

(CONTINUED FROM TENTH PAGE.)

don't know how I've longed to see your bonnie face again."

"Yes, I do; because I know how I've longed to see you, Vi. It was very stupid of me not to ask about the train. I ought to have known I should have to change."

"Well, it doesn't matter now. Only, I'm so sorry you should have had all that trouble. But now, Kate, do tell me about Mr. Morewood. How odd he should happen to come down with you! He's very nice, isn't he?"

"Very," said Kate Lisle, demurely, the soft colour deepening on her cheek.

"I think him just splendid!" said Vi, energetically; "so strong and manly looking—and handsome, too. Didn't you think so?"

"Yes, I believe I did. He had nice eyes."

"And such a good mouth. Kate, why aren't you more enthusiastic over him? Do you know, I'm specially and immensely pleased you've got to know Mr. Morewood like this; and I'll tell you why. It sounds like the beginning of a romance, and—to let you into a great secret—I quite made up my mind, when I asked you here, that you were to be Mrs. Morewood, of Beach Royal."

"Oh, Vi, what nonsense!" The colour deepened again on Kate Lisle's cheek; but she did not look vexed—no, not in the very least.

"It isn't nonsense at all, Kate. There couldn't possibly be a more delightful arrangement, or a more natural one."

"Do you think so? I should have thought a wealthy landowner, like Mr. Morewood, would have looked rather higher for a wife than the orphan daughter of a poor colonel, who let her 'exactly two hundred a year when he died,' answered Kate dryly."

"You forget that the poor colonel belonged to one of the best families in England, and that his orphan daughter is one of the loveliest, sweetest girls in the world."

"If I ever knew that, I had forgotten it," said Kate, still speaking very dryly.

"But, seriously, Kate, I should be pleased to see you mistress of Beach Royal. It's such a lovely old place; and you would suit it so admirably with that dear, highbred manner of yours."

"That 'dear, highbred manner' of mine won't prevent me from calling you a little silly, if you go on talking like that," said Kate laughing. "And, by-the-by, if you admire Beach Royal so much—and it's mister, too—why don't you go in for it yourself? I'm sure you would stand quite as good a chance as I."

"Because—well, it's a secret, but I'll tell you; indeed, I've been dying to tell you all along," said Vi, laughing and blushing most delightfully.

"Oh! there's someone else—already! Upon my word Vi, you've been making good use of your time since you came down here!"

"For answer Vi drew her chair a little closer to her friend; and, in a low voice, and with sundry blushes, began one of those mysterious confidences in which girls delight."

And all through these confidences there ran the name of Harry Rolleston.

CHAPTER XVI.

LAWN TENNIS.

A couple of afternoons later, Morewood made his call at The Towers, and found Mr. Muggleton alone, in the drawing-room.

"My girls are playing tennis," said the millionaire. "P'raps you'd like to go and have a look at them?"

Before Morewood could reply, Mrs. Muggleton bustled in, full of anxiety to do honour to a guest so distinguished as the master of Beach Royal.

"I'm so pleased to see you, Mr. Morewood. We were wondering when you'd give us a call. It's very kind of you, I'm sure; and now you are here, I hope you'll stay a little. My young people are having a game at ten!" They look very happy over it, don't they? Just look at them, Mr. Morewood. You can see them quite well from this window."

The good lady bustled across to one of the windows, as she spoke, and Morewood followed her, thinking how pleasantly motherly she looked, with her face glowing with pride, as she pointed out her daughters.

"That is my youngest who is playing now—a very good player, I'm told she is Mr. Morewood. I don't profess to know much about the game myself. Do you?"

"Well, no. I can use a racquet without making myself look ridiculous—that's about all."

"Will you have a game now? Do, Mr. Morewood. They would be so pleased, I know."

"Thank you, I think I will. At any rate, I'll go and look on, if I do nothing more. Perhaps they'll want an umpire!"

He had glanced at the six or eight people on the tennis-ground, and had seen that Miss Lisle was among them.

Perhaps this was the reason he had acquiesced so readily in Mrs. Muggleton's suggestion.

The good lady herself led the way to the tennis-court; and Vi, racquet in hand, came to meet him, with great animation.

"Oh, Mr. Morewood, you're a perfect godsend! We were just wishing for another gentleman. How charming of you to come at the right moment!"

Morewood laughed, and made some fittingly courteous reply.

