Dorothea Conyers

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CHAPTER I

"If there even appeared to be the faintest reason for his not going into something," said Gheena severely. Then she put her hand on the collar of the nondescript cur named Crabbit, an animal which was not precisely an Irish terrier and not quite a retriever, had some distant connections in the house of spaniels, and other relations too varied to trace, the result of this liberally scattered ancestry being endowed with a silky-red coat, and liquid, truthful eyes which expressed his powers of affection, but not the original sin behind his broad forehead.

"You will get a cold in your nose and snuffle at dinner if you go into the water again, Crabbit. No, sir! If there could be the faintest reason for it," went on Gheena Freyne. "If he was like Dick Kennedy, who has no one to help him, or half blind like Professor Brown, or couldn't walk——" She stopped, flushing, and took up her knitting.

"Like me—yes, Gheena." The words came lightly, but a little half stifled twisted sigh slipped from Darby Dillon's lips. Darby had been a light-hearted, long-limbed soldier in days of peace. If you saw him sitting down or in the saddle, and came up at his right side, he was apparently long limbed and good-looking still: a lean well-built man of about thirty-five, but at the left side Darby's shoulder stooped; he shuffled with one limb stiff and useless, generally with a crutch under his shoulder.

A crashing fall playing polo on hard Egyptian ground had left him maimed and crippled.

"I—did.... I wasn't. He's gone again," said Gheena philosophically.

A streak of red had tumbled over the brow of the low cliff, and a resounding splash marked the fact that Crabbit was once more in hot pursuit of seagulls, the hope to seize one unawares being embedded deeply in him.

"He is off to that rock where they all sit on. Mother gets quite worried when he snuffles under her chair and thinks it is bits or perhaps he is going mad. Why do some people"—Gheena whistled impotently—"never get a grip of life, Darby? Mummie can't ever think about Crabbit without asking Dearest if it isn't right—Aren't the dog's nose noises suspicious? Darby—I—I never meant to refer to anyone."

Darby said cheerily that he knew it, and that one got used to a lost leg, even if it meant other losses—here his eyes clouded—and that a fellow who could sit on a saddle need never grumble.

They sat silent then, looking across the sea; the great endless water carpet was grey under a grey sky, always moving with froth of spray on its lips when it touched the shore, here and there a line of white breaking over some hidden rock, its steely heaving distance merging to the moving sky. Far off the smudge of smoke marked the track of a liner standing out, and two fishing boats, red-sailed, were creeping into harbour. The sea-birds cried their curiously eerie notes, a little stretch of golden sand sandwiched between the rocks was fringed with pipers

skimming on their infinitesimal legs, and here and there a breathless and outraged gull eyeing Crabbit irritably.

The peace of late autumn was on the world; smoke curled up lazily from the little stone chimneys; children were gathering seaweed and carrying it up to dry. Red war seemed impossible as the two looked out across the heaving, dimpling sea.

The cliffs, covered with short, sweet grass, ran at Duncahir to the V of a small deep harbour, shaded by high hills at the back, shadowing it chilly. Beyond the shadow of the hills stretched a tangle of jutting rocks hollowed by innumerable caves, out to where the Atlantic beat and surged on the higher cliffs outside, and, skipping, trod its brave way to and fro to distant ports.

The mouth of the inlet was wide, and generally rough with the swell and rush of cross currents.

In the soft salty air fuchsias flourished, their blazing bells in every sheltered nook, and planted in hedges for shelter.

In a hollow near the mouth of the harbour, battered trees protesting against their position as mere protection from roaring gales, Castle Freyne stood, tall and rambling, with all kinds of semi-tropical flowers growing in the garden, and its rows of blind windows staring reproachfully among open-eyed glassed fellows.

The village of Duncahir hung upon the very edge of the cliffs with an air of supreme pride because it did not topple over, so close were the houses built to where the land broke off and the sudden rent all fuchsia-edged.

The Freynes had once owned all the mountain and bog and flat lands along the east side of the harbour, and had

now disposed of it with cheer; this sentiment lessened when it appeared that the tenants of the estate still expected to have defunct calves replaced, help given with carts and horses and all the old benefits which a patient landlady had conferred on them.

Matilda Freyne, Gheena's mother, had acquiesced with every decision made for her in life save one—her own name. She had detested it in her childhood, turned it to Matty and Mat and Tilda during her girlhood, and then dared anyone worthy of the name of friend to call her by any of these abbreviations, as they were worse than the original.

