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**Only Three Weeks, by the Author of Ereighda Castle**

**Fitzgerald Geraldine Penrose**

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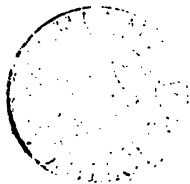
ONLY THREE WEEKS.

*J. Nobel.*

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'EREIGHDA CASTLE.'

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

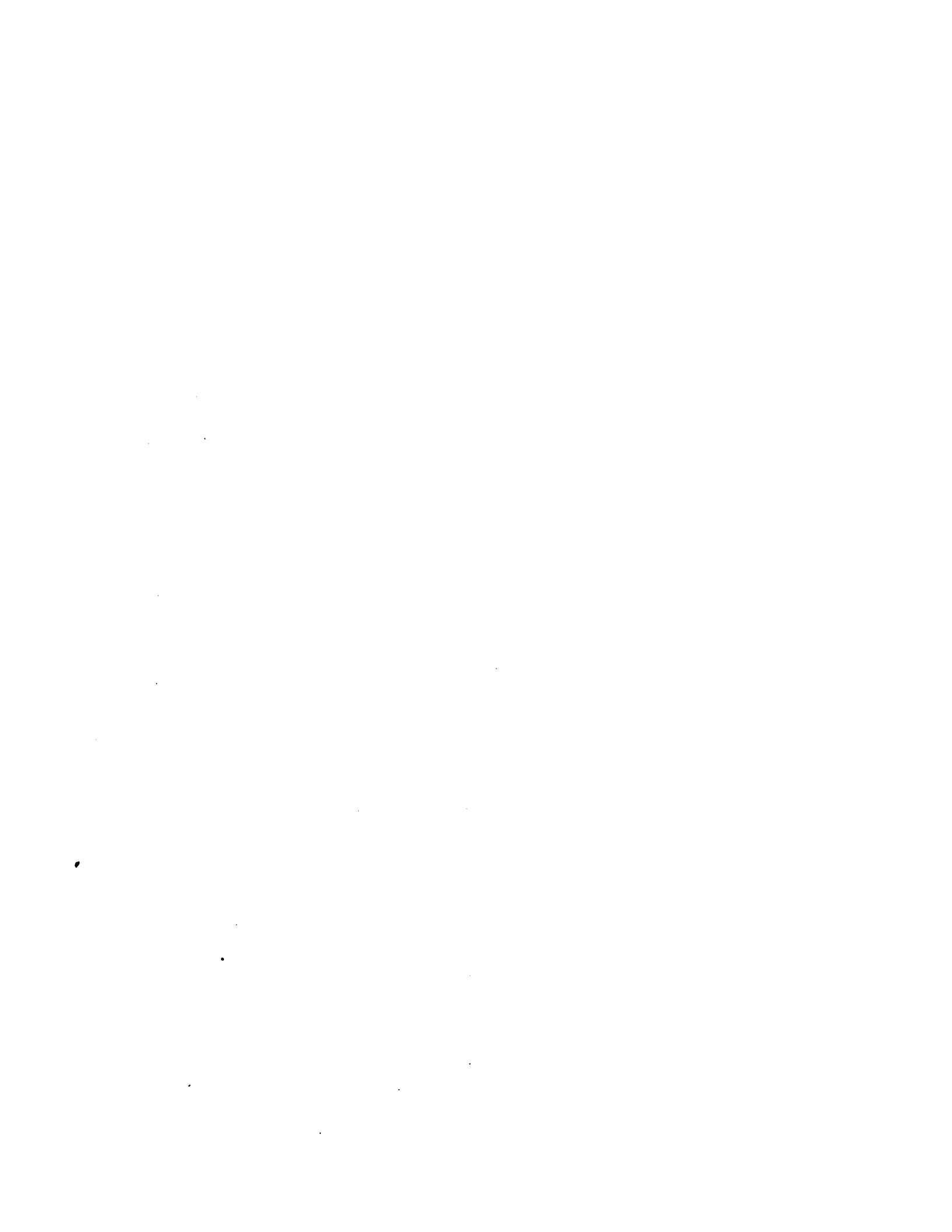


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# ONLY THREE WEEKS.