Vi looked very pretty, in cool, fresh pink muslin, with her sparkling eyes daintily waving dark hair; and at another time, he would, probably, have constituted himself her partner, but to-day he felt quite willing

to resign her to Harry Rolleston, who was hovering near.

His own attention was taken up with watching Kate Lisle, who was playing with much energy and skill.

She looked more charming than ever, he thought, gowned in pure white, a sailor hat, with a blue ribbon round it, resting lightly on her pretty hair.

The exercise had called a brighter colour than usual to her cheek, and an added sparkle to her eye.

Moreover, she looked so graceful—so thoroughly lady-like and refined.

She either had not seen him approach, or effected not to see him. Who, that knows the nature of woman, could presume to say which?

In a minute or two the game was finished, and then Vi called to her—

"Kate, come here a moment. I want you."

"Kate! Then I guessed her name. How very remarkable!" thought Morewood.

It was not so very remarkable if one remembers how few ordinary names, beginning with K, there are in the English language; but it somehow pleased him to think so.

Kate came, with a flitting blush and a sweet smile, and told Mr. Morewood, a gain, how very much obliged she felt to him, and all the rest of it.

And then Miss Vi walked off with Harry Rolleston, and left those other two together.

Vi and Harry Rolleston's being together did not commend itself at all to the prudent mother mind of Mrs. Muggleton.

Harry was no match for pretty Vi; and, certainly, it would be a thousand pities if Morewood—who was all that could be desired—should fall to the share of Kate Lisle.

Mrs. Muggleton liked Kate very much; but it wasn't natural she should like her well enough to wish her to make a better match than her own daughters.

However, if poor Mrs. Mugglton were not perfectly happy, the four pairs of young folk seemed as though they thought there was nothing left to be desired.

Sir Granville Grantly was in close attendance on Miss Janetta; Harry Rolleston monopolized Vi; and Morewood took care to keep in the near neighborhood of Kate Lisle.

The only other couple were Marie Muggleton and the Reverend Mr. Tiptaft, who had "dropped in" at The Towers, in order to discharge those duties as a Christian and a clergyman to which he was so conscientiously alive.

Just at first these two had been afflicted with unsatisfactory longings.

Mr. Tiptaft had thought Vi by far the most charming of the millionaire's daughters, and, consequently, the one whom he most wished to obtain; and Miss Marie had certain maiden yearnings in the direction of John Morewood and Beech Royal.

That impudent Harry Rolleston, and that too charming Kate Lisle, disappointed their hopes; and then, what more natural than that the two should find consolation in each other?

The rector of Little Cleeve was a philosopher.

He bethought himself that one girl's million was as good as another's; and that the older and less attractive Miss Muggleton would not only be easier to get, but would probably be easier managed when she was got.

There was a flash in Vi's dark eye, and a spice of mischief in her laugh, which slightly daunted the spirit of the reverend gentleman.

Accordingly, he attached himself, with great assiduity, to Marie; and, as he had a fine figure, a handsome face, and a fluent tongue, she readily permitted herself to be thus consoled.

After all, it is a great thing for the daughter of a soap-maker to be courted by the nephew of an earl.

Not that Miss Muggleton really intended to be won by Mr. Tiptaft.

She set a far higher value upon herself and her father's millions.

The reverend gentlemen would have to play his cards very adroitly before he accomplished that.

However, it must be admitted, he did not lack adroitness.

It was not long before he induced his fair companion to imagine she was tired of tennis; and then they gently sauntered through shady glades together, while he discoursed, in bland soft tones, of themes which made her fancy he was the most disinterested and ingenuous of men.

Poor Marie Muggleton was not a very acute observer of human nature.

Respect for the clergy had been ingrained in her from early childhood; and the fact that she had, in London, met, with many who were noble, high-souled men, made her more ready to give credit for sincerity to this soft-spoken, man smooth-faced man, who was, it she had only known it, a disgrace to his high calling.

CHAPTER XVII.

SIR PATRICK DONOVAN.

Sir Gerald was strolling through his own park, one sunny September afternoon, when suddenly, he gave an exclamation of delight, and hurried across the grass with both hands outstretched, in eager welcome, towards someone who was coming up the drive.

"My dear Donovan! Is it really you?"

"Meself, and none other, me boy," said the new-comer, in a rich Irish brogue.

