

AMONG THE HILLS OF DERRY.

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There was not a word spoken as Pat Hegarty and his daughter Rosie passed out of the cottage door. They stood for a moment in the little garden, while the tears brimmed anew in Rosie's blue eyes that had wept themselves dry in the night. With a heart-breaking sob she turned again to the cottage, gave one last look around, and pressed a farewell kiss on the stolid door-post. Then, with her face hidden under her shawl, she hurried down the boreen, followed by her father's lagging footsteps.

They had some distance to walk before they could reach the cross-roads and get on the car for Derry city. In Derry the bitterest parting of all would come, for Rosie must go on her lonely way to America, while her father remained behind.

They had only each other in the world, these two, for the girl's mother had died many years before, and the great West had long ago swallowed up all other relatives. They had struggled on bravely for some time, Rosie's sewing taking out her father's wages and keeping the home together. But lately the struggle had become more difficult. Her father's uncertain health and increasing lameness had thrown the chief care of the household on Rosie, and all her efforts seemed to yield but poor result. In the midst of their difficulties came a letter from a lady in America offering the young girl a comfortable place in her house as sewing-maid. Apart from the wages, which were good enough to be in themselves an inducement, Rosie inclined to accept the proposal. She had become acquainted with Mrs. Miller when that lady had visited some relatives in Derry the year before, and the wealthy visitor's kindness had remained a pleasant memory to the little country girl.

The matter was talked over long and earnestly in the cottage, and at last it was decided that Rosie should go, leaving her father behind till better times should unite them again. A neighbour had promised to keep an eye to the cottage and Pat, and, among all the kindly people, Rosie knew that her father's comfort would not be neglected.

Though they could not see it for the blinding tears, a charming prospect spread before the travellers as they passed over the crest of the mountain. All around and beneath them Derry, fair and smiling in the dewy-sweet May morning, stretched the pleasant townlands of North Foyle, a widening line of silver, while beyond it the blue heights of Innishowen seemed to touch the sky. When Rosie's emotion had spent itself she gazed around with hungry yearning, drawing deep breaths of the hawthorn-scented air. Many years might come when she might hunger in vain for the sight and the scent of those dear hills of Derry; many a weary year might come and go ere her longing eyes could rest again on the silver Foyle.

There was something very pitiful to a sympathetic observer in this farewell scene. Little Rosie Hegarty was not by any means a typical country wench. She was slender and daintily made, with wide, innocent blue eyes and cheeks of delicate red and white, somewhat disfigured now with weeping. She looked a mere child, despite her twenty years and the ceaseless petty hardships of her life. Her beauty had a strangely appealing effect, as of a harebell trembling on a windy knoll by the sea. She looked all unfit to battle with the world, to venture unprotected on life's highway.

Derry quay was reached too quickly, and here lay a steamboat, waiting to carry the emigrants to the liner off Moville. Rosie's eyes were dry, now that the final wrench had come—it had been settled that the father should not go to Moville, prolonging fruitlessly the pain of parting—and her mouth was firmly set, to keep back rebellious sobs. Some fresh grief, some deadly disappointment, had surely come to her upon the way, and taken all the light of hope from her wistful face. She looked sadder, older, and more careworn than when she had set off in the morning. As the steamer left the quay Rosie's straining eyes looked past her father, as if in search of some loved object that they could not find. Then the boat moved onward down Lough Foyle, and the dreary voyage was begun.

A young man now made his way rather timidly to where Rosie sat, an abject little bundle of despair.

"Rosie, darlin'!" he whispered, "don't cry any more—ye're breakin' my heart out an' out. Sure it's no time till ye'll be back again, an' we'll all be as happy as kings an' queens. Dhry yer eyes now, alanna, an' don't cry no more!"

Rosie looked up into his face, her blue eyes shining through their tears.

"O, Barney!" she said, with a little sob of joy. "I thought ye were not comin' to say 'good-bye' to me at all. I made sure of it when I didn't see you on the quay."

"I didn't want to interrupt ye an' you bid-din' 'good-bye' till your father," Barney said tenderly; "but ye didn't think I'd let my own wee girl off so far without a kiss, did ye, Rosie agra?"

