep, nor the wear and tear of half a century entirely to reach. With a few redeeming spots like these, however, excepted, the rest of the garment was faded, threadbare, and polished as the cuff of a sailor's jacket. The high, stiff collar, the buff facings, and the long tails would have plainly showed it had once been livery, even if the two lonely gilt buttons on the high waist behind, bearing the family crest, had been lost and gone with the rest of the brotherhood. Every day, before the little bell rang for dinner, did Roger divert himself of his working-dress, brush over the few white hairs that still remained to cover his polished scalp, and then put on his bottle-green livery with as much care and tenderness as if it had been wove of spider's web. Poor Roger! many a scold he got from Mr. Lee for keeping up his ridiculous old notions, and many a laugh had Mr. Peteraham at his profound salutations, when he came to visit the family; but laugh or scold, it was the same to Roger; on he went, practicing the same old habits, despite every remonstrance.

This obscurity in which the history of the Lees was involved, coupled with the mysterious conduct of the stranger, led Lanty to suspect some deep plotting between him and Else Curley. As for the latter, he had little fear she would take part in anything directly tending to bring misfortune on the light-keeper or his family; but still she might meddle so far with the danger as to bring them into trouble without actually intending it,—and all for the sake of gold, to obtain which he supposed the miserly old creature was prepared to run any risk, even that of her salvation. "Hooh!" he muttered, "for that matther, she'd go to the de'il's door and singe her ould beard at the key-hole to earn a sixpense; and, as for you, my augeuaugh," he continued, gazing after the retreating figure of the stranger, "ye've the cut of a schamer about ye, any way. Be all that's bad, I niver saw ye with a fishin rod in yer hand yet, but ye put me in mind iv one i' them big long-nosed cranes down there standing up to their knees in the wather, watchin round for the little innocent shiners to make a pounce on them. F'eth, may be it's some sworn inemy i' the family ye are, keeping their thrail all the time since they left the south; or may it's a sheriff's officer ye'd be in purshuit of an ould debt; or, by jiminy king, who knows but yer some discarded sweetheart sneakin afther Mary Lee. If yer that, I'd advise ye lave the country or buy yer coffin. But whatsomever ye are, yer a chate any way, that's sartin; and so, may sweet bad luck attind ye, acushla, and that's my prayer for ye, night and mornin, sleepin and wakin;" and Lanty shook his fist at the stranger as he disappeared over the brow of the hill; "and since ould Else has tuck ye in tow," he concluded, spitting on his stick and again heading for the mountains, "I'll just stand by and look on; but one thing I'll be bould to tell ye both, cute and all as ye are, that by the powers o' pewther ye'll have to rise early and thravel fast if ye hope to get the blind of one Lanty Hanlon."

Leaving Lanty to pursue his journey across Benraven, we return to the stranger. After examining for some time the structure of the narrow iron bridge over the chasm called the "Devil's Gulch," he raised the latch of the gate, and finding it unlocked, pushed it open. The light-keeper's lodge, facing him directly as he entered, was a long low cottage fronting full on the sea. The light tower rose up close by its side, with its great round lantern on top, to the height of a hundred and fifty feet from the rock, as smooth and white as marble. The doors, walls, and window sashes of the lodge were also white and clean as human hands could make them; even the black steps by which he ascended to the hall door shone bright and spotless as polished ebony. The place, however, notwithstanding the care and trouble it cost, looked still and deserted. For full ten minutes the stranger stood in front of the house gazing around him, and yet no one came to bid him welcome. A little white bantam on the grass plot before the door, scraping up the green-sward and calling his family around him was the only signs of life to be seen. In such a remote spot he naturally hoped the presence of a stranger in his garb would draw some one from the house; but he was mistaken. At length, tired of waiting, he advanced to the door, and knocked; still there was no answer; he knocked again, and yet no one came. Then turning the handle and opening the door, he stepped over the threshold, and found himself all at once in a long passage or entrance hall. On either side of this hall hung several spears and fowling pieces, here and there, fishing rods resting on brass sockets against the wall and suspended from the ceiling, half a dozen or more reels of jack lines, with hooks and leads attacked, ready for use. It was evident from their superior quality, and the excellent condition in which they were kept, these articles were used more for amusement than profit. Beyond, however, and near the opposite extremity of the passage, hung two light oars of beautiful finish, and close beside them a small sail of Russia duck, with its little sheet coiled carefully round it, and if one might judge from its appearance, but recently used. The stranger seemed to notice this last-mentioned article with special interest; and the cold smile that overspread his long face as he looked at it, plainly showed he knew well by whose delicate fingers it was handled last. Proceeding along the hall like a connoisseur in a picture gallery, he came at last to an opening into a capacious parlor, and entering without further ceremony, sat down on the first chair he saw and carelessly throwing his feet upon the seat of another, began to gaze about him, like a man quite resolved to await the coming of some one, should he wait till morning.