She had seriously thought of becoming Genevieve when confirmed, but having some vague idea that a change of name was irrefutably coupled with immersion, and her hair being straight by nature, she refrained, holding a grievance for years afterwards against the clergyman because he had not fully explained a subject which she here consulted him.

On her wedding day the "I Matilda" was spoken so faintly that an agitated mother held out strong smelling-salts and quite upset the ceremony. It took the Bishop, a nervous man, five minutes to recover, because he had been bending over to whisper reassurance to the faint-voiced bride at the moment.

In the vestry Matilda viciously upset the ink-bottle over the registry book, thus obliterating every signature except her own.

When her first child was born and proved to be a girl, Mrs. Freyne decided that at least she should not be burdened with one hideous name. Her child's was to be Irish and the name of a flower. Very weak-minded people have

occasional outbursts of complete obstinacy, and when Major Freyne, who was very deaf, insisted on the family name of Annette or Caroline, Matilda, his wife, merely sent for the gardener and asked for information about Irish flowers.

When Hallinan scratched his head and seemed to think of nothing but Push och Bui and Cruve tharrig, Mrs. Freyne was still determined, but undecided. She held the baby herself at the font, had a flash of inspiration five minutes beforehand, and pronounced its name firmly—Carrigeen.

It was sufficiently like Caroline to escape her husband's notice, and when the astounded Mr. Hallinan, who was too well acquainted with the word, said "Eh, what?" Matilda Freyne repeated it hurriedly and firmly.

When it was pointed out to her—and, in fact, she remembered that Carrigeen was a certain edible seaweed—Mrs. Freyne said gloomily that at least it was not Matilda, and bent before the blast of marital wrath, with what Major Freyne called heatedly the aggravation of a sally bough.

When Carrigeen could no longer be Baby or Doatie she certainly could not be Carrig or Een, and it was the nurse who settled the matter by calling her Miss Gheena, with an "h" introduced.

Major Freyne was taken early to his fathers, and his wife being quite unable to decide anything for herself, drifted into matrimony with a somewhat peppery cousin, who resented Gheena's ultimate inheritance of Castle Freyne at her marriage and the prospect of the dower house, Girtnamurragh, for himself.

Gheena was slight, with very bright brown hair, seldom burdened with a hat; a skin browned to a very soft tan, grey-

blue eyes, a crooked smile and a determined will.

"Crabbit very nearly got a gull, Darby; he is snapping at jelly-fish now and coming in. And why you men don't say something!"

Darby Dillon observed patiently that if an American citizen chose to come to Duncahir for his health, they really had no right to criticize.

Gheena returned severely that she did not believe that Basil Stafford had any right either to America or ill-health, and got up.

The sun was setting, and through a rift in the pack of clouds came bars of amber and gold, turning Innisfail island to a dome of misty purple, and Leeshane to a low hump of mauve.

"If Mom did not cry and talk of her heart I'd go out myself," said Gheena, dropping three stitches in her excitement, her needles clicking and flashing feverishly.

"And if I went, no one here would knit. I caught that hateful Maria Casey doing fancy work yesterday, and Annette Freyne making a mitten which might do for a sandbag. There is even no hope of hunting. Hill has gone now. I tell you, Darby, I believe—I really believe that he's—that Stafford man—a——"

"It was hot enough to take a swim this morning," said Basil Stafford easily. "You might have come out, Miss Freyne, when I was doing aquatic feats."

Gheena knitted faster still. She looked up, frowning, at a nondescript and active young man, with pleasant eyes and a somewhat grim mouth, who was standing close to them.

"Coming like—like—a man in rubber shoes! You might be out after spies," said Gheena sarcastically.

"It was after Carrigeen at low tide," said the young man gravely, showing a basket of white seaweed, to prove that the remark was not personal. "The news is none too cheery," he added gravely, looking down at a telegraph-form.

Gheena pulled at the flimsy slip, to read something concerning cows, sheep, pigs and several numbers, and to grunt suspiciously.

"The newspaper office sends them to me in code," said Basil softly. "I get so much more for my money that way." He translated a long message, and Gheena's lips drooped until her eyes grew angry.

With the energy and skill of the amateur strategist, she immediately explained how completely everything had been muddled.

"How, if the English had done one thing and another and France and Russia the rest, the whole of the German army would be scrambling away back to Berlin to get into the Kaiser's coal cellars."

"Just rush and dash," declaimed Gheena loftily, "not this retreating and losing."

Basil Stafford remarked, "And perhaps of men," rather slyly; to which Gheena answered, "Yes," with a glance of fiery meaning, and he grinned—softly.

