

**THE LUCK OF THE FOUR-
LEAVED SHAMROCK;
OR, A JOURNEY'S END**

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The Luck of the Four-Leaved Shamrock; Or, a Journey's End by Dorothea Baker

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DOROTHEA BAKER

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A JOURNEY'S END.

BY

DOROTHEA BAKER,
AUTHOR OF 'WILLIE WESTON'S WONDERFUL SIXPENCE.'

'Trip no further, pretty swain;
Journeys end in lovers' meeting,
Every wise man's son doth know.'
TWELFTH NIGHT.



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THE LUCK
OF THE
FOUR-LEAVED SHAMROCK.



CHAPTER I.

THERE is a common superstition that a four-leaved shamrock brings good luck.

On my first visit to Ireland I was fortunate enough to find such a shamrock : whether the luck it brought me was good or bad, this story will show.

My school-days were over ; my only

guardian was dead ; I was mistress of my own time and money, and I was almost alone in the world.

Such a state of freedom may have its advantages, but to me it seemed cold and dreary, and I shrank from the thought of the hard and busy world which I must face alone.

So I was heartily glad when, one morning, the post brought me a letter from my only surviving relation, my aunt, Mrs. Connor of Castle Connor, a place somewhere in the West of Ireland, begging of me to come over and stay with her till my plans were settled.

‘And,’ her letter concluded, ‘we will do our best to settle you and them at the same time.’

Two days later my preparations were finished ; the sea was crossed, and I was in

Ireland, looking eagerly out of the window as the railway carriage crawled slowly across what seemed to me an endless expanse of bog.

I had never seen such a view before. Wide stretches of tawny yellow, flushed purple here and there by the lingering heather blossoms, and broken by dark irregular piles of turf, or deep bog-holes where the water gleamed blue as the sky overhead, and the low blue hills on the horizon. Such a scene might well seem dreary on a gloomy day ; but seen under a bright autumn sun, it was both beautiful and impressive.

The very flatness of the country gave a sense of freedom and boundlessness, which made it as delightful to my unaccustomed eyes as was the faint aromatic smell of turf-smoke to my nostrils.

Even the little delays and mishaps which would have been tiresome anywhere else, were here only sources of fresh amusement. At the Annaght Junction, where I had to wait for some little time, the platform was crowded with frieze-coated farmers; and I should never have made my way through to the waiting-room, if a kind old woman had not come to my help. She sat down with her knitting to keep me company, and told me how the fair which caused the crowd was 'the greatest fair in Ireland *entirely*,' and in consequence the trains had been late every night that week. 'But sure, miss,' she concluded, 'I hope you'll be having your tea to-night, before the train started yesterday!'

As the evening drew on the view became more gloomy. The train moved on slowly across the wide dark plain, whose

monotony was only broken by the pale gleam of water, or rude pyramids of black turf. I was glad when the train stopped at the Knockmacurriga station, and I heard a voice—'Is there a lady here at all for Castle Connor?' and when I put my head out of the window, I was straightway greeted by a black-eyed little man, who whirled me out of the train with a volley of assurances that he was proud to welcome me to the country, packed me and my possessions on an outside car, and then gave a flourish to his whip, which was answered by a kick from the pony, and off we set. Uphill and downhill we dashed, swinging round corners, rattling over stones, while, bewildered and shaken, I could only cling to the rail of the seat, and had hardly consciousness left to wonder on which side we should be overturned; and certainly

had no breath with which to answer to my driver's civilities, and praises of his pony, which had won six pounds at the race at Knockmacurriga only last Tuesday was a month ; and 'hould on for dear life, miss, for I see it's you that's not used to a kyar, and we'll have you at Castle Connor in a jiffy !'

In spite of his promise it was a full hour before the six long Irish miles were passed, and we drove through the grey arched gateway of Castle Connor.

A long grass-grown avenue led past belts of plantation and green stretches of park, where through the spreading beech-boughs I caught pretty glimpses of dark hills, and a lake golden in the sunset, and a picturesque stone bridge crossing a small river.

At last we reached the house, a large