About this apartment, in which the stranger now found himself seated all alone, there was a general air of comfort and taste, while at once suggested the idea of a lady mistress far above what he might expect to find at a light-keeper's lodge, and especially at so remote a point as Araheer Head. Nevertheless, though the room looked comfortable, and everything arranged in excellent taste, there was still nothing in it either new or fashionable. Massive picture frames with grim looking faces in the background hung here and there round the apartment; but their rich gilding was gone, and their edges, stripped with black, made sad contrast with the newly-painted walls. The harpsichord in the corner had lost its silver handles, by which in olden times it was so often drawn out into the merry circle, and the ancient clock opposite, now silent as a tombstone, glared over at its once light-hearted companion with a melancholy expression of countenance. They had, doubtless, been friends together for many a year, and in their early days had oft conversed pleasantly from opposite corners—each after his own fashion. But age, alas! had now left his mark on both. The clock's open good-natured face was bleared and wrinkled, so much so, indeed, that its early associates could scarcely have recognized it; and the harpsichord's once burnished case had lost all its polish, and its edges were stripped and lean, like the elbows of a coat. Still, though both were broken down and somewhat shabby, they were clean and decent, like old gentlemen who had seen better days. And there, too, near the fire-place, was the high-backed sofa with its heavily-carved feet and double rows of brass nails along the edges, But conspicuous above all appeared the old family Bible lying in state upon the centre table, under its vellum cover and iron clasps. Everything in the room spoke eloquently of the past, for everything looked ancient and venerable, even to the bird cage over the window, where the gray linnet sat dozing with his head under his wing.

That apartment, dear reader, was an epitome of the history of Ireland, and might have furnished materials for a finer allegorical picture than ever Claude Lorraine drew—her heroes without a name or monument save those poor rotting shreds of canvas—the fire of her music dying out day by day, nay—alas; that we should say it!—almost as cold and dead as the blackened embers on her desolate shrines—her once brave and stalwart sons now wrapping their emaciated limbs in their tattered garments and resigning themselves, without a struggle, to serfdom and the grave. Had the author of the "Giaour," who could see even in the fair but lifeless form of woman the picture of "Greece, but living Greece no more,"—had he lived to sit there and gaze around him, how much more sublime the inspiration he had drawn from those sad, crumbling relics! Yes, the nation was still living, but all her glories, save the glory of her faith, had departed.

But the stranger's heart was not one of that mould. On the contrary, he scanned every article of furniture in the room with a cold, prying curosity, that accorded ill with the fashionable sporting dress he wore, and having at last completed his survey, drew his chair to the centre table and opened the sacred volume.

Had he been a lover of old books, he might have paused to examine the title page before he proceeded farther, and the curiously illuminated letters it exhibited, but especially an ancient and copious note in the margin, purporting to show that the book was printed at Madrid in the year 1467, by a native of Mentz, at royal request—a fact which might have greatly surprised those French and German litterateurs who claim for Louis XIV, and Frederic II. the honor of having been the only patrons of the art before that period. But the gentlemen was either not of that class, or ignorant of the Latin tongue, in which it was printed, for he ran his eye hastily over the page without seeming to notice either date or language.

Without pausing a moment, he turned over leaf after leaf, glancing merely at the top and bottom of the pages, and evidently in search of something he understood to be found there. He spent some five or six minutes in this search, and at last, having discovered what he sought, drew from his breast pocket a small book of tablets, copied what items he thought necessary, and then hastily closing the Bible, (stealthily watching the doors of the apartment all the while,) clasped it as before

