

SIR HALL CAINE

THE DEEMSTER

Hall Caine
The Deemster

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The Deemster

CHAPTER I THE DEATH OF OLD EWAN

Thorkell Mylrea had waited long for a dead man's shoes, but he was wearing them at length. He was forty years of age; his black hair was thin on the crown and streaked with gray about the temples; the crow's-feet were thick under his small eyes, and the backs of his lean hands were coated with a reddish down. But he had life in every vein, and restless energy in every limb.

His father, Ewan Mylrea, had lived long, and mourned much, and died in sorrow. The good man had been a patriarch among his people, and never a serener saint had trod the ways of men. He was already an old man when his wife died. Over her open grave he tried to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed – " But his voice faltered and broke. Though he lived ten years longer, he held up his head no more. Little by little he relinquished all active interest in material affairs. The world had lost its light for him, and he was traveling in the dusk.

On his sons, Thorkell, the elder, Gilcrist, the younger, with nearly five years between them, the conduct of his estate devolved. Never were brothers more unlike. Gilcrist, resembling his father, was of a simple and tranquil soul; Thorkell's nature was fiery, impetuous, and crafty. The end was the inevitable one; the heel of Thorkell was too soon on the neck of Gilcrist.

Gilcrist's placid spirit overcame its first vexation, and he seemed content to let his interests slip from his hands. Before he was out Thorkell Mylrea was in effect the master of Ballamona; his younger brother was nightly immersed in astronomy and the Fathers, and the old man was sitting daily, in his slippers, in the high-backed armchair by the ingle, over which these words were cut in the black oak: "God's Providence is mine inheritance."

They were strange effects that followed. People said they had never understood the extraordinary fortunes of Ballamona. Again and again the rents were raised throughout the estate, until the farmers cried in the grip of their poverty that they would neither go nor starve. Then the wagons of Thorkell Mylrea, followed close at their tail-boards by the carts of the clergy, drove into the cornfields when the corn was cut, and picked up the stooks and bore them away amid the deep curses of the bare-armed reapers, who looked on in their impotent rage.

Nevertheless, Thorkell Mylrea said, far and wide, without any show of reserve, and with every accent of sincerity, that never before had his father's affairs worn so grave a look. He told Ewan as much time after time, and then the troubled old face looked puzzled. The end of many earnest consultations between father and son, as the one sat by the open hearth and the other leaned against the lettered ingle, was a speedy recourse to certain moneys that lay at an English bank, as well as the old man's signature to documents of high moment.

Old Ewan's spirits sank yet lower year by year, but he lived on peacefully enough. As time went by, he talked less, and his humid eyes seemed to look within in degree as they grew dim to things without. But the day came at length when the old man died in his chair, before the slumberous peat fire on the hearth, quietly, silently, without a movement, his graspless fingers fumbling a worm-eaten hour-glass, his long waves of thin white hair falling over his drooping shoulders, and his upturned eyes fixed in a strong stare on the text carved on the rannel-tree shelf, "God's Providence is mine inheritance."

That night Thorkell sat alone at the same ingle, in the same chair, glancing at many parchments, and dropping them one by one into the fire. Long afterward, when idle tongues were set to wag,

it was said that the elder son of Ewan Mylrea had found a means whereby to sap away his father's personality. Then it was remembered that through all his strange misfortunes Thorkell had borne an equal countenance.

They buried the old man under the elder-tree by the wall of the churchyard that stands over against the sea. It seemed as if half of the inhabitants of the island came to his funeral, and six sets of bearers claimed their turn to carry him to the grave. The day was a gloomy day of winter; there was not a bird or a breath in the heavy air; the sky was low and empty; the long dead sea was very gray and cold; and over the unplowed land the withered stalks of the last crop lay dank on the mold. When the company returned to Ballamona they sat down to eat and drink and make merry, for "excessive sorrow is exceeding dry." No one asked for the will; there was no will because there was no personality, and the lands were by law the inheritance of the eldest son. Thorkell was at the head of his table, and he smiled a little, and sometimes reached over the board to touch with his glass the glass that was held out toward him. Gilcrist had stood with these mourners under the empty sky, and his heart was as bare and desolate, but he could endure their company no longer. In an agony of grief and remorse, and rage as well, he got up from his untouched food and walked away to his own room. It was a little, quiet nest of a room that looked out by one small window over the marshy Curraghs that lay between the house and the sea. There Gilcrist sat alone that day in a sort of dull stupor.

The daylight had gone, and the revolving lamps on the headland of Ayre were twinkling red after black over the blank waters, when the door opened and Thorkell entered. Gilcrist stirred the fire, and it broke into a bright blaze. Thorkell's face wore a curious expression.

"I have been thinking a good deal about you, Gilcrist; especially during the last few days. In fact, I have been troubled about you, to say the truth," said Thorkell, and then he paused. "Affairs are in a bad way at Ballamona – very."

Gilcrist made no response whatever, but clasped his hands about his knee and looked steadily into the fire.

"We are neither of us young men now, but if you should think of – of – anything, I should consider it wrong to stand – to put myself in your way – to keep you here, that is – to your disadvantage, you know."

Thorkell was standing with his back to the fire, and his fingers interlaced behind him.

Gilcrist rose to his feet. "Very well," he said, with a strained quietness, and then turned toward the window and looked out at the dark sea. Only the sea's voice from the shore beyond the churchyard broke the silence in that little room.

Thorkell stood a moment, leaning on the mantel-shelf, and the flickering lights of the fire seemed to make sinister smiles on his face. Then he went out without a word.

Next morning, at daybreak, Gilcrist Mylrea was riding toward Derby Haven with a pack in green cloth across his saddle-bow. He took passage by the "King Orry," an old sea-tub plying once a week to Liverpool. From Liverpool he went on to Cambridge to offer himself as a sizar at the University.

It had never occurred to any one that Thorkell Mylrea would marry. But his father was scarcely cold in his grave, the old sea-tub that took his brother across the Channel had hardly grounded at Liverpool, when Thorkell Mylrea offered his heart and wrinkled hand, and the five hundred acres of Ballamona, to a lady twenty years of age, who lived at a distance of some six miles from his estate. It would be more precise to say that the liberal tender was made to the lady's father, for her own will was little more than a cypher in the bargaining. She was a girl of sweet spirit, very tender and submissive, and much under the spell of religious feeling. Her mother had died during her infancy, and she had been brought up in a household that was without other children, in a gaunt rectory that never echoed with children's voices. Her father was Archdeacon of the island, Archdeacon Teare; her own name was Joance.

If half the inhabitants of the island turned out at old Ewan's funeral, the entire population of four parishes made a holiday of his son's wedding. The one followed hard upon the other, and thrift

was not absent from either. Thorkell was married in the early spring at the Archdeacon's church, at Andreas.

It would be rash to say that the presence of the great company at the wedding was intended as a tribute to the many virtues of Thorkell Mylrea. Indeed, it was as well that the elderly bridegroom could not overhear the conversation with which some of the homely folk beguiled the way.

"Aw, the murther of it," said one buirdly Manxman, "five-and-forty if he's a day, and a wizened old polecat anyway."

"You'd really think the gel's got no feelin's. Aw, shockin', shockin', extraordinary!"

"And a rael good gel too, they're sayin'. Amazin'! Amazin'!"

The marriage of Thorkell was a curious ceremony. First there walked abreast the fiddler and the piper, playing vigorously the "Black and Gray"; then came the bridegroom's men carrying osiers, as emblems of their superiority over the bridesmaids, who followed them. Three times the company passed round the church before entering it, and then they trooped up toward the communion-rail.

Thorkell went through the ceremony with the air of a whipped terrier. On the outside he was gay in frills and cuffs, and his thin hair was brushed crosswise over the bald patch on his crown. He wore buckled shoes and blue laces to his breeches. But his brave exterior lent him small support as he took the ungloved hand of his girlish bride. He gave his responses in a voice that first faltered, and then sent out a quick, harsh, loud pipe. No such gaunt and grim shadow of a joyful bridegroom ever before knelt beside a beautiful bride, and while the Archdeacon married the spectre of a happy man to his own submissive daughter, the whispered comments of the throng that filled nave and aisles and gallery sometimes reached his own ears.

"You wouldn't think it, now, that the craythur's sold his own gel, and him preaching there about the covenant and Isaac and Rebecca, and all that!"

"Hush, man, it's Laban and Jacob he's meaning."

When the ceremony had come to an end, and the bridegroom's eyes were no longer fixed in a stony stare on the words of the Commandments printed in black and white under the chancel window, the scene underwent a swift change. In one minute Thorkell was like another man. All his abject bearing fell away. When the party was clear of the churchyard four of the groom's men started for the Rectory at a race, and the first to reach it won a flask of brandy, with which he returned at high speed to the wedding company. Then Thorkell, as the custom was, bade his friends to form a circle where they stood in the road, while he drank of the brandy and handed the flask to his wife.

"Custom must be indulged with custom," said he, "or custom will weep."

After that the company moved on until they reached the door of the Archdeacon's house, where the bride cake was broken over the bride's hand, and then thrown to be scrambled for by the noisy throng that blew neat's horns and fired guns and sang ditties by the way.

Thorkell, with the chivalrous bearing of an old courtier, delivered up his wife to the flock of ladies who were ready to pounce upon her at the door of the Rectory. Then he mingled freely with the people, and chattered and bantered, and made quips and quibbles. Finally, he invited all and sundry to partake freely of the oaten cake and ale that he had himself brought from Ballamona in his car for the refreshment of his own tenants there present. The fare was Lenten fare for a wedding day, and some of the straggle-headed troop grumbled, and some sniffled, and some scratched their heads, and some laughed outright. The beer and bread were left almost untouched.

Thorkell was blind to the discontent of his guests, but the Archdeacon perceived it, and forthwith called such of the tumultuous assemblage as came from a distance into his barns. There the creels were turned bottom up, and four close-jointed gates lifted off their hinges were laid on the top for tables. Then from pans and boilers that simmered in the kitchen a great feast was spread. First came the broth, well loaded with barley and cabbage, and not destitute of the flavor of numerous sheep's heads. This was served in wooden piggins, shells being used as spoons. Then suet pudding, as round as a well-fed salmon, and as long as a 30 lb. cod. Last of all a fat hog, roasted whole, and cut

with a cleaver, but further dissected only by teeth and fingers, for the unfastidious Manxman cared nothing for knife and fork.

After that there were liquor and lusty song. And all the time there could be heard, over the boisterous harmony of the feasters within the barn, the yet noisier racket of the people without.

By this time, whatever sentiment of doubtful charity had been harbored in the icy breast of the Manxman had been thawed away under the charitable effects of good cheer, and Thorkell Mylrea and Archdeacon Teare began to appear in truly Christian character.

"It's none so ould he is yet, at all at all."

"Ould? He hasn't the hayseed out of his hair, boy."

"And a shocking powerful head-piece at him for all."

There were rough jokes and dubious toasts, and Thorkell enjoyed them all. There was dancing, too, and fiddling, and the pipes at intervals, and all went merry until midnight, when the unharmonious harmonies of fiddle and pipes and unsteady song went off over the Curraghs in various directions.

Next morning Thorkell took his wife home to Ballamona. They drove in the open springless car in which he had brought down the oaten cake and ale. Thorkell had seen that the remains of these good viands were thriftily gathered up. He took them back home with him, carefully packed under the board on which his young wife sat.

CHAPTER II

A MAN CHILD IS BORN

Three years passed and Thorkell's fortunes grew apace. He toiled early and late. Time had no odd days or holiday in his calendar. Every day was working day except Sunday, and then Thorkell, like a devout Christian, went to church. Thorkell believed that he was a devoutly religious man, but rumor whispered that he was better able to make his words fly up than to prevent his thoughts from remaining below.

His wife did not seem to be a happy woman. During the three years of her married life she had not borne her husband children. It began to dawn upon her that Thorkell's sole desire in marriage had been a child, a son, to whom he could leave what no man can carry away.

One Sunday morning, as Thorkell and his wife were on their way to church, a young woman of about twenty passed them, and as she went by she curtsied low to the lady. The girl had a comely, nut-brown face, with dark wavy clusters of hair tumbling over her forehead from beneath a white sun-bonnet, of which the poke had been dexterously rolled back. It was summer, and her light blue bodice was open and showed a white under-bodice and a full neck. Her sleeves were rolled up over the elbows, and her dimpled arms were bare and brown. There was a look of coquetry in her hazel eyes as they shot up their dark lustre under her long lashes, and then dropped as quickly to her feet. She wore buckle shoes with the open clock tops.

Thorkell's quick eyes glanced over her, and when the girl curtsied to his wife he fell back the few paces that he was in front of her.

"Who is she?" he asked.

Thorkell's wife replied that the girl was a net-maker from near Peeltown.

"What's her name?"

Thorkell's wife answered that the girl's name was Mally Kerruish.

"Who are her people? Has she any?"

Thorkell's wife explained that the girl had a mother only, who was poor and worked in the fields, and had come to Ballamona for help during the last hard winter.

"Humph! Doesn't look as if the daughter wanted for much. How does the girl come by her fine feathers if her mother lives on charity?"

Thorkell's wizened face was twisted into grotesque lines. His wife's face saddened, and her voice dropped as she hinted in faltering accents that "scandal did say – say – "

"Well, woman, what does scandal say?" asked Thorkell; and his voice had a curious lilt, and his mouth wore a strange smile.

"It says – I'm afraid, Thorkell, the poor girl is no better than she ought to be."

Thorkell snorted, and then laughed in his throat like a frisky gelding.

"I thought she looked like a lively young puffin," he said, and then trotted on in front, his head rolling between his shoulders, and his eyes down. After going a few yards further he slackened speed again.

"Lives near Peeltown, you say – a net-maker – Mally – is it Mally Kerruish?"

Thorkell's wife answered with a nod of the head, and then her husband faced about, and troubled her with no further conversation until he drew up at the church door, and said, "Quick, woman, quick, and mind you shut the pew door after you."

But "God remembered Rachel and hearkened to her," and then, for the first time, the wife of Thorkell Mylrea began to show a cheerful countenance. Thorkell's own elevation of spirits was yet more noticeable. He had heretofore showed no discontent with the old homestead that had housed his people for six generations, but he now began to build another and much larger house on the rising

ground at the foot of Slieu Dhoo. His habits underwent some swift and various changes. He gave away no gray blankets that winter, the itinerant poor who were "on the houses" often went empty from his door, and – most appalling change of all – he promptly stopped his tithe. When the parson's cart drove up to Ballamona, Thorkell turned the horse's head, and gave the flank a sharp cut with his whip. The parson came in white with wrath.

"Let every pig dig for herself," said Thorkell. "I'll daub grease on the rump of your fat pig no more."

Thorkell's new homestead rose rapidly, and when the walls were ready for the roof the masons and carpenters went up to Ballamona for the customary feast of cowree and jough and binjeau.

"What! Is it true, then, as the saying is," Thorkell exclaimed at the sight of them, "that when the sport is the merriest it is time to give up?"

They ate no cowree at Ballamona that night and they drank no jough.

"We've been going to the goat's house for wool," grunted one of them as they trudged home.

"Aw, well, man, and what can you get of the cat but his skin?" growled another.

Next day they put on the first timbers of the roof, and the following night a great storm swept over the island, and the roof-timbers were torn away, not a spar or purlin being left in its place. Thorkell fumed at the storm and swore at the men, and when the wind subsided he had the work done afresh. The old homestead of Ballamona was thatched, but the new one must be slated, and slates were quarried at and carted to Slieu Dhoo, and run on to the new roof. A dead calm had prevailed during these operations, but it was the calm that lies in the heart of the storm, and the night after they were completed the other edge of the cyclone passed over the island, tearing up the trees by their roots, and shaking the old Ballamona to its foundations. Thorkell Mylrea slept not a wink, but tramped up and down his bedroom the long night through; and next morning, at daybreak, he drew the blind of his window, and peered through the haze of the dawn to where his new house stood on the breast of Slieu Dhoo. He could just descry its blue walls – it was roofless.

The people began to mutter beneath their breath.

"Aw, man, it's a judgment," said one.

"He has been middlin' hard on the widda and fatherless, and it's like enough that there's Them aloft as knows it."

"What's that they're saying?" said one old crone, "what comes with the wind goes with the water."

"Och, I knew his father – him and me were same as brothers – and a good ould man for all."

"Well, and many a good cow has a bad calf," said the old woman.

Thorkell went about like a cloud of thunder, and when he heard that the accidents to his new homestead were ascribed to supernatural agencies he flashed like forked lightning.

"Where there are geese there's dirt," he said, "and where there are women there's talking. Am I to be frightened if an old woman sneezes?"

But before Thorkell set to work again he paid his tithe. He paid it with a rick of discolored oats that had been cut in the wet and threshed before it was dry. Thorkell had often wondered whether his cows would eat it. The next Sunday morning the parson paused before his sermon to complain that certain of his parishioners, whom he would not name at present, appeared to think that what was too bad for the pigs was good enough for the priests. Let the Church of God have no more of their pigswill. Thorkell in his pew chuckled audibly, and muttered something about paying for a dead horse.

It was spring when the second roof was blown down, and the new house stood roofless until early summer. Then Thorkell sent four lean pigs across to the Rectory, and got his carpenters together and set them to work. The roofing proceeded without interruption.

The primrose was not yet gone, the swallow had not yet come, and the young grass under the feet of the oxen was still small and sweet, when Thorkell's wife took to her bed. Then all Ballamona was astir. Hommy-beg, the deaf gardener of Ballamona, was sent in the hot haste of his best two miles

an hour to the village, commonly known as the Street, to summon the midwife. This good woman was called Kerry Quayle; she was a spinster of forty, and she was all but blind.

"I'm thinking the woman-body is after going on the straw," said Hommy-beg, when he reached the Street, and this was the sum of the message that he delivered.

"Then we'd better be off, as the saying is," remarked Kerry, who never accepted responsibility for any syllable she ever uttered.

When they got to Ballamona, Thorkell Mylrea hustled Hommy-beg into the square springless car, and told him to drive to Andreas, and fetch the Archdeacon without an hour's delay. Hommy-beg set off at fine paces that carried him to the Archdeaconry a matter of four miles an hour.

Thorkell followed Kerry Quayle to the room above. When they stepped into the bedroom Thorkell drew the midwife aside to a table on which a large candle stood in a tall brass candlestick, with gruesome gargoyles carved on the base and upper flange. From this table he picked up a small Testament bound in shiny leather, with silver clasps.

"I'm as great a man as any in the island," said Thorkell, in his shrill whisper, "for laughing at the simpletons that talk about witches and boaganes and the like of that."

"So you are, as the saying is," said Kerry.

"I'd have the law on the lot of them, if I had my way," said Thorkell, still holding the book.

"Aw, and shockin' powerful luck it would be, as the old body said, if all the witches and boaganes in the island could be run into the sea," said Kerry.

"Pshaw! I'm talking of the simpletons that believe in them," said Thorkell, snappishly. "I'd clap them all in Castle Rushen."

"Aw, yes, and clean law and clean justice, too, as the Irishman said."

"So don't think I want the midwife to take her oath in my house," said Thorkell.

"Och, no, of course not. You wouldn't bemean yourself, as they say."

"But, then, you know what the saying is, Kerry. 'Custom must be indulged with custom, or custom will weep,'" and, saying this, Thorkell's voice took a most insinuating tone.

"Aw, now, and I'm as good as here and there one at standing up for custom, as the saying is," said the midwife.

The end of it all was that Kerry Quayle took there and then a solemn oath not to use sorcery or incantation of any kind in the time of travail, not to change the infant at the hour of its birth, not to leave it in the room for a week afterward without spreading the tongs over its crib, and much else of the like solemn purport.

The dusk deepened, and the Archdeacon had not yet arrived. Night came on and the room was dark, but Thorkell would not allow a lamp to be brought in, or a fire to be lighted. Some time later, say six hours after Hommy-beg had set out on his six-mile journey, a lumbrous, jolting sound of heavy wheels came from the road below the Curragh, and soon afterward the Archdeacon entered the room.

"So dark," he said, on stumbling across the threshold.

