

## ✱ BYRNE. ✱

One youth was shoving the sand up into little heaps with a very clumsy shabby shoe. The other lazily hung his jaw and did nothing. He was not too lazy, however, to growl out a word now and then in a manner which was a singular mixture of good nature and sulkiness.

They were both porters from the great hotel just behind us, and were unconscious of my proximity as I lay on the sand, sometimes reading and again looking out over the short, pebbly beach and the sea. The only break in the semicircular line was a lighthouse on its small island a mile away to the eastward.

'Well mumbled the fellow nearest me, the one who was doing nothing, 'I'm getting about sick of this.'

'Well, I dunno, Bin, said his companion. This indifference where sympathy was looked for, seemed to put a little life into Bin. His full name was Abinadab, as I happened to know. 'I'm going to' as I tell you, Bin ejaculated, suddenly picking up a bit of driftwood and slinging it far out into the water. 'This everlasting haulin' trunks up and down-stairs for everlastin' swells that's too confounded lazy to do anythin' for themselves! It's degradin' and I'm done.'

Presently I heard the name of my friend Byrne in the talk of my two neighbors.

'It didn't hear him preach last Sunday in the hotel parlor! Ha! ha! ha!' It was Bin again. 'Ain't been to anythin' of that sort before—dunno when. But—' with a chuckle, 'Jennie, she made me promise to listen outside the window.'

I smiled under my umbrella, for Jennie was a comely maid, and I was glad her influence was so wholesome; but I sobered again quickly.

'Well, yes, I heard him, and I heard enough, too. I am sick of all the old bosh they always talk. It was, 'Like the work you're at, and 'Be ready to do for folks, and 'No matter how much you do, you can't do it too strong,' and so on and so on, only he put it different, so it seemed mighty fine and easy, and Jennie she like to died, it was so awful sweet. And I said to her, 'Good gracious, what does he know about it? He ain't never worked in his life. He ain't never done anythin' he didn't want to.' And she says, 'How do you know?' And I says, 'Can't you tell by lookin' at him? He's a swell through and through, just a big, lazy swell, that's what he is. Let him preach,' says I. 'He can't pull wool over my eyes!'

By this time I had risen and was on the point of trying a different kind of sermon on my friend Bin, though I am no preacher. I am only a clerk for a business firm, and no talker about anything but goods. But I happened to know something about Byrne, and thought a little simple biography might improve Bin's mind. Just as I was about to open my mouth, however, I noticed the approach of a tall man, walking with a beautiful woman. It was Byrne himself, and the girl to whom he was engaged—in my eyes the handsomest couple the world ever saw. I naturally reserved my conversation with Bin for a future time, and hastened to join my two friends in their promenade, catching these mumbled words as I passed the two porters: 'And marries a rich girl, too, for all his 'umble talk!'

The next afternoon was sultry. Byrne and I were on the beach for a talk and a breath of air. He was telling me about his proposed trip to Europe and his plan for a course of study before settling down to parish work. I was listening in a half-envious way, for Byrne was superior to me in education, and in fact in real mental strength, and no man altogether likes to be overtopped. But he didn't know it. He thought he had a great deal to learn before he could be of use in the world. He had only been first in his class at college, and three times first—it there is any such thing—at the seminary, and then he had built up only one broken-down parish since he came out. And now he had just declined a call to a New York church, one of the largest, because he had too humble an opinion of his abilities to let him take it. The fact was, he was a great man in both soul and body.

Everybody saw that except him self. We expected great things of him. When we were in college, I thought we should go on working along the same lines together, but I became poor and had to stop studying and take a business offer, which brought me the income I must have for the sake of those I supported. But that is neither here nor there. Byrne and I kept up our friendship and I was quite proud of it. From theology to travels I was his confidential adviser. So now he had consulted me about going abroad and had announced his own decisions, and all in his own delightful way. He towered a head above me as we walked.

'And when do you sail?' I asked, trying to keep the envy out of my voice. And then I endeavored to persuade him after all to accept his call to New York. 'What's the idea in going now?' I said. 'Why not wait till you get a little fagged? You'd better accept your call to St. —' 'After you have been there a while they will allow you to go abroad. In the meantime, you would have a local habitation and a name.'

