

and she so handsome, and not having a friend at all. And I wished with all my strength that she would marry Donnell M'Donnell before I went away to America, which would ease my mind about him. For I felt the greatest pity in the world for kind, big Donnell's disappointment.

My stepmother was provoked at my sad face next day, and called me ungrateful. But when I cried bitterly she got a little kinder, and in the evening allowed me to go into Ballymena to see my friend Gracie. So towards sundown, when the snow was getting red on the fences, I wrapped my shawl about me and set off for the town, sobbing loudly to ease my heart, all along the lonely road, where there was no one to hear me but the robbers. The brown trees against the dusky red sky, the white swelling lines of the fields, the dark chimneys of the town on before me, were all blent in a dismal maze, when who should leap over the stile and stand beside me but Gracie's great lover, Donnell. I told him my eyes were only watering with cold, and he turned and walked alongside of me for a way, while we talked of Gracie of course. He was very angry at her, and said she was playing fast and loose with him, making him the sport of the town and the country. I took Gracie's part, and so we went on till we came to the last white gate on the road and began to meet the townspeople. Then I told him I was going away, and he looked so vexed that I nearly cried again. I felt so glad to see him sorry.

Well, little Bet, said he, we must give you a good dance over in yon big farmhouse of ours before you go. And in the meantime—

I'll see to your business, Donnell, said I, smiling. Never fear but I'll do your business to the last.

Then he shook my two hands till he nearly squeezed them into a jelly, and left me.

When I went to Miss Doran's it was past the work hour, and the girls were putting on their bonnets to go away; Gracie was only sitting close to the candle, putting the flowers on a ball dress for one of the country ladies. She having the nicest, had always the honor of giving the finishing touches to the most particular work. She looked very tired, but oh, so handsome, with her pale cheek against the yellow light, and her dark head leaning over a mass of white and rose-color tulle.

A bud here, said she, and a spray there, and then I have done. You'll come home with me and sleep. That cross stepmother of yours won't see you again to-night.

Don't talk that way, Gracie, said I, but I came intending to stay. And the work being finished, we went home to her lodgings.

A lovely bunch of flowers was lying on her table, and she laughed, and blushed, and looked beautiful when she saw it.

Who is that from, Gracie? said I. Donnell?

No, indeed, said she, tossing her head. But I was sure that was a fib, for she looked as happy as possible, lying resting herself in her arm chair beside the fire, while I set out the tea-things. She looking so glad, and the shabby room looking so snug, and our little tea-drinking being so cozy, I could not bear to tell her the bad news now, and began to set about Donnell's business.

Gracie, said I, I wish you would marry Donnell soon.

Soon? said she, opening her eyes, and looking at me angrily. I'll never marry him.

But you know, Gracie, said I, getting hot about it, that you ought to marry him. He says—that is, I know—you have made him the laughing stock of the country, and—

Very fine, cried she. And so he has been complaining to you, has he?

I did not say that, said I; but oh, Gracie, I know you like some one. I saw you smiling over a letter the other day, just the way you are smiling now.

And what if I do, said she, laughing and tossing her head; that does not prove that it must be Donnell.

There is no one else as good, said I, eagerly. It could not be any one else.

Pon my word, said she, staring at me, I think you had better go and marry him yourself.

I? Oh, Gracie! said I, starting up and sitting down again, and beginning to cry, I wanted to tell you that I am going to America.

You may be sure we talked no more about Donnell that night.

Donnell did not fail to keep his word about giving me a feast before I left the country. He invited three pipers to play, and half the country side to dance. Gracie and I met at the crossroads, and walked over to the farm together, she

bringing a troop of beaux with her from the town. The farm is a dear old place, with orchard trees growing up round the house, and it looked so homely that frosty night. Donnell's mother met us at the door, and unpinned our shawls in her own room. Gracie looked beautiful in a new dress and bright ribbon. Donnell's mother stroked my hair with her hand, and stuck a bit of holly in the front of her black frock. She kept me with her, after Gracie had gone down stairs, holding my hand and she asked me about going to America. And the place felt so safe and warm, and she was so kind and motherly which I was little accustomed to at home, that my heart got so sore I could scarcely bear it.

We had a great tea-drinking in the parlor and then went out to the kitchen and the pipers fell to work, and Gracie was amiable as possible to Donnell. But just in the middle of our dancing the door latch of the back door was lifted, and Squire Hannan walked in in his top boots.

I wanted to speak to you on business, M'Donnell, he said, but I will not disturb you now.

Will you do me the honor of joining us, sir, said Donnell; and Squire Hannan needed no second invitation. He was soon making his bow before Gracie, and Donnell saw no more of her smiles that night. She danced with the Squire till it was time to go home, and then, after she had set out for the town, escorted by him and her other beaux, Donnell's mother kissed me, and Donnell drew my arm through his, and walked home with me across the snowy fields to my stepmother's house. He was abusing Gracie all the way, and I was, as usual, taking her part.