It happened in replacing the book he dropped something on the floor, and instanly picking it up, found it to be a silver beaded rosary, with a gold crucifix attached, and of exquisite workmanship. The image was of the purest gold, the nails in the hands and feet were diamonds of great brilliancy, and the cross, on which the figure hung, ivory inlaid with some precious metal, and bordered with small but costly pearls. It was evidently the relic of some pious ancestor, for the beads were much wore, and the edges of the cross had lost their original sharpness, and grown round and smooth from the wear and tear of years. It was curious to see how the stranger smiled as he held up the sacred trinket between his thumb and finger. A child could have read in his countenance how little he respected either the image or the reality—the cross or the crucified. Whilst engaged, however, in this contemptuous inspection of the venerable and precious relic,—the sneer on his face growing deeper as he gazed,—he was startled by a shadow suddenly darkening the window. and turning to see what it was, beheld the countenance which smiled on him from the stern of little boat an hour before, peeping through the glass. The face was so close to the window that the stranger might have seen, from its peculiar expression, he had mistaken for some familiar friend, whose visit had been expected. The side light troubled her so much at first that she could see nothing distinctly in the room, and raising both hands to shade it off, happened to throw back the broad-brimmed hat she wore and thus revealed in full view to the stranger, now advanced within arm's length of the window, a countenance of extraordinary beauty—for in another second the laughing girl had discovered her mistake, and startled by the close proximity of a man so utterly unknown to her, and trembling with shame and confusion at her apparent levity, bounded back as if a spectre had confronted her, and flew away from the window like an affrighted bird.

The stranger called to her to stop and listen to his apology; he knocked on the glass, and even attempted to raise the sash and follow her; but all was in vain; away she ran over the green lawn, her tresses streaming back on the gentle breeze, and disappeared over the edge of the precipice. For an instant the disappointed sportsman stood spell-bound, hardly able to tell whether the form was a vision or a reality. And no wonder. Her figure was light and airy, her extreme grace of motion even in the confusion and hurry of her flight, and the exquisite beauty of her modest face, might well have raised such an illusion in minds far more philosophic than the stranger's.

And now again all was as still as before; not a sound was to be heard but the sullen break of the sluggish wave against the rocks, or the occasional call of the little proud bantam still scraping on the green.

The sun had sunk by this time within an hour of his setting, and crowned the far-off summit of Benraven with his golden light. The sky was cloudless, and the air as balmy as the zephyrs that play round the base of the Himalayas and fan the banks of the ancient Hydaspes. Stealing out from under the shadows of the island appeared the white sails of the coasting vessels, with scarce wind enough to give them motion,—so calm had it grown for the last hour; and away beyond them, in the west, rose the dark form of the Horn, round whose top the wings of countless sea birds might be seen wheeling and glinting in the rays of the setting sun. The scene was as grand and picturesque as one might care to look upon, and yet it seemed to awaken but little interest in the stranger. Indeed, the sullen look of disappointment on his face, as he gazed through the window on the world without, showed but slight relish for the poetry of nature. At last, turning away abruptly from the casement when he saw there was no likelihood of the young lady returning, he retraced his steps to the hall door, and was just about to follow the visionary form to the edge of the rock, when, to his great relief he heard the sharp crack of a rifle, within twenty paces of where he stood. Looking in the direction of the sound, he saw smoke curling slowly up from the sea; then a water spaniel sprang on the bank, and began shaking the brine from his dripping sides; and finally, a man in a pea jacket, with his pantaloons rolled up over the tops of his boots, and a gun in his hand, suddenly made his appearance. He was apparently about fifty years of age, stout and hearty looking, and carried in his face as he approached the stranger, a look of welcome which it was impossible for a moment to mistake.

"Good evening, sir," said he, touching his hat to the visitor, hardly able to utter the words, so exhausted was he in climbing the rock.

The stranger slowly introduced his arms under his coat tails, and made a grave and respectful inclination of his head.

"Sorry you found no one in the house to bid you welcome," said the stout gentleman, wiping the perspiration from his face.

"Rayther think the apology should come the other way," replied the stranger, drawling out his words.

"O, don't mind that, sir; when you found nobody in the house, you did perfectly right to make yourself as much at home as possible."

"Mr. Lee, I presume—the gentleman here in charge?"

"The same, sir, and quite at your service—that is' as soon as I can manage to catch breath again, Heigh-ho! By George, I haven't gone through so much these ten years before. That confounded Holland hawk has the nine lives of a cat—and—and I verily believe a few to spare besides. Pheugh! heugh!"

"Been gunning, I preceive."

"Yes; fired fourteen balls—nine of them clean into his body, and there he is, yet, sound as ever."

"Well, now, that's rayther uncommon ain't it?" said the stranger, without moving an inch from his position; "should think one was enough."

(To be continued.)


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