A beautiful blush swept over Rosie's delicate face.

"Whisht, Barney!" she whispered imploringly; "sure the people will hear ye, an' what will I do then?"

"Let them hear!" said Barney stoutly, but in a lowered voice. "Aren't we sweethearts this many a day, an' only waitin' till I save the bit o' money. Are ye ashamed o' me, Rosie girl?"

"O, Barney!" Rosie said, with such a tenderly reproachful look that Barney melted into incoherent endearments, which found them all too soon at Moville.

Neither paid much regard to the lookers on, as that last "good-bye" was said.

"God keep ye, ashore, machree, an' bring ye back to me safe!" Barney said brokenly as he strained his "wee girl" to his breast, but Rosie said never a word, for his heart was too full.

Three years had passed away since little Rosie Hegarty went to America, and now the ship that was bringing her back was hourly expected in Lough Foyle. These years had wrought some startling changes in her home and in her hopes. Pat Hegarty was married again, this time to a woman with money—an energetic, loud-voiced person who kept him and his affairs in most unwonted order. The last news that Rosie had heard of Barney was in a letter from one of the gossips at home. This informed her that a match had been made between Barney M'Laughlin and a girl from the far side, and immediately upon its receipt Rosie had written the coldest and briefest of notes to Barney, merely giving him his freedom and claiming her own. Since then she had heard nothing of him, but the sting in her heart remained.

Things had gone well with Rosie for the two years following her departure from home. Her employer was kindness itself, and Rosie

was able to send substantial help to her father. Then, all together, came Mrs. Miller's death, the news of her father's second marriage, and of her lover's defection. The girl felt overwhelmed, but managed to find another place, and to keep her head above water for a time.

But things were not yet at their worst. The climax of her misfortunes came in a serious illness, which left her stranded in a hospital, penniless and enfeebled. Her father and stepmother insisted on her return home. Mrs. Hegarty forwarded the passage money, which Rosie, sorely against her will, was obliged to accept. It seemed her crowning humiliation that she must return to Ireland, weak and destitute, to be a burden on her father's wife. She shrank from meeting the old neighbours, from enduring their questions and sympathy, but far beyond all else she dreaded meeting her fickle sweetheart.

It was May-time again when Rosie left Derry City behind, and was driven homewards on her father's car. Pat's welcome to his daughter was tender and whole-hearted, but yet, to her jealous eyes, he somewhat seemed estranged from her. The sight of the car stirred a faint resentment in her breast, it was so evidently due to her stepmother. Her conscience battled with her humiliated pride, and accused her of harbouring base ingratitude, so that altogether poor Rosie's drive home did not afford her much enjoyment.

Mrs. Hegarty awaited them on the doorstep. She kissed her palefaced stepdaughter, and led her in with loud-voiced welcome. The girl looked more flower-like and fragile than ever, and made scarcely any reply to the elder woman's string of questions. Mrs. Hegarty, indeed, hardly expected an answer. She was talking chiefly to cover her nervousness, and to bridge over the difficulty that Rosie might feel in accepting her presence there. Despite her loud voice and domineering manner, there was not a kinder heart in the country, and poor little Rosie's soft beauty had made its way there at once.

As the days went on, some of Rosie's strength came back, and a sea-shell bloom stole into her

Human nature could contain it no longer, so the great story at last came out. The telling of it was left to Mrs. Hegarty, as she was somehow felt to be responsible for the piece of good luck.

"What d'ye think but we had a visitor, an' you out, Rosie," she said—"an' who d'ye think it was, now? Guess, for the life o' ye!"

"Who would it be?" said Rosie carelessly.

"Was it John Mullan? I thought I saw him cross the fields as I came up here."

This answer seemed strangely full of mirth to Mrs. Hegarty. Rosie looked at her in bewilderment, wondering if her remark had really contained anything very funny.

"Yes, indeed, then, it was John Mullan, since ye know so well," Mrs. Hegarty said, with great enjoyment, "an' who but yourself has a right to know all about the same John, when it's Mrs. Mullan we'll be callin' ye wan o' these days. An' how is the world usin' ye this weather, Mrs. Mullan, ma'am?" she wound up, with a great laugh.

