

## THE GLENS OF ANTRIM.

SHE lived in a bothy, alone. No one knew her history. No one cared. Years before, she had drifted in at a harvest. She had never threatened to leave, and had never been asked either to stay or leave. Her bent, lean figure seemed part of the steading, and of the landscape as well. Everybody in the countryside knew her. She had always a ready answer; often a nippy one.

“The top o’ the mornin’ to you, Mary.”

“Ach an’ howld yer tongue, Andy—a lad like you to be makin’ love to a poor owld woman, an’ you wid a wife of yer own at home!”

Mary was Irish by birth, as you will have guessed, and Irish in her fluency of language.

“An’ hoo’s yer hoast, Mary?”

“Hoast, did ye say? An’ how wid ye think it could be, an’ me wid a thrapple on me as dry as the burnin’ sands of Arabia?”

That was Mary’s one little weakness. She had a hoast. “It’ll lay me on me back some day,” she would say. But she put up a stout fight; her sole weapon a half-mutchkin bottle, the filling of which not only used up her spare time, but her spare cash as well. Regularly she tramped the three miles to town with one object in view. She knew every stone on the way, and every dog and every bairn. The bairns heard her coming before she appeared, for Mary whistled as she went, a soft low, half breathy, whistle. And her tunes were

lively ones, such as go to the feet, like whisky to the head. She never got drunk. The half-mutchkin was consumed in homœopathic doses. On special occasions she might get cheery to the point of lilting an old rag of a song she called "The Glens of Antrim." But only on special occasions.

She was a worker. First up in the mornings, the farmer and his wife would hear her familiar whistling as she made her way round to the byre; and hearing, turn over to sleep again. The cows knew her whistle, too, and were ready with a welcome, looking round in a kindly way as if to bid her "Good morning." Indeed, all living things had a welcome for Mary—cocks and hens, dogs and cats, and horses; and before she could get to her milking she had to speak to some of them very sternly.

Inanimate things, too, were sharers of her affection. She was on specially intimate terms with her kettle in the bothy. Before she went out to see to her hens, she would put it on the fire, and when she returned, there it would be singing like a lintie. "Ach, Katie, me joy; an' ye would be singin' a song to me, would ye? Howld yer patience now an' wait till I put a taste o' tea in me owld pan; ach, be jabbers, an' ye would spit at me, ya hissy; I'll larn ye, I will; I'll larn ye the foine manners for a lady. There now, sit down and content yourself!"

In such ways Mary found companionship where many a less intelligent person might have felt lonely.

There came a day in winter when Mary's hoast was so bad that she could scarcely rise to stir the fire. All night the cough troubled her. When she did rise she had to hold on by the wall. To add to her trouble,

the half-mutchkin was empty, and she was too proud to borrow. She had to force herself to her work. "Och, och," she said, as she hobbled about wearily that day.

In the afternoon she started for the town. There was snow on the ground. The road seemed endless. Even to lift her feet was a bother. At several gates out of the sight of houses, she rested. Near the town she met the doctor doing his rounds.

"Cold weather, Mary!" he said. Then he asked her how she was keeping.

"Sure an' it's nothin' but me hoast," she replied. He walked back with her to his house and gave her a bottle. "Straight home now, Mary!" he enjoined.

And Mary did go straight home, calling by the way at the hotel where she had a nip, perhaps two, and a rest, and a refilling of her half-mutchkin. The moon was up when she started on the home journey proper. She felt more like herself. The distance was nothing now that she was well again. She reached the bridge, a mile out, in what appeared to be good time. There she took a sip from her bottle—the half-mutchkin; the doctor's was tucked safely away in the bottom of her bag.

She proceeded, whistling as she went. When she reached the road-end to the farm she had to rest. Her legs were weak. She leaned against the gate. She would take her breath before climbing the hill. It was only a couple of hundred yards. At the gate there was a big stone. She swept the snow from it and sat down.

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A clear bright night, and everything so still. She had never known such peace. She would be home in no time. Sounds of music came to her, old tunes played

pensively, fiddles and harps and sweet singers too, and the sun bright in a blue sky, and the Glens of Antrim—oh, lovely, restful glens—green-verdured and smiling! Away in the distance the music was floating; the glens far off too, sunlit and happy, receding, sinking, down, down, down, so sweet, so still—silence!

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The cows were weary waiting in the morning, and lowed as for one lost; and the sheep-dog looked down the hill towards the bothy, keen-eyed, anxious, straight of tail; and the farmer and his wife rubbed their eyes, wakened by the absence of an accustomed sound, the low soft whistle of Mary. It was a sad, lonesome place, dogs and kine, cats and horses and hens, the farmer and his wife, and Andy; and the kettle, cold and silent on the bothy hearth.

But Mary was neither sad nor lonesome. So they thought when the sheep-dog licked the snow from her sweet old face.