"Ah, Archdeacon," said Thorkell, with the unaccustomed greeting of an outstretched hand, "the Church shall bring light to the chamber here," and Thorkell handed the tinder-box to the Archdeacon and led him to the side of the table on which the candle stood.

In an instant the Archdeacon, laughing a little, or protesting meekly against his clerical honors, was striking the flint, when Thorkell laid a hand on his arm.

"Wait one moment; of course you know how I despise superstition?"

"Ah! of course, of course," said the Archdeacon.

"But, then, you know the old saying, Archdeacon, 'Custom must be indulged with custom,' you know it?" And Thorkell's face shut up like a nut-cracker.

"So I must bless the candle. Eh, is that it?" said the Archdeacon, with a low gurgle; and the next moment he was gabbling in a quick undertone through certain words that seemed to be all one word: "OLord-Jesus-Christ-bless-Thou-this-creature-of-a-waxen-taper-that-on- what-place-soever-

it-be-lighted-or-set-the-devil-may-flee-from-that- habitation-and-no-more-disquiet-them-that-serve – Thee!"

After the penultimate word there was a short pause, and at the last word there was the sharp crack of the flint, and in an instant the candle was lighted.

Then the Archdeacon turned toward the bed and exchanged some words with his daughter. The bed was a mahogany four-post one, with legs like rocks, a hood like a pulpit sounding-board, and tapestry curtains like a muddy avalanche. The Archdeacon – he was a small man, with a face like a russet apple – leaned against one of the bed-posts, and said, in a tone of banter:

"Why, Thorkell, and if you're for indulging custom, how comes it that you have not hung up your hat?"

"My hat – my hat!" said Thorkell, in perplexity.

"Aw, now," said the midwife, "the master's as great a man as any in the island at laughing at the men craythurs that hang up their hats over the straw to fright the boaganes, as the old woman said."

Thorkell's laughter instantly burst forth to justify the midwife's statement.

"Ha, ha! Hang up my hat! Well now, well now! Drives away the black spirits from the birth-bed – isn't that what the dunces say? It's twenty years since I saw the like of it done, and I'd forgotten the old custom. Must look funny, very, the good man's hat perched up on the bed-post? What d'ye say, Archdeacon, shall we have it up? Just for the laugh, you know, ha, ha!"

In another moment Thorkell was gone from the room, and his titter could be heard from the stairs; it ebbed away and presently flowed back again, and Thorkell was once more by the bedside, laughing immoderately, and perching his angular soft hat on the topmost knob of one of the posts at the foot of the bed.

Then Thorkell and the Archdeacon went down to the little room that had once been Gilcrist's room, looking over the Curragh to the sea.

Before daybreak next morning a man child was born to Thorkell Mylrea, and an heir to the five hundred acres of Ballamona.

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTENING OF YOUNG EWAN

In the dead waste of that night the old wall of Ballamona echoed to the noise of hurrying feet. Thorkell himself ran like a squirrel, hither and thither, breaking out now and again into shrill peals of hysterical laughter; while the women took the kettle to the room above, and employed themselves there in sundry mysterious ordinances on which no male busybody might intrude. Thorkell dived down into the kitchen, and rooted about in the meal casks for the oaten cake, and into the larder for the cheese, and into the cupboard for the bread-basket known as the "peck."

Hommy-beg, who had not been permitted to go home that night, had coiled himself in the settle drawn up before the kitchen fire, and was now snoring lustily. Thorkell roused him, and set him to break the oatcake and cheese into small pieces into the peck, and, when this was done, to scatter it broadcast on the staircase and landing, and on the garden-path immediately in front of the house; while he himself carried a similar peck, piled up like a pyramid with similar pieces of oatcake and cheese, to the room whence there issued at intervals a thin, small voice, that was the sweetest music that had ever yet fallen on Thorkell's ear.

What high commotion did the next day witness! For the first time since that lurid day when old Ewan Mylrea was laid under the elder-tree in the churchyard by the sea, Ballamona kept open house. The itinerant poor, who made the circuit of the houses, came again, and lifted the latch without knocking, and sat at the fire without being asked, and ate of the oatcake and the cheese. And upstairs, where a meek white face looked out with an unfamiliar smile from behind sheets that were hardly more white, the robustious statespeople from twenty miles around sat down in their odorous atmosphere of rude health and high spirits, and noise and laughter, to drink their glass of new brewed jough, and to spread on their oaten bread a thick crust of the rum-butter that stood in the great blue china bowl on the little table near the bed-head. And Thorkell – how nimbly he hopped about, and encouraged his visitors to drink, and rallied them if they ceased to eat!

"Come, man, come," he said a score of times, "shameful leaving is worse than shameful eating – eat, drink!"

And they ate, and they drank, and they laughed, and they sang, till the bedroom reeked with the fumes of a pot-house, and the confusion of tongues therein was worse than at the foot of Babel.

Throughout three long jovial weeks the visitors came and went, and every day the "blithe bread" was piled in the peck for the poor of the earth, and scattered on the paths for the good spirits of the air. And when people jested upon this, and said that not since the old days of their grandfathers had the boaganes and the fairies been so civilly treated, Thorkell laughed noisily, and said what great fun it was that they should think he was superstitious, and that custom must be indulged with custom, or custom would weep!

Then came the christening, and to this ceremony the whole country round was invited. Thorkell was now a man of consequence, and the neighbors high and low trooped in with presents for the young Christian.

Kerry, the midwife, who was nurse as well, carried the child to church, and the tiny red burden lay cooing softly at her breast in a very hillock of white swaddlings. Thorkell walked behind, his little eyes twinkling under his bushy eyebrows; and on his arm his wife leaned heavily after every feeble step, her white waxwork face bright with the smile of first motherhood.

The Archdeacon met the company at the west porch and they gathered for the baptism about the font in the aisle: half-blind Kerry with the infant, Thorkell and his young wife, the two godfathers, the Vicar General and the High Bailiff of Peeltown, and the godmother, the High Bailiff's wife, and behind this circle a mixed throng of many sorts. After the gospel and the prayers, the Archdeacon,

in his white surplice, took the infant into his hands and called on the godparents to name the child, and they answered Ewan. Then, as the drops fell over the wee blinking eyes, and all voices were hushed in silence and awe, there came to the open porch and looked into the dusky church a little fleecy lamb, all soft and white and beautiful. It lifted its innocent and dazed face where it stood in the morning sunshine, on the grass of the graves, and bleated, and bleated, as if it had strayed from its mother and was lost.

The Archdeacon paused with his drooping finger half raised over the other innocent face at his breast, Thorkell's features twitched, and the tears ran down the white cheeks of his wife.

In an instant the baby-lamb had hobbled away, and before the Archdeacon had restored the child to the arms of blind Kerry or mumbled the last of the prayers, there came the hum of many voices from the distance. The noise came rapidly nearer, and as it approached it broke into a great tumult of men's deep shouts and women's shrill cries.

The iron hasp of the lych-gate to the churchyard was heard to chink, and at the same moment there was the sound of hurrying footsteps on the paved way. The company that had gathered about the font broke up abruptly, and made for the porch with looks of inquiry and amazement. There, at the head of a mixed throng of the riff-raff of the parish, bareheaded men, women with bold faces, and children with naked feet, a man held a young woman by the arm and pulled her toward the church. He was a stalwart fellow, stern of feature, iron gray, and he gripped the girl's bare brown arm like a vise.

"Make way there! Come, mistress, and no struggling," he shouted, and he tugged the girl after him, and then pushed her before him.

She was young; twenty at most. Her comely face was drawn hard with lines of pain; her hazel eyes flashed with wrath; and where her white sun-bonnet had fallen back from her head on to her shoulders, the knots of her dark hair, dragged and tangled in the scuffle, tumbled in masses over her neck and cheeks.

It was Mally Kerruish, and the man who held her and forced her along was the parish sumner, the church constable.

"Make way, I tell you!" shouted the sumner to the throng that crowded upon him, and into the porch, and through the company that had come for the christening. When the Archdeacon stepped down from the side of the font, the sumner with his prisoner drew up on the instant and the noisy crew stood and was silent.

"I have brought her for her oath, your reverence," said the sumner, dropping his voice and his head together.

"Who accuses her?" the Archdeacon asked.

"Her old mother," said the sumner; "here she is."

From the middle of the throng behind him the sumner drew out an elderly woman with a hard and wizened face. Her head was bare, her eyes were quick and restless, her lips firm and long, her chin was broad and heavy. The woman elbowed her way forward; but when she was brought face to face with the Archdeacon, and he asked her if she charged her daughter, she looked around before answering, and seeing her girl Mally standing there with her white face, under the fire of fifty pairs of eyes, all her resolution seemed to leave her.

"It isn't natheral, I know," she said, "a mother speaking up agen her child," and with that her hard mouth softened, her quick eyes reddened and filled, and her hands went up to her face. "But nature goes down with a flood when you're looking to have another belly to fill, and not a shilling at you this fortnight."

The girl stood without a word, and not one streak of color came to her white cheeks as her mother spoke.

"She denied it, and denied it, and said no, and no; but leave it to a mother to know what way her girl's going."

There was a low murmur among the people at the back and some whispering. The girl's keen ear caught it, and she turned her head over her shoulder with a defiant glance.

"Who is the man?" said the Archdeacon, recalling her with a touch of his finger on her arm. She did not answer at first, and he repeated the question.

"Who is the guilty man?" he said, in a voice more stern.

"It's not true. Let me go," said the girl, in a quick undertone.

"Who is the partner of your sin?"

"It's not true, I say. Let me go, will you?" and the girl struggled feebly in the sumner's grip.

"Bring her to the altar," said the Archdeacon. He faced about and walked toward the chancel, and entered it. The company followed him and drew up outside the communion rail. He took a Testament from the reading-desk and stepped toward the girl. There was a dead hush.

"The Church provides a remedy for slander," he said, in a cold, clear tone. "If you are not guilty, swear that you are innocent, that he who tampers with your good name may beware." With that the Archdeacon held the Testament toward the girl. She made no show of taking it. He thrust it into her hand. At the touch of the book she gave a faint cry and stepped a pace backward, the Testament falling open on to the penitent-form beneath.

Then the murmur of the bystanders rose again. The girl heard it once more, and dropped on her knees and covered her face, and cried, in a tremulous voice that echoed over the church, "Let me go, let me go."

The company that came for the christening had walked up the aisle. Blinking Kerry stood apart, hushing the infant in her arms; it made a fretful whimper. Thorkell stood behind, pawing the paved path with a restless foot. His wife had made her way to the girl's side, her eyes overflowing with compassion.

"Take her to prison at the Peel," said the Archdeacon, "and keep her there until she confesses the name of her paramour." At that, Thorkell's wife dropped to her knees beside the kneeling girl, and putting one arm about her neck, raised the other against the sumner, and cried, "No, no, no; she will confess."

There was a pause and a long hush. Mally let her hands fall from her face, and turned her eyes full on the eyes of the young mother at her side. In dead silence the two rose to their feet together.

"Confess his name; whoever he is, he does not deserve that you should suffer for him as well," said the wife of Thorkell Mylrea, and as she spoke she touched the girl's white forehead with her pale lips.

"Do *you* ask that?" said Mally, with a strange quietness.

For one swift instant the eyes of these women seemed to see into each other's heart. The face of Thorkell's wife became very pale; she grew faint, and clutched the communion rail as she staggered back.

At the next instant Mally Kerruish was being hurried by the sumner down the aisle; the noisy concourse that had come with them went away with them, and in a moment more the old church was empty, save for the company that had gathered about the font.

There was a great feast at Ballamona that day. The new house was finished, and the young Christian, Ewan Mylrea, of Ballamona, was the first to enter it; for was it not to be his house, and his children's and his children's children's?

Thorkell's wife did not join the revels, but in her new home she went back to her bed. The fatigue and excitement of the day had been too much for her. Thorkell himself sat in his place, and laughed noisily and drank much. Toward sunset the sumner came to say that the girl who had been taken to prison at the Peel had confessed, and was now at large. The Archdeacon got up and went out of the room. Thorkell called lustily on his guests to drink again, and one stupefied old crony clambered to his feet and demanded silence for a toast.

"To the father of the girl's by-blow," he shouted, when the glasses were charged; and then the company laughed till the roof rang, and above all was the shrill laugh of Thorkell Mylrea. Presently the door opened again, and the Archdeacon, with a long, grave face, stood on the threshold and beckoned to Thorkell at the head of his table. Thorkell went out with him, and when they returned together a little later, and the master of Ballamona resumed his seat, he laughed yet more noisily than before, and drank yet more liquor.

On the outside of Ballamona that night an old woman, hooded and caped, knocked at the door. The loud laughter and the ranting songs from within came out to her where she stood in the darkness, under the silent stars. When the door was opened by Hommy-beg the woman asked for Mylrea Ballamona. Hommy-beg repulsed her, and would have shut the door in her face. She called again, and again, and yet again, and at last, by reason of her importunity, Hommy-beg went in and told Thorkell, who got up and followed him out. The Archdeacon heard the message, and left the room at the same moment.

Outside, on the gravel path, the old woman stood with the light of the lamp that burned in the hall on her wizened face. It was Mrs. Kerruish, the mother of Mally.

"It's fine times you're having of it, Master Mylrea," she said, "and you, too, your reverence; but what about me and my poor girl?"

"It was yourself that did it, woman," said Thorkell; and he tried to laugh, but under the stars his laugh fell short.

"Me, you say? Me, was it for all? May the good God judge between us, Master Mylrea. D'ye know what it is that happened? My poor girl's gone."

"Gone!"

"Eh, gone – gone off – gone to hide her shameful face; God help her."

"Better luck," said Thorkell, and a short gurgle rattled in his dry throat.

"Luck, you call it? Luck! Take care, Ballamona."

The Archdeacon interposed. "Come, no threats, my good woman," he said, and waved his hand in protestation. "The Church has done you justice in this matter."

"Threats, your reverence? Justice? Is it justice to punish the woman and let the man go free? What! the woman to stand penance six Sabbaths by the church-door of six parishes, and the man to pay his dirty money, six pounds to you and three to me, and then no mortal to name his name!"

The old woman rummaged in the pocket at her side and pulled out a few coins. "Here, take them back; I'm no Judas to buy my own girl. Here, I say, take them!"

Thorkell had thrust his hands in his pockets, and was making a great show of laughing boisterously.

The old woman stood silent for a moment, and her pale face turned livid. Then by a sudden impulse she lifted her eyes and her two trembling arms. "God in Heaven," she said, in a hoarse whisper, "let Thy wrath rest on this man's head; make this house that he has built for himself and for his children a curse to him and them and theirs; bring it to pass that no birth come to it but death come with it, and so on and on until Thou hast done justice between him and me."

Thorkell's laughter stopped suddenly. As the woman spoke his face quivered, and his knees shook perceptibly under him. Then he took her by the arms and clutched her convulsively. "Woman, woman, what are you saying?" he cried, in his shrill treble. She disengaged herself and went away into the night.

For a moment Thorkell tramped the hall with nervous footsteps. The Archdeacon stood speechless. Then the sound of laughter and of song came from the room they had left, and Thorkell flung in on the merry-makers.

"Go home, go home, every man of you! Away with you!" he shouted, hysterically, and then dropped like a log into a chair.

One by one, with many wise shakes of many sapient heads, the tipsy revelers broke up and went off, leaving the master of Ballamona alone in that chamber, dense with dead smoke, and noisome with the fumes of liquor.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEEMSTER OF MAN

Twenty times that night Thorkell devised expedients to break the web of fate. At first his thoughts were of revengeful defiance. By fair means or foul the woman Kerruish should suffer. She should be turned out of house and home. She should tramp the roads as a mendicant. He would put his foot on her neck. Then they would see what her uncanny threats had come to.

He tried this unction for his affrighted spirit, and put it aside as useless. No, no; he would conciliate the woman. He would settle an annuity of five pounds a year upon her; he would give her the snug gate cottage of old Ballamona to live in; his wife should send her warm blankets in winter, and sometimes a pound of tea, such as old folks love. Then must her imprecation fall impotent, and his own fate be undisturbed.

Thorkell's bedroom in his new house on Slieu Dhoo looked over the Curraghs to the sea. As the day dawned he opened the window, and thrust out his head to drink of the cool morning air. The sun was rising over the land behind, a strong breeze was sweeping over the marshes from the shore, and the white curves of the breakers to the west reflected here and there the glow of the eastern sky. With the salt breath of the sea in his nostrils, it seemed to Thorkell a pitiful thing that a man should be a slave to a mere idea; a thing for shame and humiliation that the sneezing of an old woman should disturb the peace of a strong man. Superstition was the bugbear of the Manxman, but it would die of shame at its sheer absurdity, only that it was pampered by the law. Toleration for superstition! Every man who betrayed faith in omens or portents, or charms or spells, or the power of the evil eye, should be instantly clapped in the Castle. It was but right that a rabid dog should be muzzled.

Thorkell shut the window, closed the shutters, threw off his clothes, and went back to bed. In the silence and the darkness, his thoughts took yet another turn. What madness it was, what pertness and unbelief, to reject that faith in which the best and wisest of all ages had lived and died! Had not omens and portents, and charms and spells, and the evil eye been believed in in all ages? What midget of modern days should now arise with a superior smile and say, "Behold, this is folly: Saul of Israel and Saul of Tarsus, and Samuel and Solomon, rose up and lay down in folly."

Thorkell leaped out of bed, sweating from every pore. The old woman Kerruish should be pensioned; she should live in the cozy cottage at the gates of Ballamona; she should have blankets and tea and many a snug comfort; her daughter should be brought back and married – yes, married – to some honest fellow.

The lark was loud in the sky, the rooks were stirring in the lofty ash, the swallows pecking at the lattice, when sleep came at length to Thorkell's bloodshot eyes, and he stretched himself in a short and fitful slumber. He awoke with a start. The lusty rap of Hommy-beg was at the door of his room. There was no itinerant postman, and it was one of Hommy-beg's daily duties to go to the post-office. He had been there this morning, and was now returned with a letter for his master.

Thorkell took the letter with nervous fingers. He had recognized the seal – it was the seal of the insular Government. The letter came from Castle Rushen. He broke the seal and read:

"Castle Rushen, June 3d.

"Sir – I am instructed by his Excellency to beg you to come to Castletown without delay, and to report your arrival at the Castle to Madam Churchill, who will see you on behalf of the Duchess.

"I have the honor to be, etc."

The letter was signed by the Secretary to the Governor.

What did it mean? Thorkell could make nothing of it but that in some way it boded ill. In a bewildered state of semi-consciousness he ordered that a horse should be got ready and brought round to the front. Half an hour later he had risen from an untouched breakfast and was seated in the saddle.

He rode past Tynwald Hill and through Foxdale to the south. Twenty times he drew up and half-reined his horse in another direction. But he went on again. He could turn about at any time. He never turned about. At two o'clock that day he stood before the low gate of the Castle and pulled at the great clanging bell.

He seemed to be expected, and was immediately led to a chamber on the north of the courtyard. The room was small and low; it was dimly lighted by two lancet windows set deep into walls that seemed to be three yards thick. The floor was covered with a rush matting; a harp stood near the fireplace. A lady rose as Thorkell entered. She was elderly, but her dress was youthful. Her waist was short; her embroidered skirt was very long; she wore spangled shoes, and her hair was done into a knot on the top of her head.

Thorkell stood before her with the mien of a culprit. She smiled and motioned him to a seat, and sat herself.

"You have heard of the death of one of our two Deemsters?" she asked.

Thorkell's face whitened, and he bowed his head.

"A successor must soon be appointed, and the Deemster is always a Manxman; he must know the language of the common people."

Thorkell's face wore a bewildered expression. The lady's manner was very suave.

"The appointment is the gift of the Lord of the island, and the Duchess is asked to suggest a name."

Thorkell's face lightened. He had regained all his composure.

"The Duchess has heard a good account of you, Mr. Mylrea. She is told that by your great industry and – wisdom – you have raised yourself in life – become rich, in fact."

The lady's voice dropped to a tone of most insinuating suavity. Thorkell stammered some commonplace.