But, indeed, most people would have been certain he was an Irishman before he opened his mouth to speak.

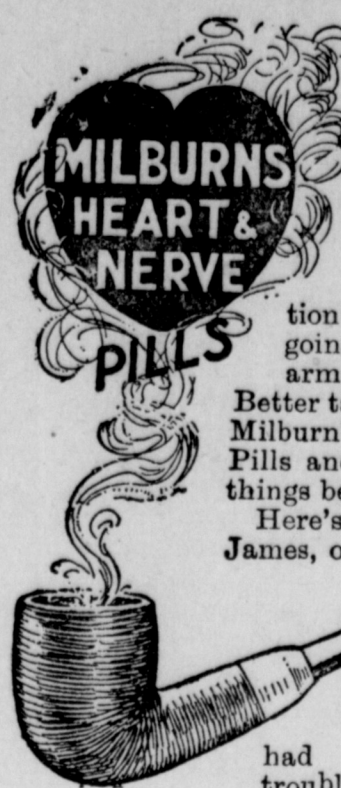
There was a dare-devil look in his dark blue eyes, a rollicking humor in his laugh, which one somehow associates instinctively with the sons of Erin.

For the rest, he was about five-and-forty years of age; his fine clear skin was tanned hazel-brown with exposure to foreign sun; his teeth were splendid; his brow was scarred with a sabre cut.

His hair was grey and grizzled, and he walked slightly lame.

"Well!" said Sir Gerald, as he held the other's hand in a long, tight grip. "I wish I

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Last November, however, I read of a man, afflicted like myself, being cured by Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills. I went to Roper's drug store and bought a box. When I had finished taking it I was so much better I bought another box and this completed the cure. My heart has not bothered me since, and I strongly recommend all sufferers from heart and nerve trouble, caused by excessive use of tobacco, to give Milburn's Heart and Nerve Pills a fair and faithful trial."

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could tell you how pleased I am to see you."

"I know, me boy, I know. Ye needn't trouble to find a single word."

"And where have you dropped from—the skies? It would be just like you."

"No me boy, no. I haven't been there yet," said the Irishman, with a look of shrewd humor. "I've simply come from 'the old country'—landed at Holyhead last night—and thought I must run down and take a look at ye before I set out again."

"Set out! Where on earth are you going now?"

"Anywhere. I'm not particular."

"Well, if you want to go to a fresh place it's my belief it's not in this world you'll find it, for you must already have been to every spot on earth. I never saw such a restless, roving fellow as you, Donovan."

"Why, my dear fellow," said the Irishman, suddenly growing serious, "what can I do? I can't stay there and starve!"—and he pointed westward. "At least, some people think that I oughtn't to do it. For meself, I'd about as lief die in old Ireland as live in any other place; and if I thought they'd bury this old carcass of mine anywhere else, when the soul's out of it, why, be jabbers! I'd never be still in me grave. I love the old place just so; but, nevertheless, what can I do?—as I was saying just now."

"I can't bear to stay at the castle, and not keep it up as befits a Donovan. That's about the truth of it, me boy; and so I'm going on me travels again, as I've been many a time before."

And with this Sir Patrick Donovan—late Major of Her Majesty's Dragoons—threw back his head, almost fiercely, while a look of determination flashed in his blue eyes.

He was something of "a character"—a cholerick, fire-eating, devil-may-care Irishman, with a spirit as bold as a lion's, a heart as gentle as a child's.

Everybody who knew him, loved him, and, indeed, it was difficult to help loving Sir Patrick Donovan.

If his spirit remained almost boyishly gay at forty-five, it was not because he had not had troubles and misfortunes enough to crush half-a-dozen men less brave than he.

The Donovans were one of the oldest of the old Irish families.

Kingly blood ran in their veins; and Castle Donovan, in ancient days, has been one of the strongholds of Ireland.

But they were poor—poor with no common poverty; and, rather than back-rent the few toll worn peasants who still owed, and cheerfully paid, fealty to "The Castle," Sir Patrick had gone out into the world as a soldier-of-fortune.

In earlier years he had had a brother, many years younger than himself, a fair-faced, slender stripling whom he had loved with a tender, self-sacrificing love—ay, as his own mother might have loved him.

Thad had fallen into bad company, had contracted debts impossible for him to pay, and then, in a sudden frenzy of remorse and agonized despair, had put a bullet into his heart one grey October dawn.