He came to see me one day after, and brought me a basket of lovely winter pears. He leaned against the wall and watched me making the butter. He was disgusted with Gracie, he said; she was a flirt, and he did not care a pin about her, only he would not be made a fool of. She had refused to let him walk with her across the fields next Sunday, to the consecration of the new church, and if he did not get some token that she had changed her mind between that and this, he would never, he swore, look her way again, but go and marry some one else for spite.

Oh no, Donnell, said I, promise me you won't do that? For I was sure that Gracie liked him all the while.

But I will, said he, smiling, at least, if other people will have me.

Oh, don't, don't, said I but he would not promise.

It's my mind, said my stepmother after he had gone, that yon lad's more like a lover of yours than her's. Why don't you catch him, and then you needn't go to America.

Mother, I cried, and felt the room spinning round with me, till I caught and held by the door.

Well, well, she said, you needn't look so mad. Many a girl'd be glad of him.

I thought a great deal about how he had sworn that he would marry some one else if he did not hear from Gracie before Sunday. I'm sure she likes him, I thought. She cannot help it. She must have seen how mean even Squire Hannan looked beside him the other night. And it would be a most dreadful thing if he was married to some one else he did not care about, and if she went on to London with a broken heart, to a West-end milliner. I thought about it, and thought about it. There was no use going to Gracie, for she would only laugh and mock at me. All at once a bright idea came into my head.

I was afraid to think of what I was going to do; but that night when my stepmother had gone to bed, leaving me to finish spinning some wool, I got out a sheet of paper and a little note of Gracie's which I had in my work-box, and began to imitate Gracie's hand-writing. I had not much trouble, for we wrote nearly alike; and afterwards I composed a little letter.

Dear Mr. M'Donnell, it said, I have changed my mind, and will be very glad if you will join me on the road to the consecration on Sunday.

Yours, sincerely

GRACIE BYRNE.

What harm can it do to send it? thought I, trembling all the while. I folded it up, and put it in an envelope directed to Mr. Donnell M'Donnell, The Buckey Farm. And it may do such a great deal of good! In the first place, it will prevent his marrying for spite before Sunday, and then she will be so glad to see him coming in spite of her crossness, that she will be quite kind to him. He is always so stiff and proud when she treats him badly, that I am sure it makes her worse. She will never find out that he got any letter—not, at least till they are quite good

friends—married, perhaps—and then they will both thank me.

So the next evening, about dusk, I slipped quietly into the town and posted my letter. I was dreadfully afraid of meeting Donnell or Gracie; but I saw no one I knew. I dropped the note in the letter-box and rushed off towards home again at full speed. I ran nearly all the way; the snowy roads were slippery in the evening frost, and near our house I fell and hurt my foot. A neighbor found me leaning against the stile and brought me home. I was to have sailed for America the very next week, but now I was laid up with a sprained ankle, and my departure was put off.

On Sunday evening, a neighbor woman who had been at the consecration came in to tell us the news. This one had been there, of course, and that one had been there for a wonder. Gracie Byrne had been there in a fine new bonnet (the girl was going to the mischief with dress,) and Squire Hannan had been there, and given her the flower out of his button-hole.

And Donnell M'Donnell was with her, of course? said I.

Ay, 'deed you may swear it, said the woman. That'll be a match before long. He walked home with her to the town, and her smilin' at him like the first of June!

They'll be married before I go away, said I to myself; and I leaned back into my corner; for the pain of my foot sickened me.

Donnell's mother brought me a custard and some apples the next day.

Donnell's gone to the Glens, my dear, said she, or he would ha' been over this mornin' to see you. He went before we heard of your foot, and he won't be home for a week.

What's he doin' there? asked my step-mother.

He has land there, you know, said Donnell's mother, and he goes whiles to settle his affairs with them that has charge of it. I don't know rightly what he's gone about now. Something has went again him lately, for he's not like himself those few days back. He said somethin' about goin' to be married when he come home, but if he is, it's not after his heart, for I never saw a bridegroom so glum on the head of it. But dear I thought it was you he liked.

So he does, Mrs. M'Donnell, said I; but not that way—not for his wife.

Well, well, my dear! said Donnell's mother, wiping her eyes.

Everybody was coming to see me now, on account of my foot. Gracie came the next day or so, and surely I was amazed at the glory of her dress! My step-mother, who did not like her, left us alone together, and Gracie's news came out. She was going to be married on next Tuesday.

I know that said I.

How do you know it? said she.

Donnell's mother told me.

Donnell's mother! Nothing but Donnell and Donnell's mother from you forever! How should she know?

Oh, Gracie, his own—

Why, she burst in, you don't imagine that he's the man? Why, it's Squire Hannan! Only think, Bet, of your Gracie being the Squire's lady!

I was quite confounded. Oh, oh, Gracie! I stammered.