"Hush, Mr. Mylrea, you shall not depreciate yourself. The Duchess has heard that you are a man of enterprise – one who does not begrudge the penny that makes the pound."

Thorkell saw it all. He was to be made Deemster, but he was to buy his appointment. The Duchess had lost money of late, and the swashbuckler court she kept had lately seen some abridgment of its gaieties.

"To be brief, Mr. Mylrea, the Duchess has half an intention of suggesting your name for the post, but before doing so she wished me to see in what way your feelings lie with regard to it."

Thorkell's little eyes twinkled, and his lips took an upward curve. He placed one hand over his breast and bent his head.

"My feelings, madam, lie in one way only – the way of gratitude," he said, meekly.

The lady's face broadened, and there was a pause.

"It is a great distinction, Mr. Mylrea," said the lady, and she drew her breath inward.

"The greater my gratitude," said Thorkell.

"And how far would you go to show this gratitude to the Duchess?"

"Any length, madam," said Thorkell, and he rose and bowed.

"The Duchess is at present at Bath –"

"I would go so far, and – further, madam, further," said Thorkell, and as he spoke he thrust his right hand deep into his pocket, and there – by what accident may not be said – it touched some coins that chinked.

There was another pause, and then the lady rose and held out her hand, and said, in a significant tone:

"I think, sir, I may already venture to hail you as Deemster of Man."

Thorkell cantered home in great elevation of soul. The milestones fell behind him one after one, and he did not feel the burden of the way. His head was in his breast; his body was bent over his saddle-bow; again and again a trill of light laughter came from his lips. Where were his dreams

now, his omens, his spells, and the power of the evil eye? He was judge of his island. He was master of his fate.

Passing through St. John's, he covered the bleak top of the hill, and turned down toward the shady copse of Kirk Michael. Where the trees were thickest in the valley he drew rein by a low, long house that stood back to the road. It was the residence of the Bishop of the island, but it was now empty. The bishopric had been vacant these five years, and under the heavy rains from the hills and the strong winds from the sea, the old house had fallen into decay.

Thorkell sat in the saddle under the tall elms in the dim light, and his mind was busy with many thoughts. His memory went back with something akin to tenderness to the last days of old Ewan, his father; to his brother, Gilcrist, and then, by a sudden transition, to the incidents of that morning at Castle Rushen. How far in the past that morning seemed to be!

The last rook had cawed out its low guttural note, and the last gleam of daylight died off between the thick boughs of the dark trees that pattered lightly overhead, as Thorkell set off afresh.

When he arrived at Ballamona the night was dark. The Archdeacon was sitting with his daughter, who had not left her room that day. Thorkell, still booted and spurred, ran like a squirrel up the stairs and into the bedroom. In twenty hot words that were fired off like a cloud of small shot from a blunderbuss, Thorkell told what had occurred. His wife's white face showed no pleasure and betrayed no surprise. Her silence acted on Thorkell as a rebuke, and when her eyes rested on his face he turned his own eyes aside. The Archdeacon was almost speechless, but his look of astonishment was eloquent, and when Thorkell left the room he followed him out.

At supper the Archdeacon's manner was that of deep amity.

"They are prompt to appoint a Deemster," he said. "Has it not struck you as strange that the bishopric has been vacant so long?"

Thorkell laughed a little over his plate, and answered that it was strange.

"Maybe it only needs that a name should be suggested," continued the Archdeacon. "That is to say, suggested by a man of influence – a man of position – by the Deemster, for instance."

"Just that," said Thorkell, with a titter.

Then there was an interchange of further amity. When the two men rose from the table the Archdeacon said, with a conscious smile, "Of course, if you should occur – if you should ever think – if, that is, the Deemster should ever suggest a name for the bishopric – of course, he will remember that – that blood, in short, is thicker than water —*ta fuill my s'chee na ushtey*, as the Manxman says."

"I will remember it," said Thorkell, in a significant tone, and with a faint chuckle.

Satisfied with that day's work, with himself, and with the world, Thorkell then went off to bed, and lay down in peace and content, and slept the sleep of the just.

In due course Thorkell Mylrea became Deemster Ballamona.

He entered upon his duties after the briefest study of the Statute Laws. A Manx judge dispensed justice chiefly by the Breast Laws, the unwritten code locked in his own breast, and supposed to be handed down from Deemster to Deemster. The popular superstition served Thorkell in good stead: there was none to challenge his knowledge of jurisprudence.

As soon as he was settled in his office he began to make inquiries about his brother Gilcrist. He learned that after leaving Cambridge, Gilcrist had taken deacon's orders, and had become tutor to the son of an English nobleman, and afterward chaplain to the nobleman's household. Thorkell addressed him a letter, and received a reply, and this was the first intercourse of the brothers since the death of old Ewan. Gilcrist had lately married; he held a small living on one of the remote moors of Yorkshire; he loved his people and was beloved by them. Thorkell wrote again and again, and yet again, and his letters ran through every tone of remonstrance and entreaty. The end of it was that the Deemster paid yet another visit to the lady deputy at Castle Rushen, and the rumor passed over the island that the same potent influence that had made Thorkell a Deemster was about to make his brother the Bishop of Man.

Then the Archdeacon came down in white wrath to Ballamona, and reminded his son-in-law of his many obligations, touched on benefits forgot, hinted at dark sayings and darker deeds, mentioned, with a significant accent, the girl Mally Kerruish, protested that from causes not to be named he had lost the esteem of his clergy and the reverence of his flock, and wound up with the touching assurance that on that very morning, as he rode from Andreas, he had overheard a burly Manxman say to the tawny-headed fellow who walked with him – both of them the scabbiest sheep on the hills – "There goes the pazon that sold his daughter and bought her husband."

Thorkell listened to the torrent of reproaches, and then said, quietly, as he turned on his heel, "Near is my shirt, but nearer is my skin."

The Deemster's wife held up her head no more. After the christening she rarely left her room. Her cheeks grew thinner, paler they could not grow, and her meek eyes lost their faint lustre. She spoke little, and her interest in life seemed to be all but gone. There was the same abject submission to her husband, but she saw less of him day by day. Only the sight of her babe, when Kerry brought it to be nursed, restored to her face the light of a fleeting joy. If it stayed too long at her breast, if it cried, if its winsome ways made her to laugh outright, the swift recoil of other feelings saddened her to melancholy, and she would put the child from her with a sigh. This went on for several months, and meantime the Deemster was too deeply immersed in secular affairs to make serious note of the shadow that hung over his house. "*Goll sheese ny lhiargagh*— she's going down the steep places," said Kerry.

It was winter when Gilcrist Mylrea was appointed to reach the island, but he wrote that his wife's health was failing her, that it was not unlikely that she was to bear a child, and that he preferred to postpone his journey until the spring. Before the gorse bushes on the mountains had caught their new spears of green, and before the fishermen of Peeltown had gone down to the sea for their first mackerel, Thorkell's wife was lying in her last illness. She sent for her husband and bade him farewell. The Deemster saw no danger, and he laughed at her meek adieu. She was soon to be the mother of another of his children – that was all. But she shook her head when he rallied her, and when he lifted the little creeping, cooing, babbling Ewan from the floor to his mother's bed, and laughed and held up his long, lean, hairy finger before the baby face and asked the little one with a puff how he would like a little sister, the white face on the pillow twitched and fell, and the meek eyes filled, and the shadow was over all.

"Good-by, Thorkell, and for baby's sake – "

But a shrill peal of Thorkell's laughter rang through the chamber, and at the next instant he was gone from the room.

That day the wife of the Deemster passed beyond the sorrows of the life that had no joys. The angels of life and death had come with linked hands to the new homestead of Ballamona, and the young mother had died in giving birth to a girl.

When the Deemster heard what had happened, his loud scream rang through every room of the house. His soul was in ferment; he seemed to be appalled, and to be stricken, not with sorrow, but with fright and horror.

"She's dead; why, she's dead, she's dead," he cried, hysterically; "why did not somebody tell me that she would die?"

The Deemster buried his wife by the side of old Ewan, under the elder-tree that grew by the wall of the churchyard that stands over by the sea. He summoned no mourners, and few stood with him by the open grave. During the short funeral, his horse was tied to the cross-timbers of the lych-gate, and while the earth was still falling in hollow thuds from the sexton's spade, Thorkell got into the saddle and rode away.

Before sunset he waited by the wooden landing jetty at Derby Haven. The old sea-tub, the "King Orry," made the port that day, and disembarked her passengers. Among them was the new Bishop of Man, Gilcrist Mylrea. He looked much older for the six years he had been away. His tall figure

stooped heavily; his thick hair fell in wavelets on his shoulders, and was already sprinkled with gray; his long cheeks were deeply lined. As he stepped from the boat on to the jetty he carried something very tenderly in his arms. He seemed to be alone.

The brothers met with looks of constraint and bewilderment.

"Where is your wife?" asked Thorkell.

"She is gone," said Gilcrist. "I have nothing left of her but this," and he looked down at the burden at his breast.

It was a baby boy. Thorkell's face whitened, and terror was in his eyes.

CHAPTER V

THE MANXMAN'S BISHOP

Gilcrist Mylrea had been confirmed Bishop, and consecrated in England; but he had to be installed in his cathedral church at Peeltown with all the honors of the insular decrees. The ceremony was not an imposing one. Few of the native population witnessed it. The Manxman did not love the Church with a love too fervent. "Pazon, pazon," he would say, "what can you expect from the like o' that? Never no duck wasn't hatched by a drake."

It was no merit in the eyes of the people that the new Bishop was himself a Manxman. "Aw, man," they would say, "I knew his father," and knowledge of the father implied a limitation of the respect due to the son. "What's his family?" would be asked again and again across the hearth that scarcely knew its own family more intimately. "Maybe some of the first that's going," would be the answer, and then there would be a laugh.

The Bishop was enthroned by Archdeacon Teare, who filled his function with what grace his chagrin would allow. Thorkell watched his father-in-law keenly during the ceremony, and more than once his little eyes twinkled, and his lips were sucked inward as if he rolled a delectable morsel on his tongue. Archdeacon Teare was conscious of the close fire of his son-in-law's gaze, and after the installation was done, and the clergy that constituted priests and congregation were breaking up, he approached the Deemster with a benevolent smile, and said, "Well, Thorkell, we've had some disagreements, but we'll all meet for peace and harmony in heaven."

The Deemster tittered audibly, and said, "I'm not so sure of that, though."

"No?" said the Archdeacon, with elevated eyebrows. "Why – why?"

"Because we read in the Good Book that there will be no more *tears*, Archdeacon," said Thorkell, with a laugh like the whinny of a colt.

The Bishop and his brother, the Deemster, got on their horses, and turned their heads toward the episcopal palace. It was late when they drove under the tall elms of Bishop's Court. The old house was lighted up for their reception. Half-blind Kerry Quayle had come over from Ballamona to nurse the Bishop's child, and to put him to bed in his new home. "Och, as sweet a baby boy as any on the island, I'll go bail, as the old body said," said Kerry, and the Bishop patted her arm with a gentle familiarity. He went up to the little room where the child lay asleep, and stooped over the cot and touched with his lips the soft lips that breathed gently. The dignity of the Bishop as he stood four hours before under the roof of St. German's had sat less well on this silent man than the tenderness of the father by the side of his motherless child.

Thorkell was in great spirits that night. Twenty times he drank to the health of the new Bishop; twenty times he reminded him of his own gracious offices toward securing the bishopric to one of his own family. Gilcrist smiled, and responded in few words. He did not deceive himself; his eyes were open. He knew that Thorkell had not been so anxious to make him a Bishop as to prevent a place of honor and emolument from going to any one less near to himself than his own brother. "Near is my shirt," as Thorkell had told the Archdeacon, "but nearer is my skin."

Next day the Bishop lost no time in settling to his work. His people watched him closely. He found his palace in a forlorn and dilapidated state, and the episcopal demesne, which was about a square mile of glebe, as fallow as the rough top of the mountains. The money value of this bishopric was rather less than £500 a year, but out of this income he set to work to fence and drain his lands, plant trees, and restore his house to comfort, if not to stateliness. "I find my Patmos in ruins," he said, "and that will oblige me to interrupt my charity to the poor in some measure."

He assumed none of the social dignity of a Bishop. He had no carriage, and no horse for riding. When he made his pastoral visitations he went afoot. The journey to Douglas he called crossing the

Pyrenees; and he likened the toilsome tramp across the heavy Curraghs from Bishop's Court to Kirk Andreas to the passing of pilgrims across a desert. "To speak truth," he would say, "I have a title too large for my scant fortune to maintain."

His first acts of episcopal authority did not conciliate either the populace or their superiors in station. He set his face against the contraband trade, and refused communion to those who followed it. "Och, terrible, wonderful hard on the poor man he is, with his laws agen honest trading, and his by-laws and his customs and his canons and the like o' that messing."

It was soon made clear that the Bishop did not court popularity. He started a school in each of the parishes by the help of a lady, who settled a bounty, payable at the Bishop's pleasure, for the support of the teachers. The teachers were appointed by his vicars-general. One day a number of the men of his own parish, with Jabez Gawne, the sleek little tailor, and Matthias Jubman, the buirdly maltster, at their head, came up to Bishop's Court to complain of the schoolmaster appointed to Kirk Michael. According to the malcontents, the schoolmaster was unable to divide his syllables, and his home, which was the schoolhouse also, was too remote for the convenience of the children. "So we beseech your Lordships," said little Jabez, who was spokesman, "to allow us a fit person to discharge the office, *and with submission we will recommend one.*" The Bishop took in the situation at a glance; Jabez's last words had let the cat out of the bag, and it could not be said to be a Manx cat, for it had a most prodigious tail. Next day the Bishop went to the school, examined master and scholars, then called the petitioners together, and said, "I find that James Quirk is qualified to teach an English school, and I can not remove him; but I am of your opinion that his house is in a remote part of the parish, and I shall expect the parishioners to build a new schoolhouse in a convenient place, near the church, within a reasonable time, otherwise the bounty can not be continued to them." The answer staggered the petitioners; but they were men with the saving grace of humor, and through the mouth of little Jabez, which twisted into curious lines, they forthwith signified to his Lordship their earnest desire to meet his wish by building their schoolhouse within the churchyard.

Though a zealous upholder of Church authority, the Bishop was known to temper justice with mercy. He had not been a month in the diocese when his sumner told him a painful story of hard penance. A young girl from near Peeltown had been presented for incontinence, and with the partner of her crime she had been ordered to stand six Sundays at the door of six churches. The man, who was rich, had compounded with the Archdeacon, paying six pounds for exemption, and being thenceforward no more mentioned; but the woman, being penniless and appalled at the disgrace before her, had fled from the island. The Archdeacon had learned her whereabouts in England, and had written to the minister of the place to acquaint him that she was under the Church's censure. The minister, on his part, had laid before her the terror of her position if she died out of communion with God's people. She resisted all appeals until her time came, and then, in her travail, the force of the idea had worked upon her, and she could resist it no more. When she rose from bed she returned voluntarily to the island, with the sign of her shame at her breast, to undergo the penance of her crime. She had stood three Sundays at the doors of three churches, but her health was feeble, and she could scarcely carry her child, so weak was she, and so long the distances from her lodging in Peeltown. "Let her be pardoned the rest of her penance," said the Bishop. "The Church's censure was not passed on her to afflict her with overmuch shame or sorrow."

It was not until years afterward that the Bishop learned the full facts of the woman's case, and comprehended the terrible significance of her punishment. She was Mally Kerruish.

The island was in the province of York, and bound by the English canons, but the Bishop made his own canons, and none were heard to demur. Some of his judgments were strange, but all leaned toward the weaker side. A man named Quayle the Gyke, a blustering fellow, a thorn in the side of every official within a radius of miles, died after a long illness, leaving nothing to a legitimate son who had nursed him affectionately. This seemed to the Bishop to be contrary to natural piety, and in the exercise of his authority he appointed the son an executor with the others. Quayle the younger lived,

as we shall see, to return evil for the Bishop's good. A rich man of bad repute, Thormod Mylechreest, died intestate, leaving an illegitimate son. The Bishop ordered the ordinary to put aside a sum of money out of the estate for the maintenance and education of the child. But Thorkell came down in the name of the civil power, reversed the spiritual judgment, ordered that the whole belongings of the deceased should be confiscated to the Lord of the Isle, and left the base-begotten to charity. We shall also see that the bastard returned good for Thorkell's evil.

The canons and customs of Bishop Mylrea not only leaned – sometimes with too great indulgence – to the weaker side, but they supposed faith in the people by allowing a voluntary oath as evidence, and this made false swearing a terror. Except in the degree of superstition, he encouraged belief in all its forms. He trusted an oath implicitly, but no man ever heard him gainsay his yea or nay.

A hoary old dog known as Billy the Gawk, who had never worked within living memory, who lived, as they said, "on the houses," and frequented the pot-house with more than the regularity of religious observance, was not long in finding out that Bishop's Court had awakened from its protracted sleep. The Bishop had been abroad for his morning's ramble, and sitting on the sunny side of a high turf hedge looking vacantly out to sea, he heard footsteps on the road behind him, and then a dialogue, of which this is a brief summary:

"Going up to the Coort, eh? Ah, well, it's plenty that's there to take the edge off your stomach; plenty, plenty, and a rael welcome too."

"Ah, it's not the stomach that's bothering me. It's the narves, boy – the narves – and a drop of the rael stuff is worth a Jew's eye for studdying a man after a night of it, as the saying is."

"Aw, Billy, Billy – aw well, well, well."

The conversation died off on the Bishop's ear in a loud roystering laugh and a low gurgle as undertone.

Half an hour later Billy the Gawk stood before the Bishop inside the gates of Bishop's Court. The old dog's head hung low, his battered hat was over his eyes, and both his trembling hands leaned heavily on his thick blackthorn stick.

"And how do you live, my man?" asked the Bishop.

"I'm getting a bite here, and a sup there, and I've had terrible little but a bit o' barley bread since yesterday morning," said the Gawk.

"Poor man, that's hard fare," said the Bishop; "but mind you call here every day for the future."

Billy got a measure of corn worth sixpence, and went straightway to the village, where he sold it at the pot-house for as much liquor as could have been bought for three-halfpence. And as Billy the Gawk drank his drop of the real stuff he laughed very loud and boasted that he could outwit the Bishop. But the liquor got into his head, and from laughing he went on to swearing, and thence to fighting, until the innkeeper turned him out into the road, where, under the weight of his measure of corn taken in solution, Billy sank into a dead slumber. The Bishop chanced to take an evening walk that day, and he found his poor pensioner, who fared hard, lodged on a harder bed, and he had him picked up and carried into the house. Next morning, when Billy awoke and found where he was, and remembered what had occurred, an unaccustomed sensation took possession of him, and he stole away unobserved. The hoary old dog was never seen again at Bishop's Court.

But if Billy never came again his kith and kin came frequently. It became a jest that the Bishop kept the beggars from every house but his own, and that no one else could get a beggar.

He had a book, which he called his "Matricula Pauperum," in which he entered the names of his pensioners with notes of their circumstances. He knew all the bits of family history – when Jemmy Corkell's wife was down with lumbago, and when Robbie Quirk was to kill his little pig.

Billy the Gawk was not alone in thinking that he could outwit the Bishop. When the Bishop wanted a new pair of boots or a new coat, the tailor or shoemaker came to Bishop's Court, and was kept there until his job of work was finished. The first winter after his arrival in his Patmos, he wanted a cloak, and sent for Jabez Gawne, the sleek little fox who had been spokesman for the conspirators

against James Quirk, the schoolmaster. Jabez had cut out the cloak, and was preparing it for a truly gorgeous adornment, when the Bishop ordered him to put merely a button and a loop on it to keep it together. Jabez thereupon dropped his cloth and held up his hands where he sat cross-legged on the kitchen dresser, and exclaimed, with every accent of aggrieved surprise:

"My Lord, what would become of the poor buttonmakers and their families if every one ordered his tailor in that way?"

"How so, Jabez?"

"Why, they would be starved outright."

"Do you say so, Jabez?"

"Yes, my Lord, I do."

"Then button it all over, Jabez," said the Bishop.