When they brought the dead body back to Ireland to bury it in the vault of the Donovans, Sir Patrick was almost heart-broken.

But, even in the midst of his grief, he a solemn vow never to rest, while he had breath, until he had paid everyone of those fatal debts which had sent his young brother to his grave.

"Poor Terry!" he said, softly, laying his hand on the dead boy's brow. "Sleep in peace, darlin'. No one shall throw an ill-word over your grave. I will see to that. Ah! but you might have trusted to me, Terence dear."

Ever since that day—now nearly a dozen years ago—Sir Patrick had set himself to keep his vow; and, by means of noble self-denial, he had accomplished it at last.

But he was a ruined man; and, as he had just said to Sir Gerald, he felt he would rather bear his poverty elsewhere than in

the land where the Donovans had once been so great.

Sir Gerald knew and loved him well; for he had been his father's friend as well as his.

There were few men he honored as he honored Sir Patrick Donovan.

"And how is the Lady Ruth?" asked the Irishman, presently.

"She is always well. She will be pleased to see you, Don. Of course, you have come to stay with us?"

"If you'll have me—for a day or two. It may be for the last time."

"Nonsense! Where's your traps?"

"They're at the station. A clean shirt, and a dress suit. You know my style, me boy."

"I should think I did! I'll send down for them at once, and, if you speak of leaving us this month, I shall consider you've insulted me. Now let's go in, and find Lady Ruth."

That evening, when Sir Gerald and his guest were sitting together over their wine, after dinner, the younger man remained silent and thoughtful for a long time, then suddenly broke out with—

"Donovan, I've got a plan for you."

"A plan?"

"Yes. Look here now! How old are you?"

"Forty-five on Michaelmas Day," said Sir Patrick, in some slight surprise.

"Well, don't you think that, instead of tearing off to foreign parts, where nobody knows you, or cares a shot about you, it would be a great deal better for you, at your time of life, to settle down at Castle Donovan—to take a wife, and begin to think about a family, like a Christian?"

Sir Gerald spoke with considerable energy.

His friend looked at him with a humorous twinkle in his eye.

"A wife!" he repeated. "What should I be doing with a wife, me boy?"

"What do other men do with wives? Aren't you old enough to be married?"

"If I'm not, I suppose I never shall be. But now, look here, Gerald, me boy, what's in the wind? What is it you're driving at? Ye know, as well as I do, that wife and babes are not for me—and ye know why. A pretty scoundrel I should be to make pretence I could kape a family, when it's all I can do to kape meself."

Sir Patrick usually put in an extra touch of Irish brogue when he was excited or deeply moved.

He did so now.

"Well, now, keep cool, and I'll tell you what I'm driving at. What would you say to a nice, bonnie girl for a wife—not too young to be sensible, nor too old to be unpleasant—about seven or eight-and-twenty, we'll say; good-looking, and good-tempered, eh?"

"I should she'd be an uncommonly nice possession for a man who could afford such luxuries; but that man isn't Pat Donovan?"

"Well, then, and further, what should you say to a fortune of close on a million pounds, to be had with that girl on the wedding-day?"

"I should say, again, such things were not for Pat Donovan."

The Irishman's lips tightened as he spoke.

A gleam of resolution, almost of sternness, shone in his usually gay, laughing eyes.

"And I should say he's just the man they are for!" exclaimed his friend, impetuously; "and it will be a great shame if you throw the chance away. Ever since you came, I've been thinking of it."

"Now look here; you've heard of old Sam Muggleton—or, perhaps, you haven't. But that doesn't matter, for I can tell you who he is—an honest, hearty, sensible fellow, who started in life as a soapmaker, and who, by judicious speculation, has made his millions."

"You see, I tell you the whole truth. I know how sensible you are, and that you wouldn't turn up your nose at a nice, pretty, lady-like girl, simply because her father's money was made in trade."

"Certainly not," remarked Sir Patrick, gravely. "I should deserve to be whipped if I did."

"Well, then, to make a long story short the old fellow has got three daughters; and as he's no son, they're to have his fortune between them, share and share alike. He'd just taken the Towers, and is getting very intimate with all the people herabouts. Of course we know what that means—he wants to marry his daughters."

"Naturally!" said Sir Patrick, without moving a muscle of his countenance.