Picking up the khaki sock—Gheena often dropped it—Basil inquired gravely whether the holes were for the easily clipping in of suspenders, and really wilted this time before the look which flashed over the piece of knitting.

"There is quite a party here to-night," said Dillon, looking along the cliff. "Here is Mrs. Weston now."

Gheena, staring unhappily, suddenly remembered that she had promised to go to Mrs. Weston's and fetch her up to tea and: "It was all Crabbit's fault," said Gheena placidly. "I don't know why people are staying on here this year like this. Mrs. Weston hasn't even the excuse of drainage works."

Mrs. Weston, who was slim and upright and nice-looking, came tripping in, heels palpably too high, along the cliffs. She was quite ostensibly but neatly painted, and made no pretence as to the expense of her chestnut wig. She was a capable young woman, who now talked of taking a house at Duncahir because her people in Australia had joined the army and she was quite alone.

The district inspector, a stout and self-opinionated youth, had shown marked symptoms of admiration, these coupled with discreet desire to know if she was one of those widows whose husbands left provisos in their wills.

Mr. Keefe joined the group at the moment. He was also asked to tea, and Darby nodded.

Violet Weston held out an eager hand for the telegram and clamoured for news. Personally, she was one of the optimists who regarded the retreat as mere strategy to lure the Germans on, and who considered that the war would end in Berlin with the Kaiser on exhibition in a neat brass cage.

Stafford read the message aloud, keeping it himself.

"You see, you wouldn't understand it," said Gheena, eyeing her knitting. "He has them sent to him in some code

or other."

Stafford tore up the wire into very small pieces and coloured faintly.

Mrs. Weston, walking on, was as fine as an optimist as Gheena had been as a strategist.

She reviewed the revealed facts of the Germans having been found starving, their foolish mistakes, and of that dreadful man, the Kaiser.

"The scald to him and his likes," said a voice bitterly.

The old kennel huntsman, Barty, limped out from behind a hedge of crimson fuchsias, his face set dolorously.

"The scald to all Kaysers," said Barty, "with Mrs. Day down to say, an' thruth in it, that seven geese were whipt lasht night, and that ould Larry Hassit, that was never too dacent, swearin' he'll pisin if the foxes isn't kilt. If there's no huntin' now there'll never be huntin' again, Misther Darby," said Barty lugubriously. "I declare to God the poor craythers of hounds an' I out, do be throwin' an eye across the finces an' then an eye up to me, an' they are but axin' the question aloud why they wouldn't be let off to hunt. Signs bye, the nice run I had afther two of the puppies last Thursday, and what harm but it was a hare an' I lambastin' them, Sammy must let the resht out of hand, and where did they make but up into Grange Gorse just across the road and frightened Mrs. Harby's bawn of cows hither an' over, an' she milkin' them at the time."

Gheena dropped her knitting, and wished to know if someone could not hunt the hounds. "Why not, Darby? And ——" She could whip in, they might try.

Harold Keefe thought that if he was not too busy, that a joint mastership might be possible—say, Freyne and Dillon and himself; he looked important.

Darby leant over to Barty, because he knew the old man always had a hunting-horn in his pocket. This he extracted and handed politely to Keefe, with a wintry smile.

Mr. Keefe's cheeks assumed the proportions of cherubs as he endeavoured to wrest sound from the piece of fashioned metal. Having produced a faint squeak, he said irritably that of course anyone could learn to blow on the thing; and, anyhow, they might have whistles, as more respectful to the absent master's memory.

"God save ye—whistles!" Barty blew a clear shrill hoot on the horn—the quick toot of the "gone away"—and it set Gheena's pulses dancing, and brought a flush to Darby's cheeks as he limped along, holding his crutch deftly beneath his half useless arm.

"Forrard away! Away!" the shrill screech echoed out across the sea.

"But supposing—oh, the sock! thank you, Mr. Stafford—that we got leave to keep a bobbing back—if it is bobbery, it's just the same, Darby—and rout out the coverts and kill foxes. Now both the Slatterys have enlisted, so Michael Maher told me he would not run his 'baygles' this year, and there are lots of them."

Darby broke in to say thoughtfully that there were, and lots of varieties among them also.

"You could gather them up and keep them at Dillonsview, Barty, in the old yard, and everyone would love to come out,

if Captain Lindlay would give us leave. He might even lend us Patience and Pollen to keep."

Barty murmured "God help us!—lend ye!" impolitely.