'There's a good deal in that,' said he, 'You evidently understand the clerical nature, and ought to have been a minister. A man feels as much lost without a parish as a dog without a master. It's a dragged, hungry feeling, but—'

A puff of wind carried his voice from me just then. In fact, while we had been talking, the wind had been rising uncomfortably, and we began to think of turning back to the broad hotel veranda. But it was tempting to stay and watch the clouds. There were immense columns of them whirling rapidly up from different quarters

of the sky, and they were black and threatening. From one of them came an angry tongue of lightning. We did not need to remark, what was quite obvious, that a small hurricane was brewing. We held on to our hats and amused ourselves studying the effect of the rising wind upon the water. When a few large rain-drops hit our cheeks, we turned to go in, but just then passed my friend Bin, on his sulk way down to the beach after a pail of salt water. Inwardly I said, 'When we get into the house, Byrne shall know our sturdy youth's opinion of him. Perhaps it may be good for both of them.'

We had gone but a few steps when we heard a man's voice shouting to us from behind:

'Say! Hullo! Turn round can't you?' We turned. There stood a man who had evidently just managed to land on the beach, for he was dripping wet, and he held in his hand the painter of his dory, which was tugging away and almost standing on end in the rough water behind him. The instant we turned he beckoned to us wilily.

Bin stood at a little distance, his jaw down and the pail dangling at his side. He was always ready to look on I had noticed, and he looked on now.

'Say! I shouted the man to us, before we had come up to him. 'Say! I want to know where I can find a minister. Thought maybe there was one up there 'to' hotel.' He rushed up to Byrne and seized his arm in his excitement.

'Look here, sir,' he grasped, 'my wife's a dyin'. She's over there in the lighthouse all alone. She's a waitin' for somebody to say the right kind of thing to her. I can't. She's got to have a minister.'

'I'm the man you want,' said Byrne, stepping quietly towards the water. 'Come along and hold your boat while I get in.'

The wind was now howling furiously, and there was an incessant growl of thunder. Outside the point the sea was fearful. I took hold of Byrne's arm and shouted above the roar:

'For heaven's sake wait till the storm is over!'

His face was full of animation. He loved a rough sea, and he loved to have such an errand. He was at home with sick people. As he turned from me he fell into the hands of Bin, who had dropped his pail, and came up to us, setting his usually hanging jaw into a firm, square line.

'Now, mister,' shouted Bin, his eyes fiery and fierce, 'don't! don't! Then he turned to the lighthouse-keeper. 'Aint you ashamed of yourself, to ask a gentleman out on that there sea?'

Byrne put his hand on Bin's shoulder with a smile. 'Thank you,' he said. 'But it's all right, you know, for him to let me decide whether I shall go or not. His thoughts are with his wife over there.'

'An' she's dyin', put in the other man; 'dyin' fast!'

'And,' added Byrne to both Bin and me as we stood side by side, we are both strong men, acquainted with water and boats, and the distance is short. So please hold the dory!'

They were in and off. I stood there till they rounded the point. It was so thick the lighthouse couldn't be seen. I felt thoroughly alarmed.

Bin, puzzled and angry,—why, he knew not,—uttered one strong word of profanity, and seemed to cast himself free of the affair. He caught up his pail, filled it with water, and carried it doggedly back to the house.

I passed an anxious night. At one moment the clutch of fear nearly stifled me, at another I tried to persuade myself that I was a hysterical fool for my pains; but sleep I could not. Why had not Byrne come back to the hotel after the gale had settled down into the steady downpour which I could hear as I lay on a sofa in the smoking-room? I stayed there, so that I could be ready to get him something hot



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I'm sorry now I run it down.' He looked at the quiet face. 'I didn't know you was that kind of a man. Jennie, she's going to teach me so's I can do some of them things you spoke about. I will try. God help me.'

This was a solemn consecration service, although the minister was silent.

