THE
EARL OF DESMOND;
OR
O'BRIEN's COTTAGE.

AN IRISH STORY.

(Continued from our last.)

"I have a sister," said Maynard, "who, within these few months, has become a widow; she has no children living, and it is intention to propose her future residence with me. She is a worthy and amiable woman—the widow of a man respectable in the profession of the law, of the name of Brown; and though my sister is not highly accomplished, yet she is sufficiently so to inculcate the first rudiments of education on the infant mind—to model it on the firm foundation of morality and virtue. If your lordship approves, under my roof shall the care of this dear child be committed to her; and over her health and comforts it shall be my business to preside."

"I am charmed with this plan," answered his lordship; "and, from my mind being relieved by this arrangement, shall pursue my journey with encreased hope and pleasure; and shall, with confidence, commit her to your fatherly care till the arrival of your worthy sister."

The doctor, to this replied, a few days would suffice for the completion of this business; and then showed him what part of the house he could most conveniently allot, to accommodate his sister and her new charge.

He then spoke of the O'Briens—of their care of, and affection for, Georgiana, and of the grief they would feel in the separation.

Lord Desmond said it was his intention to make them a handsome acknowledgment for their attention, which he should commit to his care; but conceived they must be fully prepared for her removal, for which he felt the instant necessity.

This great event settled, the conversation become general. Lord Desmond informed the doctor he intended to fix his residence in Naples, and that he had sent his suite forward to Dublin, from whence he should embark for England: then giving him the address of his banker in Naples, and taking the most affectionate leave of his little niece, with renewed and impressive entreaties to Maynard, to consider himself as her father, till he or his brother's return, he again resumed his journey, and proceeded to Dublin.

Maynard was both pleased and affected by the scene which had taken place; he was happy lord Desmond had seen his niece, the child for whom he was so interested, and whom, by a strange concurrence of melancholy events, had been thrown upon his care ever since her birth; and he was likewise extremely gratified in thinking his beloved sister would have the care of her, till the return of her father or uncle should consign her to more competent instruction. The establishment, which almost immediately took place, was of a nature the most desirable and beneficial to the hitherto neglected Georgiana. Mrs. Brown, delighted with the office she was chosen to fulfil, cultivated the expanding mind of her pupil with maternal solicitude and unwearied application; and, with pleasure, found her care was amply repaid: but time rapidly winged its flight, and four years had already elapsed since its commencement; and yet Georgiana remained with doctor Maynard.

Frequent letters from lord Desmond gave great satisfaction to this worthy family; but, as yet, no mention was made of his return.

At length one arrived, in which, after expressing his great pleasure and satisfaction on account of Georgiana's health and improvements, and of his obligations in consequence, he added, that, being now nearly restored to perfect health, he was preparing to return, and anticipated the happiness it would be to him to receive his niece from his hands.

This letter elated all the family, and many little preparations were made for this long-expected pleasure; together with many little productions of Georgiana's, which were to be shown her uncle as proofs of her ingenuity and industry: but time still passed on, and he came not; and Maynard's impatience daily encreased, as he was truly anxious his darling protogee should be established according to her rank and merit.

Maynard had long despaired of ever hearing any thing more of the colonel; the many years which had elapsed since any account had been received, gave every reason to believe a report which had been circulated, that he had fallen, with many other brave officers, in an unsuccessful action; though, still in his letters, lord Desmond seemed greatly to depend on his brother's being yet living, as it was equally well known many officers had also been taken prisoners; and he never would give up the idea himself of his being alive, nor would suffer a suggestion being made to his niece of her father's death; for, as no direct account of it had been received, he conceived it best to keep up some degree of expectation and affection in her mind for her unfortunate and absent parent.

Thus went on the family at Clonnish—happy, in every respect, but from connexion. The doctor was called on to attend a patient in a putrid fever, whose malignity was extreme. Maynard, whose philanthropy was unbounded, paid peculiar attention to the unhappy sufferer, from the circumstance of his being nearly forsaken by all attendants, from their great apprehension of infection. Maynard reproved their want of courage and feeling, procured a proper nurse, and administered many of the proper remedies himself. He had the pleasure to see his humane kindness repaid by the recovery of his patient; but, alas! this most deserving and worthy man caught, himself, the fatal infection, which, baffling every aid of medicine, terminated fatally in less than five days; a constant delirium attending the whole of his disorder.