It is at all times difficult to discuss anything when one stands up. There was a large rock jutting out of the short grass, and the three men sat down upon it, because the idea was worth thinking of.

Darby waved his crutch, Keefe and Barty chattered. The absent might be glad to have his wild country hunted over in some form. Subscriptions would roll in, everyone wanted to hunt—and it was really quite possible now that the war might last for the winter months.

"A bit of a note to the Captain," said Barty.

"It's quite absurd, but it might be done," said Darby.

"And you agree as to joint mastership and the whistles," said Harold Keefe.

"And I'll whip in," said Gheena, "as we could not get a temporary master and the huntsman left unexpectedly, and Lindlay is shy about a strange man."

"But—you don't really think they won't be completely beaten before the winter is over," chipped in Violet Weston. "Is it really worth while? They can't prosper, those dreadful treaty-breakers, can they? But, of course, hunting would be nice."

Mr. Keefe said that he knew of a horse, one the Government hadn't snapped, and to be bought for the value—if Mrs. Weston was for the chase.

That neat-looking lady said she was, indeed; but in Kleeawuvia there were no side saddles, and would people here object to her riding like a man?

Mr. Keefe replied that Lady Rosie O'Brien rode astride, and that ought to be enough for anyone. Here he tried to get up, to find himself enveloped in the grey warp and woof of Gheena's sock, a portion of the wool having unwittingly got round Darby's crutch, so that at every wave he had unwrought much labour.

Gheena, winding wrathfully, declared that if she had not just got on nicely in the plain part she would not have minded; but to re-do half a sock—here she hauled a loop tight about Mr. Keefe's plump neck, and made him gurgle voiceless wonder at the strength of wool.

When his pink flush had deepened to vermilion, he broke the strangling strand and gulped reproach at the unsympathetic but annoyed Gheena.

They had decided they would be too late for tea, and were walking on again, when with a hurricane of little squeaks Mrs. Weston discovered that she had dropped a topaz and diamond brooch of some value.

One which dear Francis had given to her, and the clasp had always been fairly good. The prospect of her tea faded as she looked across to where they had been sitting.

Basil Stafford felt the sad right at his youth when he offered to go back and look for the jewel.

"No. If Mr. Keefe will come, I know his eyes would find anything." A flashing glance almost dispelled the sinking desire for tea and plum cake which Mr. Keefe felt acutely.

"We won't be long," said Violet Weston, scuttling away on her high heels.

Mr. Keefe left with her and returned for a box of matches.

"I'll catch her easy," he said, with a blend of gloom and complacency in his voice. "The fine mover she'd be if it wasn't for those silly shoes she puts on because her feet are a bit out-size."

"All that planning for that fellow," observed Darby, looking after the hurrying pair.

CHAPTER II

It was considerably past five when Gheena Freyne coo-eed loudly towards the drawing-room window and followed the Australian call with a shriek for tea. Mrs. Freyne, promptly appearing on the door-step, observed placidly that she had not waited, and didn't they all think she was right?

Matilda Freyne was stoutly comely, possessed with a mild attractiveness which would never leave her. A quantity of shining red-gold hair, which declined to get grey, was puffed in old-fashioned style above her placid forehead. She had mild blue eyes and a charming voice.

"One never knows when Gheena goes to the sea what she may get into," continued Gheena's mother, holding out a plump hand. "Now wasn't I right, Darby, not to wait?"

When Darby said "You were, Matilda," the word brought a look of dislike which forty-six years of possession had not toned down.

"But they will boil a new kettle, and the hot cakes may not be quite cold," said their hostess cheerfully. "Even if

they are, as they were, rather underdone, it will not much matter. And where is Mrs. Weston?"

Darby observed that the widow lady had gone looking for a topaz with Mr. Keefe and would be back presently. Mrs. Freyne, with a placid and unmoving finger on the bell, said she thought that was quite useless, because Dearest George had told her long ago that there were none on the Duncahir beaches. The only thing she had ever got there was that disappointing stone with the imitation silver in it; so perhaps they had better send the pantry boy to tell the others to come.

Basil Stafford stood at the window looking out. The trees had been cut away in front of the house to show a glimpse of the sea and the opposite cliffs.

Fuchsia hedges sheltered the empty flower-beds from the blast, and beyond the other fuchsia hedges sheltered the two smooth green tennis courts, where watchful Gheena pounced on every weed.

It was all still and peaceful in the falling autumn dusk, the golden light of the dipping sun still flashing below the curtain of clouds, a boat stealing home to harbour.