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The simple ways of the unobtrusive rector of a small country parish in England had endeared him to the hearts of the people to whom he ministered. He was eccentric, and in conducting the services of the church, unconventional. Says a writer in the Cornhill Magazine: From the reading desk could be seen the fields stretching away to the rectory gates. One morning instead of beginning the service as usual, he announced:

'As I see my sister, somewhat late, approaching the church through the fields I shall postpone the commencement of divine service till her arrival.'

In very cold weather he would invite the congregation to come and warm themselves at the stove before leaving the church. Under other conditions of weather his thoughtfulness for the comfort of his flock took a somewhat different form, and at the end of a half hour's sermon he would sometimes say:

'As the weather is still so inclement, I will my dear friends, lengthen my discourse somewhat, in the hope that it may clear later.'

The Queensland yield of gold in 1897 was 787,000 ounces.

narrow staircase. At the head was the bedroom, and the piteous sight which there met me told its own story. The room was very bare and very neat. Three or four scriptural mottoes, worked in red wool upon canvas and framed, hung on the walls. The bed had been turned about in such a way that it could command a view of the beach, where only yesterday Byrne and I had been walking and taking, and where from this very spot might perhaps have been seen the small boat landing its messenger from this sick-room.

On the bed, bolstered up with pillows the better to see from the window, lay a little woman, pale, thin and still. Perhaps she had died while watching for the boat which never came, for her eyes still scanned the line of beach.

I read in the poor dead face the record of a starved soul, which had lived solitary, far away from that which it had been taught to prize. I could understand how the visit of a minister might have seemed to her like the one great boon which she as a dying person had a right at last to demand. I could understand how her husband would risk much to get it for her. But the price!

Then I thought how the storm must have thundered round the lonely island, and how this small, timid human creature had lain alone amidst it all, with no one to take her hand; and in my pity tears came to my eyes, while the peace on her face mocked my aching heart.

On the way back I looked at Bin, and wondered what he thought now of the sermon which yesterday he had criticised so harshly. But I could not talk, and he said not a word.

The sea was kind, and gave us back all that was left of Bryne. So many people who had heard him preach the Sunday before, or had heard him talk, or had loved and admired him for other reasons, wanted to see his face again, that was laid for a day in the hotel parlor.

There came an hour when the people were busy with dinner and I only was in the room. The door opened softly and a hesitating pair came awkwardly in. It was Bin and Jennie. They stood and looked upon the dead, peaceful face, she crying, he quiet. Not a word was said. Finally they both knelt down. It was he who made the first motion to kneel. His lips moved. For some time no sound came from them. It was very hard for Bin to say the word 'God,' but finally it came, and when it came it meant much.

'God, that there sermon was all right.'

And as we drew up our boat at the one possible landing-place on the rocky island, I bounded out like a boy. Glancing up at the house, my mind's eye seemed to show me Byrne's great figure striding down the path to meet me, his face radiant with the keen air of the morning.

'Byrne!' I called. I felt a strong grip on my arm. It was Bin.

'Don't!' said he; and then, with a face of choking grief, he muttered, 'I've been over here before this mornin'.' And he threw himself down on the stones and buried his face in his hands.

I knew the truth at once. Byrne had probably gone out of the world. I wondered what difference it made to this clumsy fellow. Then I turned and walked hurriedly up to the little wooden house which formed the base of the lighthouse. There was no sign of life near it, except a few breeze-blown hens pecking about the stone door-slab. I lifted the latch and found myself in a narrow entry, which led into a diminutive sitting-room.

Two rocking chairs stood in the room, and over the back of one of them lay a knitted shawl. Some newspapers were piled on a small table in the middle of the room, and near them a half finished stocking with yarn and needles spoke of a woman's fingers.

From here I went into the kitchen, where the cold stove and the unfinished litter told of a place hastily left. It startled me when a Maltese cat jumped down from the dresser. I was impelled to search the place, as if some message might be found from the bottom of the sea, where I now was sure Byrne was lying. My great Byrne, the watching of whose future was to have been my glory.

The cat gave me a dumb welcome, overjoyed to see a human being thus late in the day. She rubbed against my legs; then she went to a closed door, and rubbed back and forth against it, looking up and inviting me to lift the latch for her. I opened the door and passed up the

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