The whole town of Clonnish joined in the sincere, though unavailing sorrow of the doctor's family; for, to all his assistance, his advice, and his purse, had ever been free and unlimited.

Young as was Georgiana, none ever felt his loss with more severe affliction than she did: he was a father, a preceptor, a friend, when she had been under the care of the O'Brien's; his house had always been a pleasing change, which she ever, with gratitude, remembered; and his improving and instructive conversation had formed and enlarged her mind.

Georgiana, though not possessing that extreme and unequalled beauty, which, in general, adorns the heroine of a romance, was yet full of intelligence and interest: her expressive eyes beamed with the benevolent and compassionate sensations her noble heart inspired; she was full of active vivacity and cheerfulness; generous, ingenious, and tender.

Nature had bestowed on her mind the choicest treasures, the soundest understanding, the quickest perception, and a turn for every mental accomplishment; but the hand of cultivation was wanting; for, though Mrs. Brown was one of the most worthy women in existence, and had herself received a very good education, yet she was by no means competent to the sole instruction of a child of the fine genius and extensive capacity of Georgiana.

From this description of her heart and sensibilities, it may easily be presumed how deep the impression of her sorrow must be for the loss she had sustained; and that of Mrs. Brown, who had attended her suffering brother, with the tenderest attention, and most unwearied assiduity, and who had received a shock, by his untimely death, that she never recovered.

The fortune of Mrs. Brown was very small, but the addition made to it by lord Desmond, for her care of Georgiana, was sufficient for her to live very genteely; but not in the style she had with her brother; she, therefore removed, as soon as she possibly could, to a situation; and sent the earliest account to lord Desmond of the melancholy event which had taken place.

A kind consolatory answer soon returned, in which he expressed his sorrow for their loss, in the kindest terms: he, likewise, sent an ample remittance, and added, he expected his return soon to take place; and, till that happened, to draw on his banker, in Dublin, for the usual supplies.

From the death of Maynard the health of his deserving sister rapidly declined. Georgiana, whose affections for her were of the warmest nature, saw, with the most heartfelt grief, the daily increase of her malady. She was now in her twelfth year; and, consequently, began to estimate the value of her maternal friend. Repeated letters were sent to lord Desmond of the alarming state of Mrs. Brown's health, entreating his instructions in respect to Georgiana in case of her death, and on this subject Mrs. Brown was particularly solicitous, but no answer arrived; and, from the letter which announced his intention of returning, no kind of intelligence had been received; and, except by the punctual the remittances which were made for her board, the lovely Georgiana appeared so totally deserted, as though she had no connexion in life.

The illness of Mrs. Brown encreasing began to wear the most alarming appearance, and Judy O'Brien, whose attachment to Georgiana was that of a mother, and her gratitude and respect to Dr. Maynard and his family warm and sincere, requested to be admitted to attend on Mrs. Brown, to prevent Georgiana her close confinement. This attention was received with pleasure, but her attendance was soon completed; for, on the second night of it, the amiable woman breathed her last in the supporting arms of the afflicted Georgiana, whom, with her latest accents, she blessed with fervency; and, recommending her to the special care of her foster nurse, sunk, without a groan, to everlasting repose.

It will be unnecessary to dwell on the effect of this second sorrow in the gentle mind of Georgiana; it was such as might be naturally expected, and long before it subsided. In consequence of this change no other resource appeared but that Georgiana should again become an inmate in O'Brien's cottage, till her uncle's determination was known, or that he returned: his absence had now exceeded seven years.

Georgiana, again settled in her old habitation, endeavoured to pursue the studies in which she had engaged with Mrs. Brown; but the wild luxuriance of her fancy required guidance, and a variety of pursuits appeared to attract her genius, without knowing the principles of any; and the uninformed O'Briens were charmed by every thing she did, which appeared to them wonderful, however erroneous: thus her drawings, however extravagant—her poetry, however out of measure—and the music of her guittar, however out of time or tune, they were as much delighted by it, and extolled it as much, as the productions of the first artist.