The Deemster was present at that interview, and went away from it tittering audibly.

"Give to the raven and he'll come again," he muttered.

"I forgot that poor Jabez would have his buttons in his breeches-pocket," said the Bishop.

The Manxman had not yet made up his mind concerning the composite character of Bishop Mylrea, his dignity and his humility, his reserve and his simplicity, when a great event settled for the Manxman's heart the problem that had been too much for his head. This was no less a catastrophe than a general famine. It came upon the island in the second year of the Bishop's residence, and was the cause of many changes. One of the changes was that the Bishop came to be regarded by his people with the reverence of Israel for Samuel, and by his brother, the Deemster, with the distrust, envy, and, at length, mingled fear and hatred of Saul for Israel's prophet.

The land of the island had been held under a tenure of straw, known as the three-lives' tenure; the third life was everywhere running out, and the farms were reverting to the Lord of the Isle. This disheartened the farmers, who lost all interest in agriculture, let their lands lie fallow, and turned to the only other industry in which they had an interest, the herring fishing. The herrings failed this season, and without fish, with empty barns, and a scant potato crop, caused by a long summer of drought, the people were reduced to poverty.

Then the Bishop opened wider the gates of Bishop's Court, which since his coming had never been closed. Heaven seemed to have given him a special blessing. The drought had parched up the grass even of the damp Curragh, and left bleached on the whitening mold the poor, thin, dwarfed corn, that could never be reaped. But the glebe of Bishop's Court gave fair crops, and when the people cried in the grip of their necessity the Bishop sent round a pastoral letter to his clergy, saying that he had eight hundred bushels of wheat, barley, and oats more than his household required. Then there came from the north and the south, the east and the west, long, straggling troops of buyers with little or no money to buy, and Bishop's Court was turned into a public market. The Bishop sold to those who had money at the price that corn fetched before the famine, and in his barn behind the house he kept a chest for those who came in at the back with nothing but a sack in their hands. Once a day he inspected the chest, and when it was low, which was frequently, he replenished it, and when it was high, which was rarely, he smiled, and said that God was turning away his displeasure from his people.

The eight hundred bushels were at an end in a month, and still the famine continued. Then the Bishop bought eight hundred other bushels: wheat at ten shillings, barley at six shillings, and oats at four shillings, and sold them at half these prices. He gave orders that the bushel of the poor man was not to be stroked, but left in heaped-up measure.

A second month went by; the second eight hundred bushels were consumed, and the famine showed no abatement. The Bishop waited for vessels from Liverpool, but no vessels came. He was a poor priest, with a great title, and he had little money; but he wrote to England asking for a thousand bushels of grain and five hundred kischen of potatoes, and promised to pay at six days after the next annual revenue. A week of weary waiting ensued, and every day the Bishop cheered the haggard folk that came to Bishop's Court with accounts of the provisions that were coming; and every day they

went up on to the head of the hill, and strained their bleared eyes seaward for the sails of an English ship. When patience was worn to despair, the old "King Orry" brought the Bishop a letter saying that the drought had been general, that the famine was felt throughout the kingdom, and that an embargo had been put on all food to forbid traders to send it from English shores. Then the voice of the hungry multitudes went up in one deep cry of pain. "The hunger is on us," they moaned. "Poor once, poor forever," they muttered; and the voice of the Bishop was silent.

Just at that moment a further disaster threatened the people. Their cattle, which they could not sell, they had grazed on the mountains, and the milk of the cows had been the chief food of the children, and the wool of the sheep the only clothing of their old men. With parched meadows and Curraghs, where the turf was so dry that it would take fire from the sun, the broad tops of the furze-covered hills were the sole resource of the poor. At daybreak the shepherd with his six ewe lambs and one goat, and the day laborer with his cow, would troop up to where the grass looked greenest, and at dusk they would come down to shelter, with weary limbs and heavy hearts. "What's it sayin'," they would mutter, "a green hill when far from me; bare, bare, when it is near."

At this crisis it began to be whispered that the Deemster had made an offer to the Lord to rent the whole stretch of mountain land from Ramsey to Peeltown. The rumor created consternation, and was not at first believed. But one day the Deemster, with the Governor of the Grand Enquest, drove to the glen at Sulby and went up the hillside. Not long after, a light cart was seen to follow the highroad to the glen beyond Ballaugh, and then turn up toward the mountains by the cart track. The people who were grazing their cattle on the hills came down and gathered with the people of the valleys at the foot, and there were dark faces and firm-set lips among them, and hot words and deep oaths were heard. "Let's off to the Bishop," said one, and then went to Bishop's Court. Half an hour later the Bishop came from Bishop's Court at the head of a draggled company of men, and his face was white and hard. They overtook the cart half-way up the side of the mountain, and the Bishop called on the driver to stop, and asked what he carried, and where he was going. The man answered that he had provisions for the Governor, the Deemster, and the Grand Enquest, who were surveying the tops of the mountains.

The Bishop looked round, and his lip was set, and his nostrils quivered. "Can any man lend me a knife?" he asked, with a strained quietness.

A huge knife was handed to him, such as shepherds carry in the long legs of their boots. He stepped to the cart and ripped up the harness, which was rope harness, the shafts fell and the horse was free. Then the Bishop turned to the driver and said very quietly:

"Where do you live, my man?"

"At Sulby, my Lord," said the man, trembling with fear.

"You shall have leather harness to-morrow."

Then the Bishop went on, his soiled and draggled company following him, the cart lying helpless in the cart track behind them.

When they got to the top of the mountain they could see the Governor and the Deemster and their associates stretching the chain in the purple distance. The Bishop made in their direction, and when he came up with them, he said:

"Gentlemen, no food will reach you on the mountains to-day; the harness of your cart has been cut, and cart and provisions are lying on the hillside."

At this Thorkell turned white with wrath, and clenched his fists and stamped his foot on the turf, and looked piercingly into the faces of the Bishop's followers.

"As sure as I'm Deemster," he said, with an oath, "the man who has done this shall suffer. Don't let him deceive himself – no one, not even the Bishop himself, shall step in between that man and the punishment of the law."

The Bishop listened with calmness, and then said, "Thorkell, the Bishop will not intercede for him. Punish him if you can."

"And so, by God, I will," cried the Deemster, and his eye traversed the men behind his brother.

The Bishop then took a step forward. "I am that man," he said, and then there was a great silence.

Thorkell's face flinched, his head fell between his shoulders, his manner grew dogged, he said not a word, his braggadocio was gone.

The Bishop approached the Governor. "You have no more right to rent these mountains than to rent yonder sea," he said, and he stretched his arm toward the broad blue line to the west. "They belong to God and to the poor. Let me warn you, sir, that as sure as you set up one stone to enclose these true God's acres, I shall be the first to pull that stone down."

The Grand Enquest broke up in confusion, and the mountains were saved to the people.

It blew hard on the hilltop that day, and the next morning the news spread through the island that a ship laden with barley had put in from bad weather at Douglas Harbor. "And a terrible wonderful sight of corn, plenty for all, plenty, plenty," was the word that went round. In three hours' time hundreds of men and women trooped down to the quay with money to buy. To all comers the master shook his head, and refused to sell.

"Sell, man – sell, sell," they cried.

"I can't sell. The cargo is not mine. I'm a poor man myself," said the master.

"Well, and what's that it's sayin', 'When one poor man helps another poor man God laughs.'"

The Bishop came to the ship's side, and tried to treat for the cargo.

"I've given bond to land it all at Whitehaven," said the master.

Then the people's faces grew black, and deep oaths rose to their lips, and they turned and looked into each other's eyes in their impotent rage. "The hunger is on us – we can't starve – let every herring hang by its own gill – let's board her," they muttered among themselves.

And the Bishop heard their threats. "My people," he said, "what will become of this poor island unless God averts his awful judgments, only God himself can know; but this good man has given his bond, and let us not bring on our heads God's further displeasure."

There was a murmur of discontent, and then one long sigh of patient endurance, and then the Bishop lifted his hands, and down on their knees on the quay the people with famished faces fell around the tall, drooping figure of the man of God, and from parched throats, and hearts wellnigh as dry, sent up a great cry to heaven to grant them succor lest they should die.

About a week afterward another ship put in by contrary winds at Castletown. It had a cargo of Welsh oats bound to Dumfries, on the order of the Provost. The contrary winds continued, and the corn began to heat and spoil. The hungry populace, enraged by famine, called on the master to sell. He was powerless. Then the Bishop walked over his "Pyrenees," and saw that the food for which his people hungered was perishing before their eyes. When the master said "No" to him, as to others, he remembered how in old time David, being an hungered, did that which was not lawful in eating of the showbread, and straightway he went up to Castle Rushen, got a company of musketeers, returned with them to the ship's side, boarded the ship, put the master and crew in irons, and took possession of the corn.

What wild joy among the people! What shouts were heard; what tears rolled down the stony cheeks of stern men!

"Patience!" cried the Bishop. "Bring the market weights and scales."

The scales and weights were brought down to the quay and every bushel of the cargo was exactly weighed, and paid for at the prime price according to the master's report. Then the master and crew were liberated, and the Bishop paid the ship's freight out of his own purse. When he passed through the market-place on his way back to the Bishop's Court the people followed with eyes that were almost too dim to see, and they blessed in cheers that were sobs.

And then God remembered his people, and their troubles passed away. With the opening spring the mackerel nets came back to the boats in shining silver masses, and peace and plenty came again to the hearth of the poorest.

The Manxman knew his Bishop now; he knew him for the strongest soul in the dark hour, the serenest saint in the hour of light and peace. That hoary old dog, Billy the Gawk, took his knife and scratched "B.M.," and the year of the Lord on the inside of his cupboard door to record the advent of Bishop Mylrea.

A mason from Ireland, a Catholic named Patrick Looney, was that day at work building the square tower of the church of the market-place, and when he saw the Bishop pass under him he went down on his knees on the scaffold and dropped his head for the good man's blessing.

A little girl of seven, with sunny eyes and yellow hair, stood by at that moment, and for love of the child's happy face the Bishop touched her head and said, "God bless you, my sweet child."

The little one lifted her innocent eyes to his eyes, and answered with a courtesy, "And God bless you, too, sir."

"Thank you, child, thank you," said the Bishop. "I do not doubt that your blessing will be as good as mine."

Such was Gilcrist Mylrea, Bishop of Man. He needed all his strength and all his tenderness for the trials that were to come.

CHAPTER VI

THE COZY NEST AT BISHOP'S COURT

The children of the Deemster and Bishop spent the first five years as one little brood in the cozy nest at Bishop's Court. The arrangement was agreeable to both brothers while it lasted. It left Ballamona a silent place, but the master recked little of that. The Deemster kept no company, or next to none. He dismissed all his domestics except one, and Hommy-beg, who had been gardener hitherto, became groom as well. The new Ballamona began to gather a musty odor, and the old Ballamona took the moss on its wall and the lichen on its roof. The Deemster rose early and went late to bed. Much of the day was spent in the saddle passing from town to town of his northern circuit, for he held a court twice weekly at Ramsey and Peeltown. Toward nightfall he was usually back at his house, sitting alone by the fireplace, whether, as in the long nights of winter, a peat fire burned there, or, as in the summer evenings, the hearth was empty. Hardly a sound broke the dead quiet of the solitary place, save when some litigious farmer who had caught his neighbor in the act of trespass brought him, there and then, for judgment, to the Deemster's house by that most summary kind of summons, the force of superior muscles. On such occasions the plaintiff and defendant, with their noisy witnesses, would troop into the hall with the yaps and snaps of a pack of dogs, and Thorkell would twist in his chair and fine one of them, or perhaps both, and pocket their money, and then drive them all away dissatisfied, to settle their dispute by other means in the darkness of the road outside.

Meantime, Bishop's Court was musical with children's voices, and with the patter of tiny feet that ferreted out every nook and cranny of the old place. There was Ewan, the Deemster's son, a slight, sensitive boy, who listened to you with his head aslant, and with absent looks. There was wee Mona, Ewan's meek sister, with the big eyes and the quiet ways, who liked to be fondled, and would cry sometimes when no one knew why. And then there was Daniel – Danny – Dan, the Bishop's boy, a braw little rogue, with a slice of the man in him, as broad as he was long, with tousled fair head and face usually smudged, laughing a good deal and not crying overmuch, loving a good tug or a delightful bit of a fight, and always feeling high disdain at being kissed. And the Bishop, God bless him! was father and mother both to the motherless brood, though Kerry Quayle was kept as nurse. He would tell a story, or perhaps sing one, while Mona sat on his knee with her pretty head resting on his breast, and Ewan held on to his chair with his shy head hanging on his own shoulder, and his eyes looking out at the window, listening intently in his queer little absent way. And when Dan, in lordly contempt of such doings, would break in on song or story, and tear his way up the back of the chair to the back of the Bishop, Mona would be set on her feet, and the biggest baby of the four there present would slide down on to his hands and knees and creep along the floor with the great little man astride him, and whinny like a horse, or perhaps bark like a dog, and pretend to leap the four-bar gate of the baby's chair tumbled down on its side. And when Dan would slide from his saddle, and the restless horseman would turn coachman and tug the mane of his steed, and all the Bishop's long hair would tumble over his face, what shrieks of laughter, what rolling on the ground and tossing up of bare legs! And then when supper-time came, and the porridge would be brought in, and little Mona would begin to whimper because she had to eat it, and Ewan to fret because it was barley porridge and not oaten cake, and Dan to devour his share with silent industry, and then bellow for more than was good for him, what schemes the good Bishop resorted to, what promises he made, what crafty tricks he learned, what an artful old pate his simple head suddenly became! And then, when Kerry came with the tub and the towels, and three little naked bodies had to be bathed, and the Bishop stole away to his unfinished sermon, and little Mona's wet hands clung to Kerry's dress, and Ewan, standing bolt-upright in the three inches of water, blubbered while he rubbed the sponge over an inch and a half of one cheek, and Dan sat on his haunches in the bottom of the tub splashing the water on

every side, and shrieking at every splash; then the fearful commotion would bring the Bishop back from the dusky room upstairs, where the shaded lamp burned on a table that was littered with papers. And at last, when the day's big battle was done, and night's bigger battle began, and three night-dresses were popped over three wary heads that dodged them when they could, the Bishop would carry three sleepless, squealing piggies to bed – Mona at his breast because she was little, Ewan on his back because he was big, and Dan across his shoulders because he could not get to any loftier perch. Presently there would be three little pairs of knees by the crib-side, and then three little flaxen polls on the pillow, tumbling and tossing, and with the great dark head of the Bishop shaking gravely at them from over the counterpane, and then a hush broken by a question lisped drowsily, or a baby-rime that ran a line or two and stopped, and at length the long deep quiet and the silence of sleep, and the Bishop going off on tiptoe to the dusky room with the shaded lamp, and to-morrow's sermon lying half written beneath it.

And so five tearing, romping years went by, and though they were the years of the famine and the pestilence, and of many another dark cloud that hung blackest over Bishop's Court, a world of happiness was crowded into them. Then when Ewan was six years old, and Danny and Mona were five, and the boys were buttoning their own corduroys, the Deemster came over from Ballamona and broke up the little nest of humming-birds.

"Gilcrist," said Thorkell, "you are ruining the children, and I must take my own away from you."

The Bishop's grave face grew suddenly white, and when, after a pause, he said, "No, no, Thorkell, you don't mean that," there was a tremor in his deep voice.

"I do mean it," said the Deemster. "Let a father treat his children as the world will treat them when they have nothing but the world for their father – that's my maxim, and I'll act up to it with my own."

"That's hard treatment, Thorkell," said the Bishop, and his eyes began to fill.

"Spare the rod, spoil the child," said Thorkell.

"Maybe you're right," said the Bishop in a quivering voice, and he could say no more.

But the Deemster was as good as his word. Ewan and Mona were removed to Ballamona. There they had no nurse, and shifted a good deal for themselves. They ate oaten cake and barley porridge three times a day, and that was to build up their bone and brain; they were bathed in cold water summer and winter, and that was to make them hardy; they wore frocks with low necks, and that was to strengthen their lungs; they went to bed without a light and fell asleep while trembling in each other's arms, and that was to make them brave and prevent them from becoming superstitious.

If the spirit and health of the little ones did not sink under their Spartan training it was because Nature was stronger than custom, and because God is very good to the bruised hearts of children. They did not laugh too loud when the Deemster was near, and they were never seen to pull his vest, or to tug him by his hair, or to ride across his back, which was never known to stoop low for their little legs to mount. The house was not much noisier, or dirtier, or less orderly for their presence; they did not fill it with their voices, or tumble it out of its propriety with their busy fingers, as with Cousin Danny's powerful assistance they had filled and tumbled Bishop's Court, until every room in the comfortable old place seemed to say to you with a wink and a nod, "A child lives here; this is his own home, and he is master of the whole house." But when they stole away to their own little room at the back, where no fire burned lest they should grow "nesh," not all the masks that were ever made to make life look like a sorry tragedy could have hidden the joy that was always wanting to break out on their little faces. There they would romp and laugh and crow and sing, and Ewan would play at preaching, with the back of a chair for a pulpit, and his pinafore for surplice, and Mona of the big eyes sitting on the floor below for choir and congregation. And if in the middle of their play it happened that all at once they remembered Danny, then Ewan's head would fall aside, and his look in an instant be far away, and Mona's lower lip would hang suddenly, and the sunshine would straightway die out of her laughing face.

When the Bishop lost the Deemster's children he found a great void in his heart; but little Danny troubled his big head not at all about the change that had taken place. He laughed just as loud, and never cried at all, and when he awoke in the morning and his cousins were not there, their place forthwith knew them no more. In a vague way he missed his playmates, but that only meant that the Bishop had to be his playmate even more than before, and the Bishop was nothing loth. Away they ran through the copse together, these boon companions, and if the Bishop hid behind a tree, of course Danny found him, and if it was Danny that hid, of course the Bishop searched high and low, and never once heard the merry titter that came from behind the gorse bush that was arm's-length away, until, with a burst of laughter, Danny leaped out on him like an avalanche. They talked one jargon, too, for Danny's industrious tongue could not say its *w*, and it made an *s* of its *f*. "How many 'heels has your cart got, carter?" "Sour." "Very srosty to-day, master." "Well, then, come in to the sire."

In a strange and unconscious way the Bishop developed a sort of physical affinity with this sworn ally. When no sound seemed to break the silence he could hear the little man's cry through three stout stone walls and up two flights of stairs. If the child fell and hurt himself half a mile from the house, the Bishop at home felt as if he had himself dropped on a sharp stone and cut his knee. If he clambered to the top of a high wall that was out of sight, the Bishop in his study felt dizzy.

But extraordinary as was this affinity of the Bishop and his boy, the intercourse that subsisted between Danny and his nurse was yet more marvelous. The Bishop had merely a prescience of disaster threatening his darling; but Kerry seemed, by an exercise of some nameless faculty, to know the child's whereabouts at any moment of day or night. Half blind at the time of the birth of little Ewan, Kerry Quayle had grown stone-blind since, and this extraordinary power was in truth her second sight. It was confined to Danny, her nursling, but over his movements it was an absolute gift.

"Och," she cried, leaping up from the spinning-wheel, "the wee craythur's into the chapel, as the sayin' is."

"Impossible!" the Bishop answered; "I've only this moment locked the door."

But Kerry and the Bishop went to the chapel to search for him, and found the fugitive, who had clambered in through an open window, lighting the candle at the reading-desk, after washing his black hands in the font.

"Aw, now," said Kerry, lifting up her hands and her blind face in horror, "what's that it's saying, 'The little hemlock is sister to the big hemlock';" which was as much as to say that the small sin was akin to the great sin, and that little Danny, who had been caught in an act of sacrilege, would one day be guilty of worse.

"Nonsense, woman – nonsense; a child is but a child," said the Bishop, leading the delinquent away.