Well, said she, sulking, are you not glad?

Oh, yes, I said, very, on your account, but what will become of Donnell?

Donnell again. Now listen to me, Bet. I know when a man likes me, and when he doesn't like me, just as well as any other girl; and I've seen this many a day, that Donnell didn't care a pin about me. Not he. He only wanted me to marry him that the people might not say I jilted him. I told him that the other day, when he asked me to have him. No matter what I want you for, said he; I want you. Thank you, said I. And then what had he the impudence to say! If I changed my mind before Sunday, I was to send him word, that he might come to the consecration with me. Then he would set off for the Glens on Monday, and settle some business there, and be home for our wedding in a week!

I screamed out seeing what I had done.

The poor foot! cried Gracie, thinking I was in pain. Is it bad!

Never mind it! said I. And what did you say?

I said, Gracie went on, that whatever morning he got up and saw black snow on the ground that day he might look for a message from me. And yet had the meanness to walk with me on Sunday, after all. And the best fun of it is, that they say he's gone to the Glens.

Oh, oh! said I, beginning to groan again, and pretending it was all my foot. After that, Gracie talked about

herself and Squire Hannan until she went away. And somehow I never had felt as little sorrow to part with her before. She seemed not to be my own Gracie any longer.

And now I was nearly out of my senses, thinking what mischief might come of my meddling. I was sure that Donnell and Squire Hannan would fight and kill one another, and all through me. I thought I would give all I had in the world to see Donnell before any one else had told him the news, and confess to him what I had done. On Tuesday, about mid-day, a countryman from the Glens came in to light his pipe, and he said he had passed M'Donnell, of Buckey Farm, on the way.

An' I think things must be goin' badly with him, said he, for he has a look on his face as black as the potato blight.

Somebody has told him, maybe! said I to myself. And I put on my shawl, and, borrowing a stick from an old neighbor, I bobbled off secretly up the road towards the Glens. I soon got tired and dreadfully cold, as I could not walk fast, and I sat down on a bit of an old grey bridge to watch for Donnell coming past. At last he come thundering along, and although it was getting dusk, I could see that he had his head down, and looked dreadfully dark and unhappy.

Donnell! said I, calling out to him.

Who's that? he said. Why, it's never little Bet!

But indeed it is, said I, Oh, Donnell, did you hear! I came to tell you. Gracie was married this morning to Squire Hannan.

Whew! he gave a long whistle. The jilt! said he, and he snapped his fingers. But his whole face brightened up.

She's not so much a jilt as you think, Donnell, said I, for—oh, how can I ever tell you!—it was I who wrote you the note you got last week, and she has nothing to do with it. I did it for the best, I did indeed, for I thought that Gracie liked you; I did indeed! And oh, Donnell, sure you won't go and kill Squire Hannan?

Won't I, said he, looking awfully savage. I cut a great blackthorn this mornong in the Glens for no other purpose than to beat out his brains.

I gave a great scream, and, dropping my stick, fell along with it, but Donnell picked me up, and set me safe on his horse behind him.

Now, said he, I'll tell you what it is little Bet. Ill make a bargain. You'll marry me, and I won't touch Squire Hannan.

I marry you? cried I, after—after Gracie. Indeed I will not, Donnell M'Donnell.

I've behaved badly, said he, but I'm very sorry. It's long since I liked you better than Gracie, but the devil of pride was in me, and the people were saying she would jilt me. When I got your bit of a note I felt as if I was going to be hung. God bless, Squire Hannan! Now will you marry me, little Bet?

No, said I. And, with that he whipped up his horse, and dashed off with me at the speed of a hunt.

Stop, stop! cried I. Where are you taking me to? You've passed the turn of our road.

But I might as well shout to the wind. On we dashed, up hill and down hill, through fields and through bogs, with the hedges running along by our side, and the moon whizzing past us among the bare branches of the trees. He never drew rein until the horse stopped at the dear Buckey farm house door, when he carried me straight into the bright warm kitchen where his mother had the tea set out, and the cakes smoking ready for his return.

Talk her into reason, said he, putting me into his mother's arms. I want her to marry me, and she says she won't.

I did my best to keep sulky for a proper length of time, but it was the hardest thing I ever tried to do, and they both so kind, and the place so bright and cosy, and I being so happy on the sly all the time! So the end of it was that I did not go to America, and that I am Mrs. M'Donnell of the Buckey Farm. But I never tried match-making again.—[Dickens' "All the Year Round."

How a HOG SWEATS.—Not like a horse or a man, but through his forelegs. There is a spot on each leg, just below the knee, in the form of a sieve, through this the sweat passes off. And it is necessary that this is kept open. If it gets closed, as is sometimes the case, the hog will get sick; he will appear stiff and cramped—and unless he gets relief it will go hard with him. To cure him, simply open the pores. This is done by rubbing the spot with a corn-cob, and washing with warm water.