The hot cakes proved to have lost even warmth, but to have preserved their memory of their too early exit from the oven. Yet three young people ate them with fearless risk of indigestion.

Several very large cakes of heavy calibre stood on the wide tea-table. Mrs. Freyne had not as yet commenced the small economies of war time and given up raisins, cherries and icing.

The discussion concerning the possibility of the scratch pack of hounds rose and fell over the tea-table, spurred on by comments from old Barty, who was taking his tea just outside the front windows, nibbling cherry cake and enumerating the danger of not killing foxes.

"What I want to know is how many of them we are likely to kill," said Darby thoughtfully, "with those old harriers and our amateur hunting?"

Barty said: "What harrum so long as they'd see ye makin' endeavours?" And added, after a pause: "An' in spite of ye, Misther Darby, they might get away and pull down a sad one that wouldn't be too crabbit, or that was full of hins. Ye'd never know."

Darby coughed thoughtfully.

Mrs. Freyne, who still hunted, and went wherever her pilots led her, enjoying each hunt completely without a thought of what hounds were doing, was enthusiastic. She disliked riding without an object, and her dresses appeared to be shrinking.

"Of course, if Dearest George thought——"

Gheena saw Mrs. Weston's blue sailor hat in the distance, pointed to it, and asked where Dearest had got to.

Gheena had been a completely self-willed girl of eight when her mother had married again, and would probably have called him Papa or Daddy without thought, if her mother had not consulted her anxiously as to her convictions on second-hand fathers.

Once the idea of wronging the kindly deaf man, who had called her his Baby Seaweed, was placed in her head, Gheena started round her stepfather with suspiciously

resentful eyes, and called him nothing until her mother's "Dearest George" made her mutinously say Dearest also, naughtily, feeling resentful surprise because it was accepted as a charming idea.

"We got it," said Keefe, mopping his pink forehead, "but I tell you we had to look."

Basil Stafford asked where with a faint grin.

"On the edge of the cliff," said Keefe. "I'll take it stewed or roast, Mrs. Freyne, so long as it's wet. Where Mrs. Weston tried herself twice; but she sent me down the third time."

"And Mr. Keefe's sharp eyes saw it shining," said Mrs. Weston happily, patting a small ornament in her blouse. "I knew he could help if anyone could. If it's absolutely no trouble, Mrs. Freyne, I am afraid of very strong tea; it's nervy. And we walked so fast! Mr. Keefe flies. I'm tired."

"And I after her all the——" began Keefe blankly, and then stopped to drink.... Why put aside admiration even if undeserved.

At this point a motor came to the door and George Freyne bustled in.

He was an undersized man, with bushy eyebrows, cheeks which Gheena always said looked like pink pork-pies, and a dome-shaped bald head.

Anyone whom he failed to dominate he disagreed with; and as Mat the old groom used to remark: "The Masther begridged even if the fox to go the way he'd like himself."

He had been out on some mysterious business, which embraced visits to the coastguards, a cryptic and reluctant silence, and a look of impatience.

Sitting down to tea, he discussed the war with Mrs. Weston, becoming deeply pessimistic when she piped out her contempt of Germany, and then having left her floundering in a red sea of doubt and despair, would immediately explain how it all could be ended in a month, provided such-and-such plans were carried out, and if instead of Lord Kitchener and General French there were a few men unencased in red tape and not stale from custom of mimic warfare—a fresh brain in fact, such as he himself might bring, to plot and hew and smash until it was over.

The two played see-saw over the cold, slim cakes, until Mrs. Weston asked Dearest George what he might think of this wild idea of Gheena's, of gathering up hounds to eat foxes, because the farmers seemed worried about losing a few chickens.

"So unpatriotic of them, grumbling, with the hay at four pounds a ton," she said blandly.

It was, in fact, this way of putting it which made Dearest George immediately favour the prospect.

He said sharply that he could not see why, if it was at all feasible, Gheena should make silly objections.

Gheena opened her mouth—and shut it—wisely.

"The claims are positively pouring in," said George Freyne irritably. "There were three women and James Macavee here to-day, all with tales of dead geese and hens."

"And even if the common herds was all they had to be pratin' over," put in Barty. "But here's one chattin' of Orpinntons, an' the next of Leggyhorns, an' another that paid tuppence apiece for eggs of the slim-mouthed Rocks,

the lord liftenant an' lady havin' them all sot up an' above themselves with some schame for fancy breeds. An' the name alone bein' all that's right," added Barty, "seein' that a depot for maybe Speckledy Sussexes 'll be but twenty yards away from some woman that just keeps what she gits, an' the two flocks rootin' out in the one place. When 'twas claims for hins it could be put up with; but when it's claims for the schamers out of Dublin, then I tell you it's money."