That day – it was Thursday of Whitsun week – Convocation was to be held at Bishop's Court, and the clergy had already begun to gather in the library that looked west toward the sea. To keep Danny out of further mischief the Bishop led him to his own room, and there he poured water into a bowl and proceeded to bathe his eyes, which had latterly shown signs of weakness. To do this he had need to remove his spectacles, and he set them down on the table by his hand. Danny watched these proceedings with a roguish look, and when the Bishop's face was in the bowl he whipped up the spectacles and pushed them down his neck between his frock and his breast. With a whirr and a puff the Bishop shook the water from his face and dried it, and when the lash comb had tossed back his long hair he stretched his hand out for his spectacles. He could not feel them, and when he looked he could not see them, and then he called on Danny to search for them, and straightway the rogue was on hands and knees hunting in every possible and impossible place. But Danny could not find them – not he. Convocation was waiting for its chief, but the spectacles could not be found, and the Bishop, for all bookish services, was blinder than a bat without them. High and low, up and down, on every table, under every paper, into every pocket, and still no spectacles. At length the Bishop paused and looked steadily into the eyes of the little man sitting on his haunches and tittering audibly.

"Where are the glasses?"

Danny laughed very loud.

"Where are my glasses, Danny veg?"

Danny veg laughed still louder.

There was nothing to be made of an answer like that, so down on his knees went the Bishop again to see if the rogue had hidden the spectacles beneath the hearth-rug, or under the seat of the settle, or inside the shaving pot on the hearth. And all the time Danny, with his hands clasped under his haunches, hopped about the room like a frog with great starry eyes, and crowed and laughed till his face grew scarlet and the tears trickled down his cheeks.

Blind Kerry came to say that the gentlemen wanted to know when the Bishop would be with them, as the saying was; and two minutes afterward the Bishop strode into the library through a line of his clergy, who rose as he entered, and bowed to him in silence when his tall figure bent slightly to each of them in turn.

"Your pardon, gentlemen, for this delay," he said, gravely, and then he settled himself at the head of the table.

Hardly had the clergy taken their seats when the door of the room was dashed open with a lordly bang, and into the muggy room, made darker still by twenty long black coats, there shot a gleam of laughing sunshine – Danny himself, at a hop, skip, and a jump, with a pair of spectacles perched insecurely on the sliding bridge of his diminutive nose.

The Archdeacon was there that day, and when the intruder had been evicted by blind Kerry, who came in hot pursuit of him, he shook his head and looked as solemn and as wise as his little russet face would admit, and said:

"Ah, my Lord, you'll kill that child with kindness. May you never heap up for yourself a bad harvest!"

The Bishop made no answer, but breathed on the restored spectacles, and rubbed them with his red silk handkerchief.

"I hold with the maxim of my son-in-law the Deemster," the Archdeacon continued: "let a child be dealt with in his father's house as the world hereafter will deal with him."

"Nay, nay, but more gently," said the Bishop. "If he is a good man, ten to one the world will whip him – let him remember his father's house as a place of love."

"Ah, my Lord," said the Archdeacon, "but what of the injunction against the neglect of the rod?"

The Bishop bent his head and did not answer.

Once in a way during these early years the Bishop took Danny across to Ballamona, and then the two little exiles in their father's house, banished from the place of love, would rush into the Bishop's arms, Mona at his chin, Ewan with hands clasped about his leg and flaxen head against the great seals that hung from his fob-pocket. But as for Danny and his cousins, and the cousins and Danny, they usually stood a while and inspected one another with that solemnity and aloofness which is one of the phenomena of child manners, and then, when the reserve of the three hard little faces had been softened by a smile, they would forthwith rush at one another with mighty clinched fists and pitch into one another for five minutes together, amid a chorus of squeals. In this form of salutation Danny was never known to fail, and as he was too much of a man to limit his greeting to Ewan, he always pitched into Mona with the same masculine impartiality.

But the time came again when the salutation was unnecessary, for they were sent to school together, and they saw one another daily. There was only one school to which they could be sent, and that was the parish school, the same that was taught by James Quirk, who "could not divide his syllables," according to the account of Jabez Gawne, the tailor.

The parishioners had built their new schoolhouse near the church, and it lay about midway between Bishop's Court and Ballamona. It was also about half-way down the road that led to the sea, and that was a proximity of never-ending delight. After school, in the long summer evenings, the

scholars would troop down to the shore in one tumultuous company, the son of the Bishop with the son of the cobbler, the Deemster's little girl with the big girl of Jabez, who sent his child on charity. Ragged and well-clad, clean and dirty, and the biggest lad "rigging" the smallest, and not caring a ha'porth if his name was the name of the Deemster or the name of Billy the Gawk. Hand-in-hand, Danny and Ewan, with Mona between, would skip and caper along the sands down to where the gray rocks of the Head jutted out into the sea and bounded the universe; Mona prattling and singing, shaking out her wavy hair to the wind, dragging Danny aside to look at a seaweed, and pulling Ewan to look at a shell, tripping down to the water's edge, until the big bearded waves touched her boots, and then back once more with a half-frightened, half-affected, laughter-loaded scream. Then the boys would strip and bathe, and Mona, being only a woman, would mind the men's clothes, or they would shout all together at the gulls, and Danny would mock Mother Cary's chicken and catch the doleful cry of the cormorant, and pelt with pebbles the long-necked bird as it sat on the rocks; or he would clamber up over the slippery seaweed, across the sharp slate ribs to where the sea-pinks grew in the corries and the sea-duck laid her eggs, and sing out from some dizzy height to where Ewan held his breath below and Mona stood crying and trembling on the sands.

What times for Danny! How the lad seemed to swell and grow every day of life! Before he was ten he had outgrown Ewan by half an inch, and gone through a stand-up fight with every ruffian under twelve. Then, down among the fishermen on the beach, what sport! Knocking about among the boats, pulling at the oars like mad, or tugging at the sheets, baling out and pushing off, and riding away over the white breakers, and shouting for pure devilment above the splash of the water.

"Aw, man, it's all for the happy the lad feels inside," said Billy Quilleash.

Danny and Billy Quilleash were sworn chums, and the little sand-boy learned all the old salt's racy sayings, and went home to Bishop's Court and fired them off at his father.

"There's a storm coming," the Bishop said one day, looking up at the scudding clouds. "Ay, ay," said Danny, with his small eye askew, "the long cat's tail was going off at a slant a while ago, and now the round thick skate yonder is hanging mortal low." "The wind is rising," the Bishop said on another occasion. "Ay, Davy's putting on the coppers for the parson," said the young heretic.

School, too, was only another playground to Danny, a little less tumultuous but no less delightful than the shore. The schoolmaster had grown very deaf since the days when the Bishop pronounced him qualified to teach an English school. This deafness he did his best to conceal, for he had a lively recollection of the dissatisfaction of the parishioners, and he had a natural unwillingness to lose his bread and butter. But his scholars were not easily hoodwinked, and Danny, the daring young dog, would play on the master's infirmity. "Spell me the word arithmetic," the schoolmaster might ask when the boys were ranged about his desk in class. And Danny would answer with a face of tragic solemnity, "Twice one are two, twice two are four." "Very good," the schoolmaster would reply. "And now, sir, repeat me your multiplication table – twice times." And then, while the master held his head aside, as if in the act of intent listening, and the other boys twisted their faces to hide their grins or sniggered openly, Danny, still with the face of a judge, would repeat a paraphrase of the familiar little hymn, "Jemmy was a Welshman, Jemmy was a thief, Jemmy – " "Don't speak so fast, sir – say your figures more plainly," the schoolmaster would interrupt. And Danny would begin again with a more explicit enunciation, "Jemmy Quirk was a Welshman, Jemmy – " Then the sniggers and the snorts would rise to a tumult. And down would come the master's cane on the desk. "Silence, boys, and let the boy say his table. Some of you big lads might take example by him, and be none the worse. Go on, Daniel – you are quite right so far – twice five are ten, twice six – "

There was one lad in the school who could not see the humor of the situation, a slim, quiet boy, only a little older than Danny, but a long way ahead of him in learning, and one evening this solemn youngster hung behind when school was breaking up, and blurted out the mischief to the schoolmaster. He did not get the reception he expected, for, in dire wrath at the imputation that he was deaf, Mr. Quirk birched the informant soundly. Nor did the reward of his treachery end with

birching. It did not take half an hour for the report of both birching and treachery to travel by that swiftest of telephones, the schoolboy tongue, through that widest of kingdoms, the world of school; and the same evening, while Mona, on her way home, was gathering the bluebells that grew on the lea of the yellow-tipped gorse, and Ewan was chasing the humming bee through the hot air that was thick with midges, Danny, with a face as white as a haddock, was striding alone by a long circuit across the moor, to where a cottage stood by the path across the Head. There he bounded in at the porch, caught a boy by the coat, dragged him into the road, pummeled him with silent vigor, while the lad bellowed and struggled to escape.

In another instant, an old woman hobbled out of the cottage on a stick, and with that weapon she made for Danny, and gave him sundry hard raps on the back and head.

"Och, the craythur," she cried, "get off with ye – the damon – extraordinary – would the Lord think it now – it's in the breed of ye – get off, or I'll break every bone in your skin."

Danny paid as little heed to the old woman's blows as to her threats, and was up with his fist for the twentieth time to come down on the craven traitor who bellowed in his grip, when all at once a horse's feet were tramping about their limbs where they struggled in the road, and a stern voice from over their heads shouted, "Stop, stop, or must I bring the whip across your flanks?"

It was the Deemster. Danny fell aside on the right of the horse, and the old woman and the boy on the left.

"What does this mean?" asked the Deemster, turning to his nephew; but Danny stood there panting, his eyes like fire, his fists clinched, his knuckles standing out like ribs of steel, and he made no answer.

"Who is this blubbering coward?" asked the Deemster, pointing with a contemptuous gesture to the boy half hidden by the old woman's dress.

"Coward, is it?" said the woman. "Coward, you say?"

"Who is the brat, Mrs. Kerruish?" said the Deemster, sharply.

At that Mrs. Kerruish, for it was she, pulled the boy from behind her, plucked off his hat, ran her wrinkled hand over his forehead to his hair, and held up his face, and said:

"Look at him, Deemster – look at him. You don't come this way often, but look at him while you're here. Did you ever see his picture before? Never? Never see a face like that? No? Not when you look in the glass, Deemster?"

"Get into the house, woman," said the Deemster, in a low, thick tone, and so saying, he put the spurs to his horse.

"As for this young demon here," said the old woman, pushing the boy back and pointing with her stick at Danny, "he'll have his heel on your neck yet, Deemster – and remember the word I'm saying."

CHAPTER VII

DANNY THE MADCAP

Now, Danny was a great favorite with the Deemster, and nothing that he could do was amiss. The spice of mischief in the lad made him the darling of the Deemster's heart. His own son disappointed the Deemster. He seemed to have no joy in him. Ewan was quiet, and his father thought him a milksop. There was more than one sense in which the Deemster was an indifferent judge of his species, but he found no difficulty in comprehending the idiosyncrasy of his brother's son. Over the pathetic story of Danny's maddest prank, or the last mournful account of his daring devilry, the Deemster would chuckle and shake, and roll his head between his shoulders, then give the boy a slap on his hindmost part, accompanied by a lusty name, and finally rummage for something in his pocket, and smuggle that something into the young rascal's palm.

Danny would be about fifteen years of age – a lump of a lad, and therefore out of the leading-strings of his nurse, Kerry Quayle – when he concocted a most audacious scheme, whereof Kerry was the chief subject and victim. This had nothing less for its aim and object than to get Kerry married to Hommy-beg – the blind woman to the deaf man. Now, Hommy was a gaunt, raw-boned man, dressed in a rough blue jacket and a short gray petticoat. His full and proper name was now quite lost. He was known as Hommy-beg, sometimes as Hommy-beg-Bill, a name which at once embodied a playful allusion to his great physique, and a certain genealogical record in showing that he was little Tom, the son of Bill. Though scarcely short of stone-deaf, he was musical. He played two instruments, the fiddle and the voice. The former squeaked like a rasp, and the latter thundered like a fog-horn. Away to Ballamona Master Danny went, and found Hommy-beg thinning a bed of peonies.

"Aw, man, the terrible fond she is of the like o' that swate flower," said the young rogue, who spoke the homespun to the life. "Aw, dear, the way she smells at them when you bring them up for the Bishop!"

"What, ould Kerry? Smelling, is it? And never a whiff of a smell at the breed o' them!"

"Och, no, it's not the flowers, it's the man – the man, Hommy."

"That'll do, that'll do. And blind, too! Well, well."

"But the swate temper that's at her, Hommy! And the coaxing and coaxing of her! And, man alive, the fond she is of you! *A fine sort of a man anyways*, and *A rael good voice at him*. Aw, extraordinary, extraordinary."

"D'ye raelly mane it?"

"Mane it? Aw, well, well, and who but you doesn't know it, Hommy?"

"Astonishing, astonishing!"

"Come up to the Coort and take a cup o' tay with her."

Hommy-beg scratched his head. "Is it rarely true, Danny veg?"

"I'll lave it with you, Hommy," said Danny, and straightway the young rascal went back to Bishop's Court, lighted upon blind Kerry, and entered upon a glowing description of the personal charms of Hommy-beg.

"Aw, the good-looking he is, astonishing! My gough! You should see him in his Sunday hat, or maybe with a frill on his shirt, and smiling, and all to that! Terrible dacent sort is Hommy-beg!"

"What, the loblolly-boy in the petticoat?"

"Aw, but the tender-hearted he is for all, and, bless me, Kerry woman, the swate he is on you!"

"What, the ould red-head that comes singing, as the saying is?"

"Aw, no, woman, but as black as the raven, and the way he looks sorrowful-like when he comes beside of you. You wouldn't believe it! And, bless me, the rael bad he is to come up to the Coort and take a cup of tay with you, and the like o' that."

"Do you raelly mane it, Danny, my chree?"

The very next day Hommy-beg arrived at the kitchen door of Bishop's Court in his Sunday hat, in the shirt with the frill to it, and with a peony as big as a March cabbage in his fist. The end of it all was that Kerry and Hommy-beg were forthwith asked in church. Wild as the freak was that made the deaf man and the blind woman man and wife, their marriage was none the less happy for their infirmities.

The Deemster heard of the plot on his way to church on Sunday morning, and he laughed in his throat all through the service, and when the first of the askings was solemnly proclaimed from the reading-desk, he tittered audibly in his pew. "Danny was tired of the woman's second sight – found it inconvenient, very – wanted to be rid of her – good!" he chuckled. But not long afterward he enjoyed a jest that was yet more to his taste, for his own prime butt of ridicule, the Church itself, was then the victim.

It was an old Manx custom that on Christmas Eve the church should be given up to the people for the singing of their native carols or carvals. The curious service was known as Oiel Verree (the Eve of Mary), and at every such service for the last twenty years Hommy-beg, the gardener, and Mr. James Quirk, the schoolmaster, had officiated as singers in the strange Manx ritual. Great had hitherto been the rivalry between these musical celebrities, but word had gone round the town that at length their efforts were to be combined in a carol which they were to sing together. Dan had effected this extraordinary combination of talent by a plot which was expected to add largely to the amusement of the listeners.

Hommy-beg could not read a syllable, yet he never would sing his carol without having the printed copy of it in his hand. Of course, Mr. Quirk, the schoolmaster, could read, but, as we have seen, he resembled Hommy-beg in being almost stone-deaf. Each could hear himself sing, but neither could hear another.

And now for the plot. Master Dan called on the gardener at his cottage on the Brew on the morning of the day before Christmas Day, and "Hommy," said he, "it's morthal strange the way a man of your common-sense can't see that you'd wallop that squeaking ould Jemmy Quirk in a jiffy if you'd only consent to sing a ballad along of him. Bless me, man alive, it's then they'd be seeing what a weak, ould cracked pot of a voice is at him."

Hommy-beg's face began to wear a smile of benevolent condescension. Observing his advantage, the young rascal continued, "Do it at the Oiel Verree to-night, Hommy. He'll sing his treble, and you'll sing seconds to him."

It was an unlucky remark. The gardener frowned austere. "Me sing seconds to the craythur? No, never!"

Dan explained to Hommy-beg, with a world of abject apologies, that there was a sense in which seconds meant firsts, and at length the gardener was mollified, and consented to the proposal; but one idea was firmly rooted in his mind – namely, that if he was to sing a carol with the schoolmaster, he must take the best of care to sing his loudest, in order to drown at once the voice of his rival, and the bare notion that it was he who was singing seconds to such a poor creature as that.

Then Master Danny trotted off to the schoolhouse, where he was now no longer a scholar, and consequently enjoyed an old boy's privilege of approaching the master on equal terms, and "Jemmy," he said, "it's morthal strange the way a man of your common-sense can't see that you'd wallop that squeaking old Hommy-beg in a jiffy if you'd only consent to sing a ballad along of him. Do it at the Oiel Verree to-night, Jemmy, and, bless me! that's the when they'll be seeing what a weak, ould crack-pot of a voice is at the craythur."

The schoolmaster fell even an easier prey to the plot than the gardener had been. A carol was selected; it was to be the ancient Manx carol on the bad women mentioned in the Bible as having (from Eve downward) brought evil on mankind.

Now, Hommy-beg kept his carols pinned against the walls of his cottage. The "Bad Women" was the carol which was pinned above the mantelpiece, just under the pendulum of the clock with the facetious face. It resembled the other prints in being worn, crumpled, and dirty; but Hommy-beg knew it by its position, and he could distinguish every other carol by its place on the walls.

Danny had somehow got a "skute" into this literary mystery, and after arranging with the schoolmaster the carol that was to be sung, he watched Hommy-beg out of his cottage, and then went into it under pretense of a friendly call upon blind Kerry. Before he left the cottage he had taken down the carol that had been pinned above the mantelpiece, and fixed up another in place of it from the opposite side of the room. The substituted carol happened, oddly enough, to be a second copy of the carol on "Bad Women," with this radical difference: the copy taken from under the clock was the version of the carol in English, and the copy put up was the version in Manx. Toward ten o'clock that night the church bells began to ring, and Hommy-beg looked at the clock, took the carol from under the pendulum, put on his best petticoat, and went off to church.

Now, there were to be seasonable rejoicings at the Court on the morrow, and Kerry had gone over to help at the Christmas preparations. Ewan and Mona had always spent their Christmas at Bishop's Court since the day when they left it as children. That night they had arrived as usual, and after they had spent some hours with Danny in dressing the house in a green-and-red garment of hibbin and hollin, the Bishop had turned them off to bed. Danny's bedroom was the little crib over the library, and Ewan's was the room over that. All three bade the Bishop good-night and went into their rooms. But Danny did not go to bed; he listened until he heard the Bishop in the library twisting his chair and stirring the peats, and then he whipped off his boots and crept upstairs to Ewan's room. There in bated breath he told of the great sport that was to come off at the Oiel Verree, announced his intention of going, and urged Ewan to go with him. They could just jump through the little window of his room, and light on the soft grass by the library wall, and get in again by the same easy means. No one would know that they had been out, and what high jinks they must have! But no, Ewan was not to be persuaded, and Danny set off alone.

Hommy-beg did not reach the church until the parson's sermon was almost over. Prayers had been said in a thin congregation, but no sooner were they done than crowds of young men and maidens tripped down the aisles. The young women went up into the gallery, and from that elevation they shot down at their bachelor friends large handfuls of peas. To what ancient spirit of usage, beyond the ancient spirit of mischief, the strange practise was due, we must be content to leave, as a solemn problem, to the learned and curious antiquaries. Nearly everyboy carried a candle, and the candles of the young women were adorned with a red ribbon or rosette.

In passing out of the church the parson came face to face with Hommy-beg, who was pushing his way up the aisle. The expression on his face was not at the moment one of peculiar grace, and he stopped the gardener and said sharply in his ear, "Mind you see that all is done in decency and order, and that you close my church before midnight."

"Aw, but the church is the people's, I'm thinkin'," said Hommy-beg with a shake of his tousled head.

"The people are as ignorant as goats," said the parson, angrily.

"Aw, well, and you're their shepherd, so just make sheeps of them," said Hommy-beg, and he pushed on.

Danny was there by this time, and, with a face of mighty solemnity, he sat on the right of Hommy-beg, and held a candle in his left hand. When everything was understood to be ready, and Will-as-Thorn, the clerk, had taken his station inside the communion rail, the business of the Oiel Verree began. First one man got up and sung a carol in English; then another sung a Manx carol. But the great event of the night was to be the carol sung by the sworn enemies and rivals, Hommy-beg and Mr. James Quirk.