Thus was time beguiled till our heroine had completed her fifteenth year; and for upwards of three years no letter or message had arrived. The strangeness of this total neglect of her family was the almost constant theme of her's and the O'Briens' conversation; but, as she had never known and other habitation than doctor Maynard's and O'Brien's, the contented mind of Georgiana was as happy as though she had been received by lord Desmond, in the most distinguished manner.

One day, as Georgiana was returning home from one of her morning rambles, she was met by O'Brien, who, finding she was going home, begged to accompany her. They had not proceeded many paces, when, at a small distance, they observed an elegant carriage: such an unusual sight instantly attracted their attention; and, whilst they were wondering what it might portend, one of the attendants riding up to them, asked the farmer if he knew where Mr. O'Brien lived—the farmer, instantly pulling off his hat, made a profound bow, and said he was the person; and, pointing to his residence, said he lived there.

"The earl of Desmond," said the footman, "whose carriage approaches, is coming to enquire after Miss Fitzhugh."

"This is the lady," returned O'Brien, "we will tarry home to receive his lordship, who, thank God, is come at last.—The footman, respectfully bowing to Miss Fitzhugh, rode forward to acquaint his lord, whilst O'Brien conducted the trembling Georgiana home, he being nearly as much agitated as her he supported.

By the time they had informed Judy, and were a little recovered from their confusion, the carriage drove up to the door, and from it stepped a gentleman of a most interesting appearance; and who, though not young, yet still seemed in the prime of life. He entered, and, taking Georgiana, in the most affectionate manner in arms, said, "I need not enquire—this, I feel from her strong resemblance to her dear father, is her whom I seek."

During this introduction the O'Briens observed lord Desmond and his attendants were in deep mourning, and their hearts sunk in fear of certain bad intelligence; but Georgiana did not appear struck by this circumstance.

"Tell me, my dear Georgiana," he added, "do you not condemn me for having so much neglected you the last three years; did you not conceive I had entirely forsaken you."

"I have certainly felt great uneasiness on that score," answered the blushing Georgiana, "and often regretted my separation from my nearest connexions."

"You are not unacquainted, my dear," returned his lordship, "my bad state of health required change of climate; and, though my stay abroad has so far exceeded the time I intended, it never made me forget the change I had undertaken, and it was my first wish you should have every attention paid you the nature of our separation permitted; that you have not lately heard from me, with the usual regularity, was occasioned by the infidelity of a servant, in whom I placed great confidence, who, either from carelessness or design, neglected forwarding my letters. This omission I very lately discovered; and, as my return was at that time determined on, I thought I could in person best explain this apparent inattention, which, be assured, my dear girl, has given me infinite uneasiness since it has come to my knowledge."

He then added how much trouble it had given him to reflect her education had been so much neglected; but hoped now that she would acquire, in a short time, all those accomplishments he so much wished her to be mistress of.

"It is dreadfully distressing to me, my dearest Georgiana," he continued, "that our first interview should commence with a melancholy recital: gladly would I conceal the unwelcome intelligence I bring, could it, with propriety, be passed over. Prepare your mind for distressing news—behold my dress—need I be more explicit."

"Oh! the dear colonel is dead," screamed Judy O'Brien—"Ah! I well knew, had that dear soul been spared, he never would have forsaken his child."

"You judge but too correct, good woman," answered lord Desmond, with some degree of haughtiness: "he is no more; but comfort yourself, my dear girl," (turning to Georgiana, who stood mute with surprise and grief), "it is true you have lost a worthy and amiable parent—a man of high honour in his profession—and of an unblemished character through life; but I will truly supply his place; your long neglected improvement shall now be doubly attended too, and every thing in my power to make you happy, and fit for your expectation in life, shall become my first duty to complete and attend to.

Georgiana gave way, for a short time, to the genuine effusions of filial grief; for, though she had no possible idea of her father, yet the name alone of parent will ever influence a good and tender heart, and inspire it with love and gratitude. It was so with our heroine; she had been taught to respect and love the colonel, from the repeated stories of O'Brien and his wife—to deplore the sorrows he had suffered—and had, from infancy, been forming an ideal structure of happiness, to take place on the return of her father—the fairy vision was now destroyed, and the tears of affliction bedewed her cheeks: but this, being merely speculative, the consolation and kindness of lord Desmond soothed her, and she listened calmly and patiently to his father discourse.

(To be continued.)

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