## CHAPTER I.

'I wish Dermot would not go so often to the Kavanagh's,' said Mrs. O'Clery, putting a basket of keys down on the library table, at which her husband was writing.

Mr. O'Clery looked up with an amused face.

'He has nothing else to do, poor fellow, I suppose.'

'That is scarcely the case,' said Mrs. O'Clery, in a tone of marked severity; 'he could find the same employments for himself as John does.'

'He is not the same sort of boy as Jack. Boys will act according to their character; and I have never seen any good come of trying to prevent



them. Those two boys are as different as a Skye terrier and a greyhound.'

His wife did not smile, but sat down in an arm-chair with a sigh.

'I wonder, Desmond, you do not see the unpleasant consequences which might follow from his becoming attached to Nora Kavanagh.'

Mr. O'Clery started slightly, and uttered an exclamation.

'Folly! The boy would not think of such a thing.' Nevertheless he looked disturbed, and as if a new light had broken in upon him. 'What on earth can have put that into your head?' he continued sharply.

'When a young man goes incessantly to visit at the house where a pretty young woman is living, it is not unnatural to imagine that the reason of his incessant visits may have some connection with her.'

'You should have warned him of it, then, before. It is always a mother's duty to look after her children. Men cannot be expected to do that sort of thing.' And he looked more disturbed than the occasion seemed to require.

'I came, Desmond,' she said, coldly and se-

verely, 'to ask you to give him some slight warning before he has involved himself irretrievably in this matter. You know as well as I do the circumstances which would make this match so peculiarly undesirable.' She paused; then added: 'A father has so much more power in a case of this kind than a mother. I can only offer him my advice; but you can meet him with your authority.'

'That is all very fine,' said Mr. O'Clery tartly; 'but I do not see why I am to be made a cat's-paw of to tease the poor boy in his holiday-time, which must be dull enough as it is, in all conscience.' And he tore up some old letters, and flung them angrily into a basket of waste paper at his side.

The fact was, they both idolised their eldest son, and each wished to shuffle out of the duty of speaking to him on this delicate and unpleasant subject.

'What put this idea into your head?' said Mr. O'Clery presently, more quietly. 'Has Dermot said anything to you about it himself?'

'Not exactly,' said his wife in a low mysterious tone; 'but he is always asking questions about

Nora, and about her father, and—and about—her mother.’ And she blushed crimson, and the tears came into her eyes.

Mr. O’Clery sighed deeply, coughed a little, and took a pinch of snuff.

‘How do you answer them?’

‘Why, I say she is obliged to live in the south of Europe for her health,’ said Mrs. O’Clery, getting redder than ever.

‘I never could see the good of telling lies myself; though I know it is a resource some people have immense faith in.’ And he began to mend a pen meditatively.

‘But what else was I to do, Desmond? Your own orders are, that this matter should be kept as much in the dark as possible. And you know how thoughtless Dermot is, and how likely he would be to tell the whole history to Nora some day, if he were really to be informed of the truth.’

‘Not if he promised that he would not.’

‘He forgets his promises,’ she said, sighing deeply.

‘He never forgot one that he made to me,’ said Mr. O’Clery sharply, frowning over his pen.

‘He has many, then, that he made to me.’

'Ladies never know how to manage boys. They make them give all sorts of absurd promises about little trifling things which are of no importance; and then, of course, they get into a way of not caring about their promises, and lose the idea of honour which a man would be sure to instil.'

'You think, then, that men have more sense of honour than women?'

'Fifty thousand times.'

'Thank you! That is very polite!' And she looked grave, but not the least cross or ruffled, as she added: 'I can scarcely see how Dermot's carelessness is a proof of my want of a sense of honour. However, I did not come here to argue. But do you not think, before I go, we had better settle something about this matter? Is it your wish that Dermot should be spoken to?'

'Yes, certainly,' said Mr. O'Clery, eagerly seizing the opportunity of escape. 'I think the sooner you speak to him the better; and tell him that his conduct in this instance may lead to very serious and unpleasant consequences. But speak kindly; there is no necessity for being severe; the boy has not committed himself yet; and per-