At last the time came for these worthies. They rose from opposite sides of the church, eyed each other with severe looks, stepped out of their pews, and walked down the aisle to the door of the porch. Then they turned about in silence, and, standing side by side, faced the communion.

The tittering in the gallery and whispering in the body were audible to all except the persons who were the cause of both. "Hush, hush, man alive, that's him, that's him." "Bless me, look at Hommy-beg and the petticut, and the handkercher pinnin' round his throat." "Aw, dear, it's what he's used of." "A regular Punch and Judy."

Danny was exerting himself at that moment to keep order and silence. "Hush, man, let them make a start for all."

The carol the rivals were about to sing contained some thirty verses. It was an ancient usage that after each verse the carol singers should take a long stride toward the communion. By the time the carol of "Bad Women" came to an end the carol singers must, therefore, be at the opposite end of the church.

There was now a sublime scorn printed on the features of Mr. Quirk. As for Hommy-beg, he looked, at this last instant, like a man who was rather sorry than otherwise for his rash adversary.

"The ertain they're looking," whispered a girl in the gallery to the giggling companion beside her.

Expectation was at its highest when Hommy-beg thrust his hand into his pocket and brought out the printed copy of the carol. Hommy unfolded it, glanced at it with the air of a conductor taking a final look at his score, nodded his head at it as if in approval, and then, with a magnanimous gesture, held it between himself and Mr. Quirk. The schoolmaster in turn glanced at it, glanced again, glanced a third time at the paper, and up into the face of Hommy-beg.

Anxiety was now on tiptoe. "Hush, d'ye hear, hush," whispered Danny from his pew; "hush, man, or it's spoiling it all you'll be, for sure."

At the moment when Mr. Quirk glanced into the face of Hommy-beg there was a smile on that countenance. Mr. Quirk mistook that smile. He imagined he saw a trick. The schoolmaster could read, and he perceived that the carol which the gardener held out to him was not the carol for which he had been told by Master Danny to prepare. They were, by arrangement, to have sung the English version of "Bad Women." This was the Manx version, and though the metre was the same, it was always sung to a different tune. Ah! Mr. Quirk understood it all! The monster wanted to show that he, James Quirk, schoolmaster, could only sing one carol; but, as sure as his name was Jemmy, he would be equal with him! He could sing this Manx version, and he would. It was now Mr. Quirk's turn to smile.

"Aw, look at them – the two of them – grinnin' together like a pair of old gurgols on the steeple!"

At a motion of the gardener's hand, intended to beat the time, the singers began. Hommy-beg sang the carol agreed upon – the English version of "Bad Women." Mr. Quirk sang the carol they held in their hands – the Manx version of "Bad Women." Neither heard the other, and to dispel the bare notion that either was singing seconds, each bawled at the utmost reach of his lung-power. To one tune Hommy-beg sang:

"Thus from the days of Adam
Her mischief you may trace."

And to another Mr. Quirk sang:

"She ish va'n voir ain ooilley
Son v'ee da Adam ben."

Such laughter! How the young women in the gallery lay back in their seats with hysterical shrieks! How the young fellows in the body made the sacred edifice ring with guffaws! But the singers, with eyes steadfastly fixed on the paper, heard nothing but each his own voice.

Three verses had been sung, and three strides made toward the communion, when suddenly the laughter and shouting of the people ceased. All eyes had turned toward the porch. There the Bishop stood, with blank amazement printed on his face, his head bare, and one hand on the half-opened door.

If a spectre had appeared the consternation had scarcely been greater. Danny had been rolling in his pew with unconstrained laughter, but at sight of the Bishop his candle fell from his hand and sputtered on the book-rail. The Bishop turned about, and before the people had recovered from their surprise he was gone. At the next moment everybody got up without a word and left the church. In two minutes more not a soul remained except Hommy-beg and Mr. Jemmy Quirk, who, with eyes riveted on the printed carol in their hands, still sang lustily, oblivious of the fact that they had no audience.

When Danny left the church that night it was through the lancet-window of the vestry. Dropping on the turf at the northeast of the church, he leaped the wall that divided the churchyard from a meadow on the north, and struck upon a path that went round to Bishop's Court by way of the cliff-head. The path was a long one, but it was lonesome, and its lonesomeness was no small merit in Danny's view that night. The Bishop must return to the Court by the highway through the village, and the Bishop must be in front of him.

The night was dark and dumb, and, laden with salt scent, the dank vapor floated up from the sea. Danny walked quickly. The deep boom of the waters rolling on the sand below came up to him through the dense air. Late as was the hour, he could hear the little sandpiper screaming at Orris Head. The sea-swallow shot over him too, with its low, mournful cry. Save for these sounds, and the quick beat of his own feet, all was still around him.

Beneath his stubborn bit of skepticism Danny was superstitious. He was full to the throat of fairy-lore and stories of witchcraft. He had learned both from old Billy Quilleash and his mates as they sat barking their nets on the shore. And that night the ghostly memories would arise, do what he might to keep them down. To banish them Danny began to whistle, and, failing to enliven himself much by that exercise, he began to sing. His selection of a song was not the happiest under the circumstances. It was the doleful ballad of "Myle Charaine." Danny sang it in Manx, but here is a stave of it in English:

"Oh, Myle Charaine, where got you your gold?
Lone, lone, you have left me here;
Oh, not in the Curragh, deep under the mold —
Lone, lone, and void of cheer."

He had come up to Bishop's Court on the sea-front, and there the Bishop's library stood out from the body of the old house, between the chapel porch and the kitchen offices. A light was in the library, and passing over the soft grass with the soft flight of a lapwing, Danny peered in at the curtainless window. The familiar room was empty. On the hearth a turf fire burned without flame, and bathed the book-encased walls in a rosy red. The Bishop's easy-chair, in its white covering, stood at one side of the ingle, his slippers in front of it; and beside it, on the little three-legged mahogany table, were the inkhorn and the long quill, and the Bishop's four-cornered library cap. The door stood ajar, and the two candles in the two brass brackets at each side of the fireplace were tipped by their extinguishers.

The Bishop had not returned; but the faint smile of triumph which at that thought rested like a ray of pale sunshine on Danny's face suddenly vanished. In a lad's vague way Danny now realized that it had not been merely because the night was dark and the road lonely that he had whistled and

sung. He hung his head where he stood in the night, and as if by an involuntary movement, he lifted his cap and fumbled it.

At the next instant Danny was clambering up the angle of the wall to the lead flat that covered the projecting part of the library. From this lead flat there opened the window of his own bedroom, and in a moment he was striding through it. All was darkness within, but he needed no light to see his way in that room. He knew every crib and corner; the place where he kept his fishing lines, the nail from which his moth-net hung, the bottle on the drawers in which he had his minnows, and the can with the lid well down that contained the newts that were the terror of all the women in the house. If Danny had been as blind as old Kerry he could have found everything his room had in it, except, perhaps, his breeches, or his shirt, or his other coat, or that cap that was always getting itself lost, and of course no sight and no light would help a lad to find things like these.

Hardly had Danny taken a step into his room before he realized that some one had been there since he left it. Derry, his white-eyed collie, who had been lying on the bed, dropped on the floor, and frisked about him. "Down, Derry, down!" he whispered, and for a moment he thought it might have been Derry that had pushed open the door. But the dog's snout could not have turned down the counterpane of the bed, or opened the top drawer that held the fishing flies, or rummaged among the long rods in the corner. The counterpane lay double, the drawer stood open, the rods were scattered – some one had been there to look for him, and, not finding him, had tried to find a reason for his absence, and that some one had either come into the room in the dark, or – been blind.

"Aw, it's always Kerry that's in it," Danny told himself, and with an unpleasant remembrance of Kerry's strange faculty, whereof he was the peculiar victim, he reflected that his race home had been vain. Then on the instant Danny found himself concocting a trick to defeat appearances. He had a foot on the stairs to carry out his design, when he heard the door at the front of the house open and close, and a familiar step pass through the hall. The Bishop had returned. Danny waited and listened. Now there was talking in the library. Danny's quick ear could scarcely distinguish the words, but the voices he could not mistake – they were the voices of the Bishop and blind Kerry. With a stealthy stride Danny went up to Ewan's room. Ewan was sleeping. Feeling hot and cold together, Danny undressed and turned into bed. Before he had time to bury his head under the clothes he heard the Bishop on the stairs. The footsteps passed into the room below, and then after an interval they were again on the stairs. In another moment Danny knew, though of course his eyes were fast shut, and he was sleeping most profoundly, that the Bishop with a lighted candle in his hand was leaning over him.

It would wrong the truth to say that Master Danny's slumber was disturbed that night; but next morning when the boys awoke together, and Ewan rose on his elbow with a puzzled gaze at his unexpected bed-fellow, Danny sidled out of the bed on to the floor, and, without looking too much into Ewan's face, he began his toilet, as was his wont, by putting on his cap. He had got this length, and was standing in cap and shirt, when he blurted out the mischief of last night's adventure, the singing, the sudden appearance of the Bishop, the race home along the cliff, and the coming up to bed. "But you won't let on, Ewan, will you?" he said. Ewan looked at that moment as if the fate of the universe hung on his answer, but he gave the promise that was required of him. Then the boys went downstairs and found Mona, and imparted the dread secret to her. Presently the Bishop came in to breakfast with a face that was paler than usual, and more than ordinarily solemn.

"Danny," he said, "why did you not sleep in your own bed last night, my boy?"

"I slept with Ewan, father," Danny answered, promptly.

The Bishop said no more then, and they all sat down at the table.

"And so you two boys went to bed together —*together*?" he said, and, with a dig of emphasis on his last word, repeated, he looked at Ewan.

Ewan's face crimsoned, and his tongue faltered, "Yes, uncle."

The Bishop's eyes fell. "Boys," he said, in another tone, "would you think it? I have done you a great wrong."

The boys were just then most intent on the tablecloth.

"You must know," the Bishop went on, "that there was a most unseemly riot at the Oiel Verree, and all night long I have been sore troubled by the bad thought that Danny was in the midst of it."

The boys held their heads very low over their plates, and Mona's big eyes filled visibly. Danny's impulse was to blurt out the whole mischief there and then, but he reflected that to do so would be to charge Ewan with falsehood. Ewan, on his part, would have confessed to the deception, but he knew that this would mean that Danny must be punished. The boy's wise head could see no way out of a tangle like that. The breakfast was the quietest ever eaten on a Christmas morning at Bishop's Court, and, little as the talking was, the Bishop, strangely enough, did it all. But when they rose from the table, and the boys slunk out of the room with most portentous gravity, Mona went up to the Bishop with a face full of liquid grief, and, turning the whole depths of her great troubled eyes upon him, the little maiden said: "Ewan didn't mean to tell you what wasn't true – and cousin Danny didn't intend to deceive – but he was – that is, Danny – I mean – dear uncle, you won't – "

"You mean that Danny was at the Oiel Verree last night – I know it, child, I know it," said the Bishop, and he patted her head and smiled.

But the Bishop knew also that Danny had that day made one more step down the steep of life, and left a little ghost of his child-self behind him, and in his secret heart the Bishop saw that shadowy form, and wept over it.

CHAPTER VIII

PASSING THE LOVE OF WOMEN

Now the facts of this history must stride on some six years, and in that time the Deemster had lost nearly all the little interest he ever felt in his children. Mona had budded into womanhood, tender, gracious, quiet – a tall fair-haired maiden of twenty, with a drooping head like a flower, with a voice soft and low, and the full blue eyes with their depths of love and sympathy shaded by long fluttering lashes as the trembling sedge shades the deep mountain pool. It was as ripe and beautiful a womanhood as the heart of a father might dream of, but the Deemster could take little pleasure in it. If Mona had been his son, her quiet ways and tractable nature might have counted for something; but a woman was only a woman in the Deemster's eyes, and the Deemster, like the Bedouin chief, would have numbered his children without counting his daughter. As for Ewan, he had falsified every hope of the Deemster. His Spartan training had gone for nothing. He was physically a weakling; a tall spare youth of two-and-twenty, fair-haired, like his sister, with a face as spiritual and beautiful, and hardly less feminine. He was of a self-torturing spirit, constantly troubled with vague questionings, and though in this regard he was very much his father's son, the Deemster held his temperament in contempt.

The end of all was that Ewan showed a strong desire to enter the Church. The Deemster had intended that his son should study the law and follow him in his place when his time came. But Ewan's womanly temperament coexisted with a manly temper. Into the law he would not go, and the Church he was resolved to follow. The Bishop had then newly opened at Bishop's Court a training college for his clergy, and Ewan sought and obtained admission. The Deemster fumed, but his son was not to be moved even by his wrath. This was when Ewan was nineteen years of age, and after two more years the spirituality of his character overcame the obstacle of his youth, and the Bishop ordained him at twenty-one. Then Ewan was made chaplain to the household at Bishop's Court.

Hardly had this been done when Ewan took another step in life. With the knowledge of the Bishop, but without consulting the Deemster, he married, being now of age, a pretty child of sixteen, the daughter of his father's old foe, the vicar of the parish. When knowledge of this act of unwisdom reached the Deemster his last remaining spark of interest in his son expired, and he sent Mona across to Bishop's Court with a curt message saying that Ewan and his wife were at liberty, if they liked, to take possession of the old Ballamona. Thus he turned his back upon his son, and did his best to wipe him out of his mind.

Ewan took his young wife to the homestead that had been the place of his people for six generations, the place where he himself had been born, the place where that other Ewan, his good grandfather, had lived and died.

More than ever for these events the Deemster became a solitary man. He kept no company; he took no pleasures. Alone he sat night after night in his study at Ballamona, and Ballamona was asleep before he slept, and before it awoke he was stirring. His daughter's presence in the house was no society for the Deemster. She grew beside him like her mother's youth, a yet fairer vision of the old days coming back to him hour by hour, but he saw nothing of all that. Disappointed in his sole hope, his son, whom truly he had never loved for love's sake, but only for his own sorry ambitions, he sat down under his disappointment a doubly soured and thrice-hardened man. He had grown noticeably older, but his restless energy suffered no abatement. Biweekly he kept his court, but few sought the law whom the law did not first find, for word went round that the Deemster was a hard judge, and deemed the laws in rigor. If men differed about money, they would say, "Och, why go to the Deemster? It's throwing a bone into the bad dog's mouth," and then they would divide their difference.

The one remaining joy of the Deemster's lonely life was centred in his brother's son, Dan. That lusty youth had not disappointed his expectations. At twenty he was a braw, brown-haired, brown-eyed lad of six feet two inches in stature, straight and upright, and with the thews and sinews of an ox. He was the athlete of the island, and where there was a tough job of wrestling to be had, or a delightful bit of fighting to be done, there was Dan in the heart of it. "Aw, and middling few could come anigh him," the people used to say. But more than in Dan's great stature and great strength, the little Deemster took a bitter pleasure in his daring irreverence for things held sacred. In this regard Dan had not improved with improving years. Scores of tricks his sad pugnacity devised to help the farmers to cheat the parson of his tithe, and it added not a little to the Deemster's keen relish of freaks like these that it was none other than the son of the Bishop who perpetrated them. As for the Bishop himself, he tried to shut his eyes to such follies. He meant his son to go into the Church, and, in spite of all outbursts of spirit, notwithstanding wrestling matches and fights, and even some tipsy broils of which rumor was in the air, he entered Dan as a student at the college he kept at Bishop's Court.

In due course the time of Dan's examination came, and then all further clinging to a forlorn hope was at an end. The Archdeacon acted as the Bishop's examining chaplain, and more than once the little man had declared in advance his conscientious intention of dealing with the Bishop's son as he would deal with any other. The examination took place in the library of Bishop's Court, and besides the students and the examiner there were some six or seven of the clergy present, and Ewan Mylrea, then newly ordained, was among them. It was a purely oral examination, and when Dan's turn came the Archdeacon assumed his loftiest look, and first tackled the candidate where he was known to be weakest.

"I suppose, sir, you think you can read your Greek Testament?"

Dan answered that he had never thought anything about it.

"I dare say for all your modesty that you have an idea that you know it well enough to teach it," said the Archdeacon.

Dan hadn't an idea on the subject.

"Take down the Greek Testament, and imagine that I'm your pupil, and proceed to expound it," said the Archdeacon.

Dan took the book from the bookcase and fumbled it in his fingers.

"Well, sir, open at the parable of the tares."

Dan scratched his big head leisurely, and he did his best to find the place. "So I'm to be tutor – is that it?" he said, with a puzzled look.

"That is so."

"And you are to be the pupil?"

"Precisely – suppose yourself my tutor – and now begin."

At this Ewan stepped out with a look of anxiety. "Is not that a rather difficult supposition, Archdeacon?" he said, timidly.

The Archdeacon glanced over his grandson loftily and made no reply.

"Begin, sir, begin," he said, with a sweep of his hand toward Dan, and at that he sat down in the high-backed oak chair at the head of the table.

Then on the instant there came into Dan's quick eyes a most mischievous twinkle. He was standing before the table with the Greek Testament open at the parable of the tares, and he knew too well he could not read the parable.

"When do we change places, Archdeacon?" he asked.

"We have changed places – you are now the tutor – I am your pupil – begin, sir."

"Oh! we have changed places, have we?" said Dan, and at that he lifted up the Archdeacon's silver-tipped walking-cane which lay on the table and brought it down again with a bang. "Then just you get up off your chair, sir," he said, with a tone of command.

The Archdeacon's russet face showed several tints of blue at that moment, but he rose to his feet. Thereupon Dan handed him the open book.

"Now, sir," he said, "first read me the parable of the tares."

The clergy began to shuffle about and look into each other's faces. The Archdeacon's expression was not amiable, but he took the book and read the parable.

"Very fair, very fair indeed," said Dan, in a tone of mild condescension – "a few false quantities, but very fair on the whole."

"Gentlemen, gentlemen, this is going too far," said one of the clergy.

"Silence, sir," said Dan, with a look of outraged authority.

Then there was dire confusion. Some of the clergy laughed outright, and some giggled under their breath, and some protested in white wrath, and the end of it all was that the examination came to a sudden termination, and, rightly or wrongly, wisely or foolishly, Dan was adjudged to be unfit for the ministry of the Church.

When the Bishop heard the verdict his pale face whitened visibly, and he seemed to see the beginning of the end. At that moment he thought of the Deemster with bitterness. This blow to his hopes did not cement the severed lives of the brothers. The forces that had been dividing them year by year since the days of their father appeared to be drawing them yet wider apart in the lives and fortunes of their children. Each felt that the other was frustrating his dearest expectations in his son, and that was an offense that neither could forgive. To the Deemster it seemed that the Bishop was bearing down every ambition of his life, tearing him up as a naked trunk, leaving him a childless man. To the Bishop it seemed that the Deemster was wrecking the one life that was more to him than his own soul, and standing between him and the heart that with all its follies was dearer than the world beside. From the time of Ewan's marriage and Dan's disgrace the Bishop and the Deemster rarely met, and when they passed on the road they exchanged only the coldest salutation.

But if the fates were now more than ever fostering an unnatural enmity between the sons of old Ewan they were cherishing at the same time the loves of their children. Never were cousins more unlike or more fondly attached. Between Dan, the reckless scapegrace, and Mona, with the big soft eyes and the quiet ways, the affection was such as neither understood. They had grown up side by side, they had seen each other daily, they had scampered along the shore with clasped hands, they had screamed at the sea-gulls with one voice, and still they were boy and girl together. But once they were stooking the barley in the glebe, and, the day being hot, Mona tipped back her white sun-bonnet, and it fell on to her shoulders. Seeing this, Dan came stealthily behind and thought very craftily to whisk it away unobserved; but the strings by which it was tied caught in her hair and tugged at its knot, and the beautiful wavy shower fell rip-rip-rippling down her back. The wind caught the loosened hair and tossed it about her, and she stood up erect among the corn with the first blush on her cheeks that Dan had ever brought there, and turned full upon him all the glorious light of her deep blue eyes. Then, then, oh then, Dan seemed to see her for the first time a girl no longer, but a woman, a woman, a woman! And the mountains behind her were in one instant blotted out of Dan's eyes, and everything seemed to spin about him.