"Barty came over about it," said Mrs. Freyne. "Did you, Barty, to ask Mr. Freyne his opinion?"

"I did not, ma'am," said Barty placidly, "nor think of such nonsense. It would be bether for ye to take the cup, Miss, an' Crabbit nosin' around it; but if we could gather even thim objecs of dogs, an' to show the red coats an' all, it might be the way it would make them think we was kapin' up the counthry, an' good in nonsense."

Gheena, now greatly excited, said that she would go the very next day to see about the hounds. Darby had old kennels at his place.

When Dearest George intimated curtly that he must take the car next day, as he had to drive to the coastguard station at the far side of the harbour, Gheena replied that she could walk. "The nearest Dayly was quite close, and even if the farthest were farther on——"

Darby said "Yes," and picked up the knitting thoughtfully.

"Well, it was, that was all. And you can come, Darby, and meet me at the cross roads below Macinerny's Public House, and drive me the rest of the way."

Violet Weston, smoking a cigarette, wanted to know if there was any real fear of anything happening, as there was

so much fuss about coastguards.

"Our ships will never let anything happen," she said stoutly.

"Henry Ashleigh is gone," burst out George Freyne, "to drive a motor. I forgot to tell you. I'd go myself, but I'm too useful here."

"You haven't applied for anything yet, have you?" Gheena turned with crushing directness to Basil.

"Well, you see, I'm in the pay of the Government, and only the Government can let me go," he said quietly. "If the drainage works were shut up, all those men who bought the farms on the understanding that they would be drained for them would be cheated."

To this Miss Freyne observed freezingly that she would have thought an older man could have looked after drains, and drummed on the tea-table, laying down her knitting.

Barty raised his battered hunting cap to say good-night. As he turned he shaded his keen old eyes, and looked out at the ship of rocks just visible in the grey dusk.

"I never seen such a man as the ould Professor for beltin' around the cliffs," remarked Barty, "crackin' thim rocks with a hammer that can only be irritaytin' thim, an' off back with picks and bits that he is gropin' over till two in the mornin's, behind his specs. A tax on ile 'd be the bad one for him," said Barty slowly.

A little withered thing, he went off briskly, one leg slightly shorter than the other, one arm a little stiff. His collar-bones had grown almost weary of being mended; one thumb was bent in, and a little finger crooked, as if perpetually poised to hover politely over food. But Barty was hale and active

still, and thought mournfully how much he would have liked to come out to hunt hounds again himself, a post which his broken leg and subsequent ill-health had taken from him.

He skirted the clipped laurels, passed under the vast arch, put up as a gateway in almost all old yards, and peered into the kitchen to ask the big peppery Anne, the cook, "If firin' was short, that the cakes wasn't baked above."

"Didn't I put them on for Miss Gheena, and mustn't the Missus have them out for herself?" said Anne good-humouredly. "Terrible times, Barty! To be lookin' above in the air for thim Zepherills they do talk about, and Donellan the coastguard havin' chat about the underground ships bein' about beside the coast watchin' us, till they've a chance to swhoop."

Barty then gave some lurid details as to the life on Bretham Island, where the officers dined in the cellars, sitting on the ammunition, "they were so afraid of it being struck."

"If I was to be flyin'," Anne observed, as she deposited a large leaf of pastry on a gigantic pie.

Barty said "Yes" politely. Anne weighed fourteen stone.

"I'd fly," said Anne darkly, as she opened the oven door, "where—where flyin' 'd be of use," she added. "Not hither an' over just to say there was a man here an' a gun there, but off to Berlin. An' if I didn't drop what 'd hate him up on the Kayser my name isn't Anne Dwyer. Th' ould vilyin. Isn't Paddy Hanratley's life lost be his devilment, in that retrate from Mongs? He is on to-day's paper."

Barty abstracted the *Irish Times* from the dresser and read the news greedily. He raised his head to tell the cook, now surrounded by a halo of several attentive maids, that the land was sown with spies.

"Two holy nuns taken in Cork," said Barty. "I had it for a fact from me aunt's cousin be marriage, her nephew being husband to the landlady's dather. An' the two of thim takin' lodgin's, sayin' they was out for charity, an' God save us, didn't the little gerril carry in hot wather one mornin' without knockin', an' out she runs, for their caps was off, an' the two big faces of men above the bedclothes. Masther Darby says they beyant are going to make a shot to invade us, the vilyins, an' spies here is mappin' out the very ripples on the say, an' every turf sod in the land, so as to be ready for them."

