LEVER CHARLES JAMES

CHARLES O'MALLEY, THE IRISH DRAGOON, VOLUME 1

Charles Lever

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Содержание

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TO THE

MOST NOBLE THE MARQUESS OF DOURO, M.P., D.C.L., ETC., ETC.

MY DEAR LORD, —

The imperfect attempt to picture forth some scenes of the most brilliant period of my country's history might naturally suggest their dedication to the son of him who gave that era its glory. I feel, however, in the weakness of the effort, the presumption of such a thought, and would simply ask of you to accept these volumes as a souvenir of many delightful hours passed long since in your society, and a testimony of the deep pride with which I regard the honor of your friendship.

Believe me, my dear Lord, with every respect and esteem,

Yours, most sincerely,

THE AUTHOR.

BRUSSELS, November, 1841.

A WORD OF EXPLANATION

KIND PUBLIC, —

Having so lately taken my leave of the stage, in a farewell benefit, it is but fitting that I should explain the circumstances which once more bring me before you, – that I may not appear intrusive, where I have met with but too much indulgence.

A blushing *debutante—entre nous*, the most impudent Irishman that ever swaggered down Sackville Street – has requested me to present him to your acquaintance. He has every ambition to be a favorite with you; but says – God forgive him – he is too bashful for the foot-lights.

He has remarked – as, doubtless, many others have done – upon what very slight grounds, and with what slender pretension, *my* Confessions have met with favor at the hands of the press and the public; and the idea has occurred to him to indite his *own*. Had his determination ended here, I should have nothing to object to; but unfortunately, he expects me to become his editor, and in some sort responsible for the faults of his production. I have wasted much eloquence and more breath in assuring him that I was no tried favorite of the public, who dared take liberties with them; that the small rag of reputation I enjoyed, was a very

scanty covering for my own nakedness; that the plank which swam with one, would most inevitably sink with two; and lastly, that the indulgence so often bestowed upon a first effort is as frequently converted into censure on the older offender. My arguments have, however, totally failed, and he remains obdurate and unmoved. Under these circumstances I have yielded; and as, happily for me, the short and pithy direction to the river Thames, in the Critic, "to keep between its banks," has been imitated by my friend, I find all that is required of me is to write my name upon the title and go in peace. Such, he informs me, is modern editorship.

In conclusion, I would beg, that if the debt he now incurs at your hands remain unpaid, you would kindly bear in mind that your remedy lies against the drawer of the bill and not against its mere humble indorser,

HARRY LORREQUER
BRUSSELS, March, 1840.

PREFACE

The success of Harry Lorrequer was the reason for writing Charles O'Malley. That I myself was in no wise prepared for the favor the public bestowed on my first attempt is easily enough understood. The ease with which I strung my stories together, – and in reality the Confessions of Harry Lorrequer are little other than a note-book of absurd and laughable incidents, – led me to believe that I could draw on this vein of composition without any limit whatever. I felt, or thought I felt, an inexhaustible store of fun and buoyancy within me, and I began to have a misty, half-confused impression that Englishmen generally labored under a sad-colored temperament, took depressing views of life, and were proportionately grateful to any one who would rally them even passingly out of their despondency, and give them a laugh without much trouble for going in search of it.

When I set to work to write Charles O'Malley I was, as I have ever been, very low with fortune, and the success of a new venture was pretty much as eventful to me as the turn of the right color at *rouge-et-noir*. At the same time I had then an amount of spring in my temperament, and a power of enjoying life which I can honestly say I never found surpassed. The world had for me all the interest of an admirable comedy, in which the part allotted myself, if not a high or a foreground one, was eminently suited to my taste, and brought me, besides, sufficiently often on the stage

to enable me to follow all the fortunes of the piece. Brussels, where I was then living, was adorned at the period by a most agreeable English society. Some leaders of the fashionable world of London had come there to refit and recruit, both in body and estate. There were several pleasant and a great number of pretty people among them; and so far as I could judge, the fashionable dramas of Belgrave Square and its vicinity were being performed in the Rue Royale and the Boulevard de Waterloo with very considerable success. There were dinners, balls, déjeûners, and picnics in the Bois de Cambre, excursions to Waterloo, and select little parties to Bois-fort, – a charming little resort in the forest whose intense cockneyism became perfectly inoffensive as being in a foreign land, and remote from the invasion of home-bred vulgarity. I mention all these things to show the adjuncts by which I was aided, and the rattle of gayety by which I was, as it were, "accompanied," when I next tried my voice.

