

**A LITTLE
IRISH GIRL**

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A Little Irish Girl by Duchess

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IRISH GIRL**

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A LITTLE IRISH GIRL.

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"What is love? 'Tis not hereafter:
Present mirth hath present laughter.
What's to come is still unsure."

"BRIDGET! Bridget!" cries Bridget's young mistress, in a clear sweet tone. There is something of anxiety in it—enough to make the old woman to whom the name belongs hobble more swiftly from the kitchen to the sitting-room than is her usual custom.

"An' what is it, agra?" says she, stepping over the threshold, and looking up the big, bare room to where, in the third window, a tall, slight, childish figure is standing.

"Something dreadful, I'm certain. Come here! Come here!" beckoning hurriedly to the old woman, without taking her eyes off the window. "*Hurry*, can't you? Look out over *there*,"—pointing. "What is that? A man, eh?—a man hurt, wounded?"

"Faix, 'tis like that!" says the old woman, laying her hand to her brow, and staring into the growing darkness of the November evening.

"What can be the matter with him, Bridget?"

"I don't know, me dear. But he *do* look bad, whatever it is!"

"He shouldn't have come *this* way," says Miss McDermot anxiously. "You know those bogs down there, and those—*Oh*, Bridget! did you *see*! He was nearly in then!"

"May the devil carry him!" says Bridget wrathfully, "whoever he is, for throublin' ye like this! An' may the heavens sind him sinse, to kape him for the future from searchin' for cowl'd mud baths at this sayson of the year."

"You never care a pin about anything, Bridget," says her young mistress, glancing angrily at her over her shoulder, "except——"

"*You*, me dear!" retorts the old woman promptly; whereupon both mistress and maid laugh in a subdued sort of way, as if a little afraid of being heard.

"'Pon me conscience! he'll be there all night, if the morning doesn't see him in the other world," says the old woman presently, who again has returned to her watching of the distant figure that is trying in an uncertain fashion to cross the morass. She is a rather handsome old woman, with masses of snow-white hair, that are but partly hidden beneath her still more snowy cap. Her dress is that of the ordinary Irish peasant, with a big white apron flowing over the skirt of the gown.

"Whoever he is," says Miss McDermot, peering over the old servant's shoulder through the parlour window, "he certainly knows nothing of the neighbourhood. Ours is about the most dangerous bog about here. Don't you think, Bridget, we ought to send some one to help him?"

"Unless ye mane *me*," says Mrs. Driscoll, whose Christian name is Bridget, "I don't know who ye can sind; as ye

know well enough yerself, miss (an' faix 'tis you've had cause to know it), the masther niver lets Patsy out ov his sight from mornin' till night. 'T would be ridic'ulous to count on him. An' besides—— Glory be, miss! did ye see that? For a winged bird, he's a wondherful lepper."

Indeed, the man in the bog below seems (in spite of the fact that he is battling with an injured arm) extraordinarily full of life. The ill luck that has led him into this dangerous mass of water and spongy soil is not strong enough to destroy him: even as the two women, watching him breathlessly in the window of the gaunt old house, have almost given way to despair, he makes a last effort, and, landing on a firm bit of turf, jumps from that again to the firm land beyond.

That last effort seems, however, to have exhausted him. He staggers rather than walks towards the house. As he nears it, the girl, watching him, can see how ghastly is his face; and, flinging open the old-fashioned casement with an abrupt gesture, she springs down to the soft grass beneath, regardless of the old servant's remonstrances.

A few minutes brings her to the stranger's side.

"You are hurt, sir. You are faint. Lean on me. Oh! we watched you crossing that terrible bog, and at one time we feared—— But you are safe now. You will come in? Your arm, I fear, is——"

"Broken," says the young man, with a nervous smile.

"Oh! I *hope* not. Sprained, perhaps—but not *broken*. There!—are you easier now? Lean *heavier* on me; I don't mind it a bit; and—— Oh, *don't* faint! Oh, Patsy! Patsy!"—to the groom, gardener, boot-cleaner, man-of-all-

work, who comes hurrying up to her. "Catch him! He's awfully heavy."

Patsy catches him.

"Is he dead entirely, d'ye think, miss?"

"No: only fainted. There! Be *careful!* His arm, he says, is broken. There now! Oh! is that you, Bridget?" (to the old woman, who has hobbled out to her in a very angry frame of mind): "where can we put him, do you think? In the north room?"

"The hall will do him, I'm thinkin', till the docther till us where to sind him," says the old woman icily. With open unwillingness she lends a hand to convey the fainting man into the house.

Two or three chairs arranged in the hall make an improvised stretcher; but the unconscious man lying on them looks so miserably uncomfortable that the girl's heart dies within her.

"He *can't* stay there! Take him to the north room," she says sharply.

"Miss Dulcinea, don't do that!" says Bridget, compressing her lips, and regarding her young mistress with an anxious gaze. "'Tis unlucky enough that a half-dead crature should cross the threshold; but to take him in—to keep him—till death claims him, *that* will be bad, miss! I'm tellin' ye 'twill be for your undoin', miss."

"Nonsense!" says the girl scornfully. "What superstition! Besides, he is not going to die because his *arm* is broken. Patsy, give a hand here—to the north room, I tell you!"

"Miss Dulcie darlin', be sinsible now. I tell ye a hurt man brings no luck. An' yer father, darlin'—think ov him What'll *he* say?"