"Me Dadda has us towlt," began Maria the between-maid, "I am slicin' the pyates, Mrs. Dwyer, ma'am, for the fryin'. Me Dadda has it they'll come frindly with no waypons on them; not another penny, then, need we pay for the land we has bought, an' the hay barns, nor nothin'."

"The Germans bein' such gran' men they can live without money," said Barty dryly. "God send ye're Dadda sinse, Maria Harty, an' something to do besides clanin' his boots markin' time on Sundays with the Volunteers."

Then Phil the groom coming in, observed: "That he'd seen a German Frollin that was maid to some at the hotel. An' bottled plums she clapped into a stew that she had leave to make. An' quare soorts of sossidges they'd get over the wather, black as the coals, Anne, an' solid."

Barty folded up the paper, sighing as he did so; then he leant forward.

"What is that ould Professor knocking chips out of the rocks for?" he whispered darkly.

Anne the cook sat down heavily, and prayed to the heavens above her to see her safe from harm, with all their talk.

"Makin' channels for submarines, he might be, with his hammer," she whispered fearfully. "Oh, good evenin' to ye, Barty. Good evenin'. There could be no good behind his black specs," went on Anne fearfully. "God betune us an' harrum; no good at all. An' there is the pie burnin', an' all the fault of that ould Kayser," she added, as she rolled with a wail to the oven to announce that the grannut ornymints she even drew out were black as a Germin's heart, and to scold everyone quite impartially and without resentment for the occurrence, they putting professors into her head.

Upstairs Mrs. Freyne was consulting Dearest as to whether the Army was really retreating, or whether it was only reported so as to deceive the Germans and bring forward recruits.

Dearest adjusted his glasses to explain pompously that going backwards was not advancing, and to illustrate with the flower-vases until one fell off never to stand upright again, and Gheena went to dress hurriedly.

Her big room looked out to the sea. It was high up, and she could see, when it was light, the restless waters beyond the point as well as the calmer stretch shown by the gap in the trees.

Leaning out, the soft dampness of the autumn air welcome after the stuffy heat of the drawing-room, Gheena thought she saw a flicker of light far away just where the cliffs were honeycombed by endless caves.

"I don't believe—in—any drains," said Gheena to the night very severely. "And I should certainly go to be a nurse if it was not for the knitting club."

Gheena's room possessed the advantage of a side door reached by a narrow flight of stairs just beneath it. Dearest showing signs of irritation at trails made by damp bathing dresses and Crabbit's paws on the polished hall, Gheena had taken over this door for herself and ran from it, in the morning generally, clad in nothing but her bathing dress, to return dripping under a light mackintosh, with Crabbit barking at her bare heels.

She bathed, too, sometimes on hot summer nights; delighting in the dripping flames which fell from her finger, and the blue fire streaks as she struck out. These night baths, when her mother reposed in a room which gave oblations to hygiene with a slightly opened window, behind which thick curtains were carefully drawn, were only known to the housemaid and the cook, who considered them outrageous, but said nothing.

"I should like to bathe to-night. Crabbit, you're snuffling. You couldn't come. And we might, after dinner, Crabbit, though it is October, after we are baked downstairs."

Dearest George disliking draughts, the library curtains were always closely drawn on still nights, and the shutters closed when a wind blew; also, there was always a fire. He sat there now, thinking; the problem of Gheena troubled

George Freyne deeply. His objection to the Dower House, which lurked in a gloom of trees on the very edge of the cliff, increased hourly. A stealthy backwater came fawning to the end of the garden, casting up chill salt airs from its slowly moving waters, yet sea-like enough to expose an unsightly stretch of shingle and rock at low tide, and to sap in a mean, secretive way at the protecting wall of the garden, picking away constant gaps. Castle Freyne became Gheena's, when she married, and a nephew of George Freyne's, who combined meekness of mind, strong conceit with plump cheeks and an Irish accent, had been decided upon as Gheena's future spouse.

In fact, failing Gheena, he was the next heir following a life tenancy by Matilda Freyne, so it was only right.

This Lancelot Freyne had been considered too delicate to go to school, and had strayed to manhood in his home, tyrannized over by his too fond mother. Now having dutifully ridden to hounds, gone out shooting, and applied his mind to the courtship ordered by his mother, Lancelot had upset all calculations by immediately getting a commission from the Militia and going off to train in a camp in England.