When next he knew where he was, and what he was doing, behold, there were Mona's rosy lips under his, and she was panting and gasping for breath.

But if the love of Dan and Mona was more than cousinly, though they knew it not as yet, the love of Ewan for Dan was wonderful and passing the love of women. That pure soul, with its vague spiritual yearnings, seemed to have nothing in common with the jovial roysterer, always fighting, always laughing, taking disgrace as a duck takes water, and losing the trace of it as easily. Twenty times he stood between the scapegrace and the Bishop, twenty times he hid from the good father the follies of the son. He thought for that thoughtless head that never had an ache or a care under its abundant curls; he hoped for that light heart that hoped for nothing; he trembled for the soul that felt no fear. Never was such loyalty between man and man since David wept for Jonathan. And Ewan's

marriage disturbed this affection not at all, for the love he bore to Dan was a brotherly passion for which language has yet no name.

Let us tell one story that shall show this friendship in its double bearings – Ewan's love and temper and Dan's heedless harshness and the great nature beneath it, and then we will pass on with fuller knowledge to weightier matters.

Derry, the white-eyed collie that had nestled on the top of his master's bed the night Dan sneaked home in disgrace from Oiel Verree, was a crafty little fox, with cunning and duplicity bred in his very bones. If you were a tramp of the profession of Billy the Gawk, he would look up at you with his big innocent eyes, and lick your hand, and thrust his nose into your palm, and the next moment he would seize you by the hindmost parts and hold on like a leech. His unamiable qualities grew as he grew in years, and one day Dan went on a long journey, leaving Derry behind, and when he returned he had another dog with him, a great shaggy Scotch collie, with bright eyes, a happy phiz, and a huge bush of a tail. Derry was at the gate when his master came home, and he eyed the new-comer with looks askance. From that day Derry turned his back on his master, he would never answer his call, and he did not know his whistle from the croak of a corn-crake. In fact, Derry took his own courses, and forthwith fell into all manner of dissolute habits. He went out at night alone, incognito, and kept most unchristian hours. The farmers around complained that their sheep were found dead in the field, torn and worried by a dog's teeth. Derry was known to be a dog that did not live a reputable life, and suspicion fell on him. Dan took the old fox in hand, and thenceforward Derry looked out on the world through a rope muzzle.

One day there was to be a sheep-dog match, and Dan entered his Scotch collie, Laddie. The race was to be in the meadow at the foot of Slieu Dhoo, and great crowds of people came to witness it. Hurdles were set up to make all crooks and cranks of difficulty, and then a drift of sheep were turned loose in the field. The prize was to the dog that would, at the word of its master, gather the sheep together and take them out at the gate in the shortest time. Ewan, then newly married, was there, and beside him was his child-wife. Time was called, and Dan's turn came to try the mettle of his Laddie. The dog started well, and in two or three minutes he had driven the whole flock save two into an alcove of hurdles close to where Ewan and his wife stood together. Then at the word of his master Laddie set off over the field for the stragglers, and Dan shouted to Ewan not to stir a hand or foot, or the sheep would be scattered again. Now, just at that instant who should pop over the hedge but Derry in his muzzle, and quick as thought he shot down his head, put up his paws, threw off his muzzle, dashed at the sheep, snapped at their legs, and away they went in twenty directions.

Before Ewan had time to cry out Derry was gone, with his muzzle between his teeth. When Dan, who was a perch or two up the meadow, turned round and saw what had happened, and that his dog's chances were gone, his anger overcame him, and he turned on Ewan with a torrent of reproaches.

"There – you've done it with your lumbering – curse it."

With complete self-possession Ewan explained how Derry had done the mischief.

Then Dan's face was darker with wrath than it had ever been before.

"A pretty tale," he said, and his lip curled in a sneer. He turned to the people around. "Anybody see the dog slip his muzzle?"

None had seen what Ewan had affirmed. The eyes of every one had been on the two stragglers in the distance pursued by Dan and Laddie.

Now, when Ewan saw that Dan distrusted him, and appealed to strangers as witness to his word, his face flushed deep, and his delicate nostrils quivered.

"A pretty tale," Dan repeated, and he was twisting on his heel, when up came Derry again, his muzzle on his snout, whisking his tail, and frisking about Dan's feet with an expression of quite lamb-like simplicity.

At that sight Ewan's livid face turned to a great pallor, and Dan broke into a hard laugh.

"We've heard of a dog slipping his muzzle," he said, "but who ever heard of a dog putting a muzzle on again?"

Then Ewan stepped from beside his girl-wife, who stood there with heaving breast. His eyes were aflame, but for an instant he conquered his emotions and said, with a constrained quietness, but with a deep pathos in his tone, "Dan, do you think I've told you the truth?"

Dan wheeled about. "I think you've told me a lie," he said, and his voice came thick from his throat.

All heard the word, and all held their breath. Ewan stood a moment as if rooted to the spot, and his pallid face whitened every instant. Then he fell back, and took the girl-wife by the hand and turned away with her, his head down, his very heart surging itself out of his choking breast. And, as he passed through the throng, to carry away from that scene the madness that was working in his brain, he overheard the mocking comments of the people. "Aw, well, well, did ye hear that now? – called him a liar, and not a word to say agen it." "A liar! Och, a liar? and him a parzon, too!" "Middling chicken-hearted, anyways – a liar! Aw, well, well, well!"

At that Ewan flung away the hand of his wife, and, quivering from head to foot, he strode toward Dan.

"You've called me a liar," he said, in a shrill voice that was like a cry. "Now, you shall prove your word – you shall fight me – you shall, by God."

He was completely carried away by passion.

"The parzon, the parzon!" "Man alive, the young parzon!" the people muttered, and they closed around.

Dan stood a moment. He looked down from his great height at Ewan's quivering form and distorted face. Then he turned about and glanced into the faces of the people. In another instant his eyes were swimming in tears; he took a step toward Ewan, flung his arms about him, and buried his head in his neck, and the great stalwart lad wept like a little child. In another moment Ewan's passion was melted away, and he kissed Dan on the cheek.

"Blubbering cowards!" "Aw, blatherskites!" "Och, man alive, a pair of turtle-doves!"

Dan lifted his head and looked around, raised himself to his full height, clinched his fists, and said:

"Now, my lads, you did your best to make a fight, and you couldn't manage it. I won't fight my cousin, and he shan't fight me; but if there's a man among you would like to know for himself how much of a coward I am, let him step out – I'm ready."

Not a man budged an inch.

CHAPTER IX

THE SERVICE ON THE SHORE

It was the spring of the year when the examining chaplain gave the verdict which for good or ill put Dan out of the odor of sanctity. Then in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes, he haunted the shore where old Billy and his mates were spreading their nets and barking them in preparation for the herring season that was soon to begin. There it was, while stretched on the warm shingle, with old Billy Quilleash sitting near, smoking his black cutty and mending the meshes broken by the dogfish of last year, that Dan hit on the idea of a new course in life. This was nothing better or worse than that of turning fisherman. He would buy a smack and make old Billy his skipper; he would follow the herrings himself, and take up his own share and the share of the boat. It would be delightful, and, of course, it would be vastly profitable. Everything looked plain and straight and simple, and though old Billy more than half shook his gray head at the project, and let fall by several inches his tawny face, and took his pipe out of his mouth and cleared his throat noisily, and looked vacantly out to sea, and gave other ominous symptoms of grave internal dubitation, Dan leaped to his feet at the sudden access of new purpose, and bowled off in hot haste to tell the Bishop.

The Bishop listened in silence at first, and with a sidelong look out at the window up to the heights of Slieu Dhoo, and when Dan, in a hang-dog manner, hinted at certain new-born intentions of reform, there was a perceptible trembling of the Bishop's eyelids; and when he gathered voice and pictured the vast scheme of profit without loss, the Bishop turned his grave eyes slowly upon him, and then Dan's own eyes suddenly fell, and the big world began to shrivel up to the pitiful dimensions of an orange with the juice squeezed out of it. But the end of it all was that the Bishop undertook to become responsible for the first costs of the boat, and, having made this promise with the air of a man who knows too well that he is pampering the whim of a spoiled boy, he turned away rather suddenly, with his chin a thought deeper than ever in his breast.

What hurry and bustle ensued. What driving away to north, south, east, and west, to every fishing port in the island where boats were built or sold! At length a boat was bought on the chocks at Port le Mary, a thirty-ton boat of lugger build, and old Billy Quilleash was sent south to bring it up through the Calf Sound to the harbor at Peeltown.

Then there was the getting together of a crew. Of course old Billy was made skipper. He had sailed twenty years in a boat of Kinvig's with three nets to his share, and half that time he had been admiral of the Peeltown fleet of herring boats, with five pounds a year for his post of honor. In Dan's boat he was to have four nets by his own right, and one for his nephew, Davy Fayle. Davy was an orphan, brought up by Billy Quilleash. He was a lad of eighteen, and was to sail as boy. There were four other hands – Crennel, the cook; Teare, the mate; Corkell, and Corlett.

Early and late Dan was down at the harbor, stripped to the woolen shirt, and tackling any odd job of painting or carpentry, for the opening of the herring season was hard upon them. But he found time to run up to the new Ballamona to tell Mona that she was to christen his new boat, for it had not been named when it left the chocks; and then to the old Ballamona, to persuade Ewan to go with him on his first trip to the herrings.

The day appointed by custom for the first takings of the herring came quickly round. It was a brilliant day in early June. Ewan had been across to Slieu Dhoo to visit his father, for the first time since his marriage, more than half a year ago, in order to say that he meant to go out for the night's fishing in Dan's new boat, and to beg that his young wife, who was just then in delicate health, might be invited to spend the night of his absence with Mona at the new Ballamona. The Deemster complied with a grim face; Ewan's young wife went across in the early morning, and in the afternoon all four, the Deemster and Mona, Ewan and his wife, set off in a lumbering, springless coach – the

first that the island had yet seen – to witness the departure of the herring fleet from Peeltown, and to engage in that day's ceremony.

The salt breath of the sea was in the air, and the light ripples of the bay glistened through a drowsy haze of warm sunshine. It was to be high water at six o'clock. When the Deemster's company reached Peeltown, the sun was still high over Contrary Head, and the fishing boats in the harbor, to the number of two hundred, were rolling gently, with their brown sails half set, to the motion of the rising tide.

There was Dan in his guernsey on the deck of his boat, and, as the coach drew up near the bottom of the wooden pier, he lifted his red cap from his curly head, and then went on to tie a bottle by a long blue ribbon to the tiller. There was old Billy Quilleash in his sea-boots, and there was Davy Fayle, a shambling sort of lad, long rather than tall, with fair hair tangled over his forehead, and a face which had a simple, vacant look that came of a lagging lower lip. Men on every boat in the harbor were washing the decks, or bailing out the dingey, or laying down the nets below. The harbor-master was on the quay, shouting to this boat to pull up or to that one to lie back. And down on the broad sands of the shore were men, women, and children in many hundreds, sitting and lying and lounging about an empty boat with a hole in the bottom that lay high and dry on the beach. The old fishing town itself had lost its chill and cheerless aspect, and no longer looked hungrily out over miles of bleak sea. Its blind alleys and dark lanes, its narrow, crabbed, crooked streets were bright with little flags hung out of the little stuffed-up windows, and yet brighter with bright faces that hurried to and fro.

About five o'clock, as the sun was dipping seaward across the back of Contrary, leaving the brown sails in the harbor in shade, and glistening red on the sides of the cathedral church on the island-rock that stood twenty yards out from the mainland, there was a movement of the people on the shore toward the town behind them, and of fisher-fellows from their boats toward the beach. Some of the neighboring clergy had come down to Peeltown, and the little Deemster sat in his coach, thrown open, blinking in the sun under his shaggy gray eyebrows. But some one was still looked for, and expectation was plainly evident in every face until a cheer came over the tops of the houses from the market-place. Then there was a general rush toward the mouth of the quay, and presently there came, laboring over the rough cobbles of the tortuous Castle Street, flanked by a tumultuous company of boys and men, bareheaded women, and children, who halloed and waved their arms and tossed up their caps, a rough-coated Manx pony, on which the tall figure of the Bishop sat.

The people moved on with the Bishop at their head until they came to the beach, and there, at the disused boat lying dry on the sand, the Bishop alighted. In two minutes more every fisherman in the harbor had left his boat and gathered with his fellows on the shore. Then there began a ceremony of infinite pathos and grandeur.

In the open boat the pale-faced Bishop stood, his long hair, sprinkled with gray, lifted gently over his drooping shoulders by the gentle breeze that came with its odor of brine from the sea. Around him, on their knees on the sand, were the tawny-faced, weather-beaten fishermen in their sea-boots and guernseys, bareheaded, and fumbling their soft caps in their hands. There, on the outside, stood the multitude of men, women, and young children, and on the skirts of the crowd stood the coach of the Deemster, and it was half encircled by the pawing horses of some of the black-coated clergy.

The Bishop began the service. It asked for the blessing of God on the fishing expedition which was about to set out. First came the lesson, "And God said, let the waters bring forth abundantly"; and then the story of Jesus in the ship, when there arose a great tempest while He slept, and His disciples awoke Him, and He arose and rebuked the waves; and then that other story of how the disciples toiled all night and took nothing, but let down their nets again at Christ's word, and there came a great multitude of fishes, and their nets brake. "Restore and continue to us the harvest of the sea," prayed the Bishop, with his face uplifted; and the men on their knees on the sand, with uncovered heads and faces in their caps, murmured their responses in their own tongue, "Yn Meailley."

And while they prayed, the soft boom of the unruffled waters on the shore, and the sea's deep murmur from away beyond the headland, and the wild jabbering cries of a flight of sea-gulls disporting on a rock in the bay, were the only sounds that mingled with the Bishop's deep tones and the men's hoarse voices.

Last of all, the Bishop gave out a hymn. It was a simple old hymn, such as every man had known since his mother had crooned it over his cot. The men rose to their feet, and their lusty voices took up the strain; the crowd behind, and the clergy on their horses, joined it; and from the Deemster's coach two women's voices took it up, and higher, higher, higher, like a lark, it floated up, until the soft boom and deep murmur of the sea and the wild cry of the sea-birds were drowned in the broad swell of the simple old sacred song.

The sun was sinking fast through a red haze toward the sea's verge, and the tide was near the flood, when the service on the shore ended, and the fishermen returned to their boats.

Billy Quilleash leaped aboard the new lugger, and his four men followed him. "See all clear," he shouted to Davy Fayle; and Davy stood on the quay with the duty of clearing the ropes from the blocks, and then following in the dingey that lay moored to the wooden steps.

Dan had gone up to the Deemster's coach and helped Mona and the young wife of Ewan to alight. He led them to the quay steps, and when the company had gathered about, and all was made ready, he shouted to old Billy to throw him the bottle that lay tied by the blue ribbon to the tiller. Then he handed the bottle to Mona, who stood on the step, a few feet above the water's edge.

Mona was looking very fresh and beautiful that day, with a delicious joy and pride in her deep eyes. Dan was talking to her with an awkward sort of consciousness, looking askance at his big brown hands when they came in contact with her dainty white fingers, then glancing down at his great clattering boots, and up into her soft, smooth face.

"What am I to christen her?" said Mona, with the bottle held up in her hand.

"Mona," answered Dan, with a shamefaced look and one hand in his brown hair.

"No, no," said she, "not that."

"Then what you like," said Dan.

"Well, the 'Ben-my-Chree,'" said Mona, and with that the bottle broke on the boat's side.

In another instant Ewan was kissing his meek little wife, and bidding her good-by, and Dan, in a fumbling way, was, for the first time in his life, demurely shaking Mona's hand, and trying hard to look her in the face.

"Tail on there," shouted Quilleash from the lugger. Then the two men jumped aboard, Davy Fayle ran the ropes from the blocks, the admiral's boat cleared away from the quay, and the admiral's flag was shot up to the masthead. The other boats in the harbor followed one by one, and soon the bay was full of the fleet.

As the "Ben-my-Chree" stood out to sea beyond the island-rock, Dan and Ewan stood aft, Dan in his brown guernsey, Ewan in his black coat; Ewan waving his handkerchief, and Dan his cap; old Billy was at the tiller, Crennel, the cook, had his head just above the hatchways, and Davy was clambering hand-over-hand up the rope by which the dingey was hauled to the stern.

Then the herring fleet sailed away under the glow of the setting sun.

CHAPTER X

THE FIRST NIGHT WITH THE HERRINGS

The sun went down, and a smart breeze rose off the land as the "Ben-my-Chree," with the fleet behind her, rounded Contrary Head, and crossed the two streams that flow there. For an hour afterward there was still light enough to see the coast-line curved into covelets and promontories, and to look for miles over the hills with their moles of gorse, and tussocks of lush grass. The twilight deepened as the fleet rounded Niarbyl Point, and left the islet on their lee, with Cronk-ny-Irey-Lhaa towering into the gloomy sky. When they sailed across Fleshwick Bay the night gradually darkened, and nothing was seen of Ennyn Mooar. But after an hour of darkness the heavens lightened again, and glistened with stars, and when old Billy Quilleash brought his boat head to the wind in six fathoms of water outside Port Erin, the moon had risen behind Bradda, and the rugged headland showed clear against the sky. One after another the boats and the fleet brought to about the "Ben-my-Chree."

Dan asked old Billy if he had found the herrings on this ground at the same time in former seasons.

"Not for seven years," said the old man.

"Then why try now?"

Billy stretched out his hand to where a flight of sea-gulls were dipping and sailing in the moonlight. "See the gull there?" he said. "She's skipper to-night; she's showing us the fish."

Davy Fayle had been leaning over the bow, rapping with a stick at the timbers near the water's edge.

"Any signs?" shouted Billy Quilleash.

"Ay," said Davy, "the mar-fire's risin'."

The wind had dropped, and luminous patches of phosphorescent light in the water were showing that the herrings were stirring.

"Let's make a shot; up with the gear," said Quilleash, and preparations were made for shooting the nets over the quarter.

"Ned Teare, you see to the line. Crennel, look after the corks. Davy – where's that lad? – look to the seizings, d'ye hear?"

Then the nets were hauled from below, and passed over a bank-board placed between the hatchway and the top of the bulwark. Teare and Crennel shot the gear, and as the seizings came up, Davy ran aft with them, and made them fast to the warp near the taffrail.

When the nets were all paid out, every net in the drift being tied to the next, and a solid wall of meshes nine feet deep had been swept away along the sea for half a mile behind them, Quilleash shouted, "Down with the sheets."

The ropes were hauled, the sails were taken in, the mainmast – which was so made as to lower backward – was dropped, and only the drift-mizzen was left, and that was to keep the boat head on to the wind.

"Up with the light there," said Quilleash.

At this word Davy Fayle popped his head out of the hatchways.

"Aw, to be sure, that lad's never ready. Get out of that, quick."

Davy jumped on deck, took a lantern, and fixed it to the top of the mitch board. Then vessel and nets drifted together, and Dan and Ewan, who had kept the deck until now, went below together.

It was now a calm, clear night, with just light enough to show two or three of the buoys on the back of the net nearest to the boat, as they floated under water. Old Billy had not mistaken his ground. Large white patches came moving out of the surrounding pavement of deep black, lightened only by the image of a star where the vanishing ripples left the dark sea smooth. Once or twice

countless faint popping sounds were to be heard, and minute points of shooting silver were to be seen on the water around. The herrings were at play, and shoals on shoals soon broke the black sea into a glistening foam.

But no "strike" was made, and after an hour's time Dan popped his head over the hatchways and asked the skipper to try the "look-on" net. The warp was hauled in until the first net was reached. It came up as black as coal, save for a single dogfish or two that had broken a mesh here and there.

"Too much moon to-night," said Quilleash; "they see the nets, and 'cute they are extraordinary."