Rosie's face grew very white.

"What do you mean?" she said. "What has John Mullan got to do with me?"

"Speak respectfully o' your husband, ma'am!" Mrs. Hegarty exclaimed, unsoftened. "Och, but you an' John'll make the fine pair! We'll give yez such a weddin' as was niver seen in the parish before!"

"Father, what does this nonsense mean?" Rosie said, in the sharpest tone he had ever heard her use. "I hope you have not taken leave of your senses!"

Rosie's cheeks were burning now. Mrs. Hegarty also flushed with vexation as it slowly dawned upon her that Rosie might object to the match. Why she should object was of course a mystery, but Rosie's moods were often past accounting for.

"It means, wane dear, that John Mullan wants to make ye his wife," Pat exclaimed apologetically, "an' it's the fine husband he'll make ye, an' let ye do just as ye like. It's not every day a girl can get such a catch, an' he's a real off an' a good, steady man into the bargain."

"I will never marry John Mullan, and will you please tell him so for me," Rosie said, tremulously; "though I'm much obliged to him all the same. Don't say any more about it," she added, with an appealing glance, as she stepped outside into the quiet summer night, where the soft airs fanned her burning face, and the peaceful skies looked down on her with pity.



pale cheeks. She looked lovelier than ever, and many a lad cast longing eyes upon her, but she would have none of them.

She could never summon courage to mention Barney's name, and ask if he was married. One day, when out walking alone, she came face to face with him. The shock and surprise drove the blood from her face, but she passed him with head held high, and gave him the merest nod of recognition. In that one glance, however, she met a look of mingled love and sorrow that stirred her heart strangely, and haunted her mind both sleeping and waking. If Barney belonged to another woman, could he look at her so, with the soul in his eyes?

When Rosie grew strong enough, she returned to her sewing, in order to fill her time and to earn some money. This work was chiefly the making of linen garments, ordered by the owners of the large factories in Derry. Every week the finished articles were taken in to the factory, and paid for, when a fresh supply of work was obtained. Rosie's skill with her needle was well known, and the most delicate stitchery was entrusted to her clever fingers. Mrs. Hegarty feared that the bending over such work would be bad for the girl, and entreated her to make herself happy at home, as the money was quite unnecessary. Her entreaties had no effect on her stepdaughter, who declared that she would be much happier having something to do, and that she always enjoyed doing needlework.

Rosie did not often go to Derry herself. An obliging farmer who lived near had offered to take in her parcel of work and make the exchange on his market day visits to the city. This man, John Mullan by name, was a well-to-do, middle-aged bachelor, and Mrs. Hegarty's match-making mind saw in him a very suitable husband for Rosie. That Mullan himself held similar views was soon made apparent. He came down one evening, while Rosie was out, and made a formal proposal to Pat for her hand.

"Anno' to call a young man," he said, with ponderous good-humour, "but a'm no' that ould either, an' a'm uncommon fond o' the wee cutty. If ye give her to me ye'll niver regret it, an' neither will she."

Pat and his wife were delighted at this proposal. Mrs. Hegarty was especially jubilant, because she had foretold its likelihood, and had always seen its advantages. That Rosie herself would have any objection never occurred to any of them. John Mullan was a good Catholic, and a great match. What more could any girl in her senses expect or desire?

When Rosie returned that evening she saw at once that there was something in the air. Her father and stepmother were in the best of good-humour, and seemed bubbling over with some great news that they would not immediately divulge. Sly jokes passed between the

"Well, of all the contrary cutties!" Mrs. Hegarty exclaimed, before Rosie was well out of hearing. "Did iver anybody hear the like! What does the girl expect, d'ye suppose? Is it a lord she thinks'll be comin' aither her?"

"Now, lave the wee girl alone for a bit, wumman dear," Pat expostulated. "It's only flustered she is wi' the surprise, an' doesn't rightly know what she'd be sayin'. She'll be all right when she gets time to think it over quietly, so lave her alone for a bit."