Castle Freyne was quite large enough for everyone, but Gheena, as owner, might show a still more marked desire for open windows, unguarded by curtains or shutters, and also for various innovations which made a comfort-loving soul shiver apprehensively. In any case, it would be hers when she was twenty-five.

Gheena, coming down to dinner in white, was exceedingly good to look at, and with strangers at Dunaleen Camp Mr. Freyne grew anxious.

The night fell in a mist of grey stillness, broken by a taint whimper of little waves weeping as they broke upon the rocks.

Gheena put on a black cloak, wrapped her head in a Lusky veil and slipped away to the shore. It was cold to bathe, but she scarcely knew what she was going out to look for. Some patrol ships, coastguards tramping—anything to show her that war raged somewhere, despite the grey peace upon Ireland. Her mother had already begun to re-read the papers and ask for explanations, until her husband fell asleep; then she would fall asleep herself, until ten o'clock, when she invariably awoke with great vigour, and hoped Dearest George would not lose his figure for his bad habit of sleeping in his chair, and then read a novel until eleven, when she put out all the lamps, drank hot milk, and went to bed.

Crabbit scuttled into the undergrowth, crashing through it with little short yelps, as he scented rabbits. Gheena stepped on to where the low cliffs jutted to oppose the sea. The waters whispered, fretting, lapping, sucking through the rocks; lifted on the coming tide the fringe of brown seaweed rustled faintly as it awoke to the life of the sea. A sleeping row of sea-birds on a peak of brown rock, a blur of white just visible.

Gheena had put on tennis shoes; she moved soundlessly, sure-footed, across the still uncovered rocks, stooped at the edge of the tide, where it lapped deep and cool, to put her hands in, and see the blue drip run off her fingers back to the gleaming tide.

At this point, Crabbit, having mislaid her, uttered a yell of anguish, and hurled himself noisily across the rocks, his unerring nose down.

This onrush was stopped by something solid, which melted and slipped with sudden outcry into a fairly deep pool.

As the something rose and groped, it said aloud several things of extreme pungency, and wished to know what the—well—earthly dickens sea-serpents or wild goats were out on the rocks for at midnight, knocking people down for.

The voice bearing a distinct resemblance to Mr. Basil Stafford's, Gheena observed aloud, calmly, that it was neither a sea-serpent nor a goat.

"But only Crabbit tracking me, with you in his way." And then she wished to know why he did not come out at once.

Mr. Stafford said something rather indistinctly, and then more clearly, that it seemed to be the damn sea-urchins' pool; and everywhere he put his hands down to catch a rock, he had, so far, caught prickles and couldn't get out.

The sound of a finger noisily sucked was followed by the smell of hot metal and the flash of a dark lantern, blinding in the gloom. By its rays Basil Stafford swished through the knee-deep water and stepped out on to dry rocks.

"He took me just under the knees, like an avalanche, that dog," he said irritably. "I just jumped in time to get in on my feet. I've sand shoes on, too. What on earth," he said, "are you doing down here in the dark by this hang pool?"

"Looking for submarines," said Gheena dreamily.

Stafford thought dryly that the sea-urchins' pool would certainly be a good base, and that perhaps there might be a

Dreadnought in the bathing creek. He shook his head and by the light of the lantern extracted prickles from his fingers.

"Anne Dwyer says they all fester," observed Gheena, watching with interest, "and you're breaking half of them. Here!"

She took the big brown hand in hers, extracting gently but deftly; Mr. Stafford insisting, as she said she could see no more, that he felt two of the worst just in below his first and second fingers, and the light of the lantern proving quite inadequate to illuminate them.

"And as I said, why Crabbit should have been on the rocks," said Stafford—"further down, on the fat place—and why he chose that pool."

"There isn't any fat place," said Gheena. "And why"—she raised her eyes—"why were you out?" she asked emphatically.

"It's right in the muscle, and I shall never use those fingers again. I—well—I saw—queer lights," said Stafford, after a pause. "Chaps here might start—er—smuggling again. And—oh, good Lord!" Crabbit barked at the sharp yell of anguish.

"I was only just using the pin of my brooch to burrow, as you were so sure there was a prickle there." Gheena re-pinned her brooch with hurt dignity. "Smuggle tobacco! One doesn't think of that kind of smuggling nowadays," she said bitingly. "It's smuggling German emperors and admirals and 'U' boats."

The lantern had suddenly been extinguished, and the noise of sucking, mingled with grunts of pain, came from the