"Yes, naturally, as you say. They're thoroughly nice girls; and they deserve good husbands."

"I'm sure I hope they'll get them," said the Irishman, still with an unmoved face, and with cheerful energy.

"Sir Granville Grantly is after one of them," went on Sir Gerald; "and I rather fancy another neighbor of mine, young Harry Rolleston, is sweet on the youngest. But there's still the eldest, and she's as good-looking and as good tempered a girl as you need wish to meet. Just one of your style, I should say. Now, why shouldn't you marry her?"

"Because I hope I am still an honest man," said Donovan very quietly.

"Humbly! If you were not nearly old enough to be my father, I should take the liberty of telling you you're a fool!" retorted Sir Gerald, proceeding to eat a peach with great equanimity.

In his heart he felt quite sure that Sir Patrick would ultimately be persuaded to marry Miss Muggleton; and what an excellent arrangement it would be.

It was really Lady Ruth who had suggested this; but her nephew had acquiesced in it with enthusiasm at the very first mention of it.

"Very likely, me boy, said Sir Patrick, tranquilly. "I dare say I am a fool—it isn't at all unlikely; but that's no reason why I should be a knave as well."

"A knave?"

"Yes; I count any man a knave who

tries to obtain some good thing for which he can offer no suitable equivalent."

There was something truly grand about the quiet, manly pride with which Sir Patrick spoke these words.

The look in his blue Irish eyes was a sight worth seeing.

After a moment or two, he resumed, more soberly—

"By your own showing, this young lady is well worth winning, for her own personal charms alone; and, in addition, she has a fortune of something like a million pounds. Now, what have I, a battered old soldier, to offer in exchange for all this?"

"What have you to offer? By Jove! all that any reasonable woman could desire!" exclaimed Sir Gerald. "You would make her Lady Donovan for one thing; and an old title, like yours, isn't to be sneezed at, I can tell you. But above and beyond that, there's you yourself, a man with the sweetest temper, and the best heart that ever beat in mortal bosom. Ah, Donovan, you could make your wife the happiest woman in the world!"

"Ye think so, me boy?" said the Irishman, with a swift, warm glance, which showed how he appreciated the others' friendship.

"No; I'm sure of it. I tell you, Marie Muggleton would be a happy woman if she married you. She had to go down on her knees every night to thank Heaven for her husband."

This time Sir Patrick made no answer. The shadow of a cloud passed over his fine countenance, and there was a far-away look in his eyes.

Perhaps Sir Gerald's words had stirred some depth of his big, honest heart in which there lurked a longing for the sweet, of domestic life, the love of wife, the smiles and prattle of children.

Assuredly no man was more fitted than he for the relations of husband and father.

Sir Gerald was right in that.

His wife, if ever he had one, would be indeed a happy woman.

"And you know," went on Sir Gerald, "if you can't go in for that girl, there's plenty of others who will. You'll leave her to fall into worse hands—that's all."

"There's a smooth-tongued parson after her at the present time. I should like to see him bowled over, for he is a sneaking humbug, if ever there was one. I love the Church, as you know, Donovan; and, on the whole, her clergy are men to be respected; but, of course, there are black sheep. And if Augustus Tiptaft isn't a bit of a hypocrite, I'm a Dutchman!"

"Tiptaft!" said Sir Patrick. "You never mean old Gowan's nephew?"

"Yes; do you know him?"

"A bit!"

"And you don't care for him?"

"I should think not!" said Sir Patrick, laughing. "A pink faced, simpering fool. Gowan's ashamed of him, I can tell you that. I hope he doesn't call himself an Irishman."

"He doesn't. He's ashamed of his grandmother's country," said Sir Gerald, dryly.

"Bogorra! he is, is he, the dirty scoundrel?" exclaimed Sir Patrick, his eye blazing with excitement. "Then let me tell ye, me boy his grandmother's country is ashamed of him! The miserable shalpeen, to dare to say a word against old Ireland!"

"Well then, you just go and cut him out with the heiress."

"Not I," said the Irishman, curtly, sternly almost. "I've think I'd demean myself to play the same dirty game as Gus Tiptaft? No sir, no! Come let us go to Lady Ruth."

"Foolish, bare-brained fellow!" thought Sir Gerald; but he thought it very tenderly.

And, indeed, who could ever think harshly of Patrick Donovan?

For the present, of course, no more was said of Marie Muggleton.

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