But half an hour later the moon went out behind a thick ridge of cloud that floated over the land; the sky became gray and leaden, and a rising breeze ruffled the sea. Then hour after hour wore on, and not a fish came to the look-on net. Toward one o'clock in the morning, the moon broke out again. "There'll be a heavy strike now," said Quilleash, and in another instant a luminous patch floated across the line of the nets, sank, disappeared, and finally pulled three of the buoys down with them.

"Pull up now," shouted Quilleash, in another tone.

Then the nets were hauled. Davy, the boy, led the warp through a snatch-block fixed to the mast-hole on to the capstan. Ned Teare disconnected the nets from the warps, and Crennel and Corlett pulled the nets over the gunwale. They came up silver-white in the moonlight, a solid block of fish. Billy Quilleash and Dan passed them over the scudding-pole and shook the herrings into the hold.

"Five maze at least," said Quilleash, with a chuckle of satisfaction. "Try again." And once more the nets were shot. The other boats of the fleet were signaled, by a blue light run up the drift-mizzen, that the "Ben-my-Chree" had struck a scale of fish. In a few minutes more the blue light was answered by other blue lights on every side, and these reported that the fishery was everywhere faring well.

One, two, three o'clock came and went. The night was wearing on; the moon went out once more, and in the darkness which preceded the dawn the lanterns burning on the fleet of drifting boats gave out an eerie glow across the waters that lay black and flat around. The gray light came at length in the east, and the sun rose over the land. Then the nets were hauled in for the last time and that night's fishing was done.

The mast was lifted, but before the boat was brought about the skipper shouted, "Men, let us do as we're used of," and instantly the admiral's flag was run up to the masthead, and at this sign the men dropped on one knee, with their faces in their caps, and old Billy offered up a short and simple prayer of thanks for the blessings of the sea.

When this was done every man leaped to his feet, and all was work, bustle, shouting, singing out, and some lusty curses.

"Tumble up the sheets – bear a hand there – d – the lad," bawled Quilleash; "get out of the way, or I'll make you walk handsome over the bricks."

In five minutes more the "Ben-my-Chree," with the herring fleet behind her, was running home before a stiff breeze.

"Nine maze – not bad for the first night," said Dan to Ewan.

"Souise them well," said Quilleash, and Ned Teare sprinkled salt on the herrings as they lay in the hold.

Crennel, the cook, better known as the "slushy," came up the hatchways with a huge saucepan, which he filled with the fish. As he did so there was a faint "cheep, cheep" from below – the herrings were still alive.

All hands went down for a smoke except Corlett, who stood at the tiller, Davy, who counted for nobody and stretched himself out at the bow, and Ewan. The young parson, who had been taking note of the lad during the night, now seated himself on a coil of rope near where Davy lay. The "cheep, cheep" was the only sound in the air except the plash of the waters at the boat's bow, and with an inclination of the head in the direction of the fish in the hold, Ewan said, "It seems cruel, Davy, doesn't it?"

"Cruel? Well, pozzible, pozzible. Och, 'deed now, they've got their feelings same as anybody else."

The parson had taken the lad's measure at a glance.

"You should see the shoals of them lying round the nets, watching the others – their mothers and sisters, as you might say – who've got their gills 'tangled. And when you haul the net up, away they go at a slant in millions and millions, just the same as lightning going through the water. Och, yes, yes, leave them alone for having their feelings."

"It does seem cruel, Davy, eh?"

Davy looked puzzled; he was reasoning out a grave problem.

"Well, sir, that's the mortal strange part of it. It does look cruel to catch them, sarten sure; but then the herrings themselves catch the sand-eels, and the cod catch the herring, and the porpoises and grampuses catch the cod."

Ewan did his best to look astonished.

"Aw, that's the truth, sir. It's terrible, wonderful strange, but I suppose it's all nathur. You see, sir, we do the same ourselves."

"How do you mean, Davy? We don't eat each other, I hope," said the young parson.

"Och, don't we, though? Lave us alone for that."

Ewan tried to look appalled.

"Well, of coorse, not to say *ate*, not 'xactly *ate*; but the biggest chap allis rigs the rest; and the next biggest chap allis rigs a littler one, you know, and the littlest chap, he gets rigged by everybody all round, doesn't he, sir?"

Davy had got a grip of the knotty problem, but the lad's poor, simple face looked sadly burdened, and he came back to his old word.

"Seems to me it must be all nathur, sir."

Ewan began to feel some touch of shame at playing with this simple, earnest, big little heart. "So you think it all nature, Davy?" he said, with a lump gathering in his throat.

"Well, well, I do, you know, sir; it does make a fellow fit to cry a bit, somehow; but it must be nathur, sir."

And Davy took off his blue worsted cap and fumbled it and gave his troubled young head a grave shake.

Then there was some general talk about Davy's early history. Davy's father had been pressed into the army before Davy was born, and had afterward been no more heard of; then his mother had died, and Billy Quilleash, being his mother's elder brother, had brought him up. Davy had always sailed as boy with Uncle Billy, he was sailing as boy then, and that was to the end that Uncle Billy might draw his share, but the young master (Mastha Dan) had spoken up for him, so he had, and he knew middlin' well what that would come to. "'He's a tidy lump of a lad now,' says Mastha Dan, 'and he's well used of the boats, too,' says he, 'and if he does well this time,' he says, 'he must sail man for himself next season.' Aw, yes, sir, that was what Mastha Dan said."

It was clear that Dan was the boy's hero. When Dan was mentioned that lagging lip gave a yearning look to Davy's simple face. Dan's doubtful exploits and his dubious triumphs all looked glorious in Davy's eyes. Davy had watched Dan, and listened to him, and though Dan might know nothing of his silent worship, every word that Dan had spoken to him had been hoarded up in the lad's heart like treasure. Davy had the dog's soul, and Dan was his master.

"Uncle Billy and him's same as brothers," said Davy; "and Uncle Billy's uncommon proud of the young master, and middlin' jealous, too. Aw, well! who's wondering at it?"

Just then Crennel, the cook, came up to say that breakfast was ready, and Ewan and Davy went below, the young parson's hand resting on the boy's shoulder. In the cabin Dan was sitting by the stove, laughing immoderately. Ewan saw at a glance that Dan had been drinking, and he forthwith elbowed his way to Dan's side and lifted a brandy bottle from the stove-top into the locker, under

pretense of finding a place for his hat. Then all hands sat down to the table. There was a huge dish of potatoes boiled in their jackets, and a similar dish of herrings. Every man dipped into the dishes with his hands, lifted his herring on to his plate, ran his fingers from tail to head, swept all the flesh off the fresh fish, and threw the bare backbone into the crock that stood behind.

"Keep a corner for the Meailley at the 'Three Legs,'" said Dan.

There was to be a herring breakfast that morning at the "Three Legs of Man," to celebrate the opening of the fishing season.

"You'll come, Ewan, eh?"

The young parson shook his head.

Dan was in great spirits, to which the spirits he had imbibed contributed a more than common share. Ewan saw the too familiar light of dangerous mischief dancing in Dan's eyes, and made twenty attempts to keep the conversation within ordinary bounds of seriousness. But Dan was not to be restrained, and breaking away into the homespun – a sure indication that the old Adam was having the upper hand – he forthwith plunged into some chaff that was started by the mate, Ned Teare, at Davy Fayle's expense.

"Aw, ye wouldn't think it's true, would ye, now?" said Ned, with a wink at Dan and a "glime" at Davy.

"And what's that?" said Dan, with another "glime" at the lad.

"Why, that the like o' yander is tackin' round the gels."

"D'ye raelly mane it?" said Dan, dropping his herring and lifting his eyes.

Ewan coughed with some volume, and said, "There, there, Dan – there, there."

"Yes, though, and sniffin' and snuffin' abaft of them astonishin'," Ned Teare put it again.

"Aw, well, well, well," said Dan, turning up afresh the whites of his eyes.

There was not a sign from Davy; he broke his potato more carefully, and took both hands and both eyes to strip away its jacket.

"Yes, yes, the craythur's doing somethin' in the spooney line," said Billy Quilleash; "him as hasn't the hayseed out of his hair yet."

"Aw, well," said Dan, pretending to come to Davy's relief, "it isn't reasonable but the lad should be coortin' some gel now."

"What's that?" shouted Quilleash, dropping the banter rather suddenly. "What, and not a farthing at him? And owin' me fortune for the bringin' up."

"No matter, Billy," said Dan, "and don't ride a man down like a main-tack. One of these fine mornings Davy will be payin' his debt to you with the foretopsail."

Davy's eyes were held very low, but it was not hard to see that they were beginning to fill.

"That will do, Dan, that will do," said Ewan. The young parson's face had grown suddenly pale, but Dan saw nothing of that.

"And look at him there," said Dan, reaching round Ewan to prod Davy in the ribs – "look at him there, pretendin' he never knows nothin'."

The big tears were near to toppling out of Davy's eyes. He could have borne the chaff from any one but Dan.

"Dan," said Ewan, with a constrained quietness, "stop it; I can't stand it much longer."

At that Davy got up from the table, leaving his unfinished breakfast, and began to climb the hatchways.

"Aw, now, look at that," said Dan, with affected solemnity, and so saying, and not heeding the change in Ewan's manner, Dan got up too and followed Davy out, put an arm round the lad's waist, and tried to draw him back. "Don't mind the loblolly-boys, Davy veg," he said, coaxingly. Davy pushed him away with an angry word.

"What's that he's after saying?" asked Quilleash.

"Nothin'; he only cussed a bit," said Dan.

"Cussed, did he? He'd better show a leg if he don't want the rat's tail."

Then Ewan rose from the table, and his eyes flashed and his pale face quivered.

"I'll tell you what it is," he said in a tense, tremulous voice, "there's not a man among you. You're a lot of skulking cowards."

At that he was making for the deck; but Dan, whose face, full of the fire of the liquor he had taken, grew in one moment old and ugly, leaped to his feet in a tempest of wrath, overturned his stool, and rushed at Ewan with eyes aflame and uplifted hand, and suddenly, instantly, like a flash, his fist fell, and Ewan rolled on the floor.

Then the men jumped up and crowded round in confusion. "The parzon! the parzon! God preserve me, the parzon!"

There stood Dan, with a ghastly countenance, white and convulsed, and there at his feet lay Ewan.

"God A'mighty! Mastha Dan, Mastha Dan," cried Davy. Before the men had found time to breathe, Davy had leaped back from the deck to the cockpit, and had lifted Ewan's head on to his knee.

Ewan drew a long breath and opened his eyes. He was bleeding from a gash above the temple, having fallen among some refuse of iron chain. Davy, still moaning piteously, "Oh, Mastha Dan, God A'mighty, Mastha Dan," took a white handkerchief from Ewan's breast, and bound it about his head over the wound. The blood oozed through and stained the handkerchief.

Ewan rose to his feet pale and trembling, and without looking at any one, steadied himself by Davy's shoulder, and clambered weakly to the deck. There he stumbled forward, sat down on the coil of rope that had been his seat before, and buried his uncovered head in his breast.

The sun had now risen above Contrary, and the fair young morning light danced over the rippling waters far and near. A fresh breeze blew from the land, and the boats of the fleet around and about scudded on before the wind like a flight of happy birds, with outspread wings.

The "Ben-my-Chree" was then rounding the head, and the smoke was beginning to coil up in many a slender shaft above the chimneys of the little town of Peel. But Ewan saw nothing of this; with head on his breast, and his heart cold within him, he sat at the bow.

Down below, Dan was then doing his best to make himself believe that he was unconcerned. He whistled a little, and sang a little, and laughed a good deal; but the whistle lost its tune, and the song stopped short, and the laugh was loud and empty. When he first saw Ewan lie where he fell, all the fire of his evil passion seemed to die away, and for the instant his heart seemed to choke him, and he was prompted to drop down and lift Ewan to his feet; but at that moment his stubborn knees would not bend, and at the next moment the angel of God troubled the waters of his heart no more. Then the fisher-fellows overcame their amazement, and began to crow, and to side with him, and to talk of his pluck, and what not.

"The parzons – och, the parzons – they think they may ride a man down for half a word inside his gills."

"'Cowards' – och, 'skulking cowards,' if you plaize – right sarved, say I!"

Dan tramped about the cabin restlessly, and sometimes chuckled aloud and asked himself what did he care, and then laughed noisily, and sat down to smoke, and presently jumped up, threw the pipe into the open stove, and took the brandy bottle out of the locker. Where was Ewan? What was he doing? What was he looking like? Dan would rather have died than humbled himself to ask; but would none of these grinning boobies tell him? When Teare, the mate, came down from the deck and said that sarten sure the young parzon was afther sayin' his prayers up forrard Dan's eyes flashed again, and he had almost lifted his hand to fell the sniggering waistrel. He drank half a tumbler of brandy, and protested afresh, though none had yet disputed it, that he cared nothing, not he, let them say what they liked to the contrary.

In fifteen minutes from the time of the quarrel the fleet was running into harbor. Dan had leaped on deck just as the "Ben-my-Chree" touched the two streams outside Contrary. He first looked

forward, and saw Ewan sitting on the cable in the bow with his eyes shut and his pallid face sunk deep in his breast. Then a strange, wild light shot into Dan's eyes, and he reeled aft and plucked the tiller from the hand of Corlett, and set it hard aport, and drove the boat head on for the narrow neck of water that flowed between the mainland and the island-rock on which the old castle stood.

"Hould hard," shouted old Billy Quilleash, "there's not water enough for the like o' that – you'll run her on the rocks."

Then Dan laughed wildly, and his voice rang among the coves and caves of the coast.

"Here's for the harbor or – hell," he screamed, and then another wild peal of his mad laughter rang in the air and echoed from the land.

"What's agate of the young mastha?" the men muttered one to another; and with eyes of fear they stood stock-still on the deck and saw themselves driven on toward the shoals of the little sound.

In two minutes more they breathed freely. The "Ben-my-Chree" had shot like an arrow through the belt of water and was putting about in the harbor.

Dan dropped the tiller, reeled along the deck, scarcely able to bear himself erect, and stumbled under the hatchways. Old Billy brought up the boat to its moorings.

"Come, lay down, d'ye hear? Where's that lad?"

Davy was standing by the young parson.

"You idiot waistrel, why d'ye stand prating there? I'll pay you, you beachcomber."

The skipper was making for Davy, when Ewan got up, stepped toward him, looked him hard in the face, seemed about to speak, checked himself, and turned away.

Old Billy broke into a bitter little laugh, and said, "I'm right up and down like a yard o' pump-water, that's what I am."

The boat was now at the quay-side, and Ewan leaped ashore. Without a word or a look more, he walked away, the white handkerchief, clotted with blood, still about his forehead, and his hat carried in his hand.

On the quay there were numbers of women with baskets waiting to buy the fish. Teare, the mate, and Crennel, the cook, counted the herrings and sold them. The rest of the crew stepped ashore.

Dan went away with the rest. His face was livid in the soft morning sunlight. He was still keeping up his brave outside, while the madness was growing every moment fiercer within. As he stumbled along the paved way with an unsteady step his hollow laugh grated on the quiet air.

CHAPTER XI

THE HERRING BREAKFAST

It was between four o'clock and five when the fleet ran into Peeltown harbor after the first night of the herring season, and toward eight the fisher-fellows, to the number of fifty at least, had gathered for their customary first breakfast in the kitchen of the "Three Legs of Man." What sport! What noisy laughter! What singing and rollicking cheers! The men stood neither on the order of their coming nor their going, their sitting nor their standing. In they trooped in their woolen caps or their broad sou'westers, their oilskins or their long sea-boots swung across their arms. They wore their caps or not as pleased them, they sang or talked as suited them, they laughed or sneezed, they sulked or snarled, they were noisy or silent, precisely as the whim of the individual prescribed the individual rule of manners. Rather later than the rest Dan Mylrea came swinging in, with a loud laugh and a shout, and something like an oath, too, and the broad homespun on his lips.

"Billy Quilleash – I say, Billy, there – why don't you put up the young mastha for the chair?"

"Aw, lave me alone," answered Billy Quilleash, with a contemptuous toss of the head.

"Uncle Billy's proud uncommon of the mastha," whispered Davy Fayle, who sat meekly on a form near the door, to the man who sat cross-legged on the form beside him.

"It's a bit free them chaps is making," said old Billy, in a confidential undertone to Dan, who was stretching himself out on the settle. Then rising to his feet with gravity, "Gen'l'men," said Quilleash, "what d'ye say now to Mistha Dan'l Mylrea for the elber-cheer yander?"

At that there was the response of loud raps on the table with the heels of the long boots swung over various arms, and with several clay pipes that lost their heads in the encounter. Old Billy resumed his seat with a lofty glance of patronage at the men about him, which said as plainly as words themselves, "I could ye to lave it all to me."

"Proud, d'ye say? Look at him," muttered the fisherman sitting by Davy Fayle.

Dan staggered up and shouldered his way to the elbow-chair at the head of the table. He had no sooner taken his seat than he shouted for the breakfast, and without more ado the breakfast was lifted direct on to the table from the pans and boilers that simmered on the hearth.

First came the broth, well loaded with barley and cabbage; then suet puddings; and last of all the frying-pan was taken down from the wall, and four or five dozen of fresh herrings were made to grizzle and crackle and sputter over the fire.

Dan ate ravenously, and laughed noisily, and talked incessantly as he ate. The men at first caught the contagion of his boisterous manners, but after a time they shook their tousled heads and laid them together in gravity, and began to repeat in whispers, "What's agate of the young mastha, at all, at all?"

Away went the dishes, away went the cloth, an oil-lamp with its open mouth – a relic of some monkish sanctuary of the Middle Ages – was lifted from the mantel-shelf and put on the table for the receipt of custom; a brass censer, choked with spills, was placed beside it; pipes emerged from waistcoat-pockets, and pots of liquor with glasses and bottles came in from the outer bar.

"Is it heavy on the liquor you're going to be, Billy?" said Ned, the mate; and old Billy replied with a superior smile and the lifting up of a whisky bottle, from which he had just drawn the cork.

Then came the toasts. The chairman arose amid hip, hip, hooraa! and gave "Life to man and death to fish!" and Quilleash gave "Death to the head that never wore hair!"

Then came more noise and more liquor, and a good deal of both in the vicinity of the chair. Dan struck up a song. He sang "Drink to Me Only," and the noisy company were at first hushed to silence and then melted to audible sobs.

"Aw, man, the voice he has, anyway!"

"And the loud it is, and the tender, too, and the way he slidders up and down, and no squeaks and jumps."

"No, no; nothin' like squeezin' a tune out of an ould sow by pulling the tail at her."

Old Billy listened to this dialogue among the fisher-fellows about him, and smiled loftily. "It's nothin'," he said, condescendingly – "that's nothin'. You should hear him out in the boat, when we're lying at anchor, and me and him together, and the stars just makin' a peep, and the moon, and the mar-fire, and all to that, and me and him lying aft and smookin', and having a glass maybe, but nothin' to do no harm – that's the when you should hear him. Aw, man alive, him and me's same as brothers."

"More liquor there," shouted Dan, climbing with difficulty to his feet.

"Ay, look here. D'ye hear, down yander? Give us a swipe o' them speerits. Right. More liquor for the chair!" said Billy Quilleash. "And for some one besides? – is that what they're saying, the loblolly-boys? Well, look here, bad cess to it, of coorse, some for me, too. It's terrible good for the narves, and they're telling me it's morthal good for steddying the vi'ce. Going to sing? Coorse, coorse. What's that from the elber-cheer? Enemy, eh? Confound it, and that's true, though. What's that it's sayin'? 'Who's fool enough to put the enemy into his mouth to stale away his brains?' Aw, now, it's the good ould Book that's fine at summin' it all up."

Then there was more liquor and yet more, till the mouth of the monastic lamp ran over with chinking coin. Old Billy struck up his song. It was a doleful ditty on the loss of the herring fleet on one St. Matthew's Day not long before.

An hour before day,
Tom Grimshaw, they say,
To run for the port had resolved;
Himself and John More
Were lost in that hour,
And also unfortunate Kinved.

The last three lines of each verse were repeated by the whole company in chorus. Doleful as the ditty might be, the men gave it voice with a heartiness that suggested no special sense of sorrow, and loud as were the voices of the fisher-fellows, Dan's voice was yet louder.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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