The matter was accordingly left severely alone for some days. Mrs. Hegarty carefully avoided even the remotest reference to Mullan or matrimony, yet Rosie saw the subject in her face continually. When the interval of grace expired the good woman made up for lost opportunity. She was very fond of Rosie, and thought this proposal the very best thing that could have befallen that ungrateful young person. Rosie seemed obstinate and foolish about it, and her stepmother was resolute that she should be brought to see her folly. The virtues of John Mullan, and the advantages of the proposed match were loudly impressed upon her at all hours of the day. The poor girl grew at last to loathe the very name of her unwelcome suitor, though he was really one of the best and kindest of men.

Rosie got no respite whatever during that unlucky time. Her stepmother's voice was never still. Even out in the lonely fields at evening time its shrill tones seemed to intrude upon the silence. The girl's nerves were unstrung, and her life made wretched by the ceaseless annoyance, but she never wavered in her decision. If Barney was not for her she would marry no man.

Pat Hegarty remained neutral, with the exception of an occasional appeal thrown in on behalf of his daughter.

"Now, Mary wumman, have patience," he pleaded one evening. "Sure the wee girl's fairly moidhered wi' all yer talkin'. Luv at her there, as white as a snowdrop, an' ye'd think a breath 'ud blow her away. Wumman dear, have ye no heart in ye?"

Mary's eyes followed his outside, where Rosie was leaning on the gate, looking out across the fields to the dying sun. Mary looked, and the heart in her pled with affection and sorrow.

"Aye, luk at her there!" she said, with bitter impatience, "the poor, wee, white thing! What is she to fend for herself in this weary world? God help her when she's left her lone! I'd like to take her this minute an' marry her to Mullan myself—the poor, dacent man that 'ud make her as happy as the day is long."

As Rosie got whiter and thinner, her stepmother grew more impatient with her. One day the girl, stung beyond endurance, declared that she would go out as a servant. This exasperated Mrs. Hegarty to the point of mockery.

"Aye, a fine servant you would make—I

noody can be more.
"Musha, who would luk at you for a servant?" was the reply. "Och, a fine servant ye would make, wi' yer white hands an' yer wee white face, an' the dainty ways o' ye! Where's the fool that 'ud give ye wages?"
"The fool's to find," Rosie rejoined, flushing indignantly. "I am going in to the Rabble on Wednesday. I'll maybe have some peace then."

By Wednesday Rosie had packed her box, and quietly asked her father to drive her to Derry. There followed a stormy hour, but Rosie carried her point.

When they got to Derry the streets were filled with a good-humoured noisy crowd of girls and boys, and their would-be employers. Rosie shrank from joining the throng, and only the remembrance of her stepmother's mocking words gave her courage to persevere.

She stood with her father for what seemed a long time, but no one addressed her with a view to employment. This was not strange, for she looked very unlike a farm-house servant. She seemed rather a dainty lady, watching the crowd from curiosity, not from a desire to find work. Her father disapproved of the proceeding altogether, though he had given in to her whim, and so he made no attempt to help forward her cause.

Rosie's heart filled with disappointment and humiliation. She felt very tired, too, and could hardly keep the tears from her eyes. She had bent her head to hide a troublesome drop, when a young man, passing through the crowd, stopped short at sight of her.

"Rosie! Rosie darlin'!" came a low whisper in her ear.

The voice thrilled through Rosie, and set her heart throbbing wildly. She looked up in his face with her wet blue eyes, and met the love-light shining down on her, the same dear love-light she had known of old.

"Barney!" she murmured faintly, all their estrangement forgotten.

"What ailed ye at me this long time, Rosie agra?" Barney whispered, hurriedly. "Sure a boy heart's clean broke since ye wrote me that letter. An' God be praised, ye didn't mane it at all, did ye not? Come away out o' here, ashore, till we talk it over!"

The match between Rosie and Barney was not quite so grand as the one she had favoured at first, but, all the same, Mrs. Hegarty gave it her heartiest blessing. The way Rosie improved, in health and appearance, after that Rabble, was "nothin' less nor a miracle," her stepmother said.

* The half-yearly hiring fair is known as the Rabble.