The soldier element tinctured strongly our society, and I will say most agreeably. Among those whom I remember best were several old Peninsulars. Lord Combermere was of this number, and another of our set was an officer who accompanied, if indeed he did not command, the first boat party who crossed the Douro. It is needless to say how I cultivated a society so full of all the storied details I was eager to obtain, and how generously disposed were they to give me all the information I needed. On topography especially were they valuable to me, and with such good result that I have been more than once complimented on the accuracy

of my descriptions of places which I have never seen and whose features I have derived entirely from the narratives of my friends.

When, therefore, my publishers asked me could I write a story in the Lorrequer vein, in which active service and military adventure could figure more prominently than mere civilian life, and where the achievements of a British army might form the staple of the narrative, – when this question was propounded me, I was ready to reply: Not one, but fifty. Do not mistake me, and suppose that any overweening confidence in my literary powers would have emboldened me to make this reply; my whole strength lay in the fact that I could not recognize anything like literary effort in the matter. If the world would only condescend to read that which I wrote precisely as I was in the habit of talking, nothing could be easier than for me to occupy them. Not alone was it very easy to me, but it was intensely interesting and amusing to myself, to be so engaged.

The success of Harry Lorrequer had been freely wafted across the German ocean, but even in its mildest accents it was very intoxicating incense to me; and I set to work on my second book with a thrill of hope as regards the world's favor which – and it is no small thing to say it – I can yet recall.

I can recall, too, and I am afraid more vividly still, some of the difficulties of my task when I endeavored to form anything like an accurate or precise idea of some campaigning incident or some passage of arms from the narratives of two distinct and separate "eye-witnesses." What mistrust I conceived for all eye-

witnesses from my own brief experience of their testimonies! What an impulse did it lend me to study the nature and the temperament of narrator, as indicative of the peculiar coloring he might lend his narrative; and how it taught me to know the force of the French epigram that has declared how it was entirely the alternating popularity of Marshal Soult that decided whether he won or lost the battle of Toulouse.

While, however, I was sifting these evidences, and separating, as well as I might, the wheat from the chaff, I was in a measure training myself for what, without my then knowing it, was to become my career in life. This was not therefore altogether without a certain degree of labor, but so light and pleasant withal, so full of picturesque peeps at character and humorous views of human nature, that it would be the very rankest ingratitude of me if I did not own that I gained all my earlier experiences of the world in very pleasant company, – highly enjoyable at the time, and with matter for charming souvenirs long after.

That certain traits of my acquaintances found themselves embodied in some of the characters of this story I do not to deny. The principal of natural selection adapts itself to novels as to Nature, and it would have demanded an effort above my strength to have disabused myself at the desk of all the impressions of the dinner-table, and to have forgotten features which interested or amused me.

One of the personages of my tale I drew, however, with very little aid from fancy. I would go so far as to say that I took

him from the life, if my memory did not confront me with the lamentable inferiority of my picture to the great original it was meant to portray.

With the exception of the quality of courage, I never met a man who contained within himself so many of the traits of Falstaff as the individual who furnished me with Major Monsoon. But the major – I must call him so, though that rank was far beneath his own – was a man of unquestionable bravery. His powers as a story-teller were to my thinking unrivalled; the peculiar reflections on life which he would passingly introduce, the wise apothegms, were after a morality essentially of his own invention. Then he would indulge in the unsparing exhibition of himself in situations such as other men would never have confessed to, all blended up with a racy enjoyment of life, dashed occasionally with sorrow that our tenure of it was short of patriarchal. All these, accompanied by a face redolent of intense humor, and a voice whose modulations were managed with the skill of a consummate artist, – all these, I say, were above me to convey; nor indeed as I re-read any of the adventures in which he figures, am I other than ashamed at the weakness of my drawing and the poverty of my coloring.

That I had a better claim to personify him than is always the lot of a novelist; that I possessed, so to say, a vested interest in his life and adventures, – I will relate a little incident in proof; and my accuracy, if necessary, can be attested by another actor in the scene, who yet survives.

I was living a bachelor life at Brussels, my family being at Ostende for the bathing, during the summer of 1840. The city was comparatively empty, – all the so-called society being absent at the various spas or baths of Germany. One member of the British legation, who remained at his post to represent the mission, and myself, making common cause of our desolation and ennui, spent much of our time together, and dined *tête-à-tête* every day.

It chanced that one evening, as we were hastening through the park on our way to dinner, we espied the major – for as major I must speak of him – lounging along with that half-careless, half-observant air we had both of us remarked as indicating a desire to be somebody's, anybody's guest, rather than surrender himself to the homeliness of domestic fare.

"There's that confounded old Monsoon," cried my diplomatic friend. "It's all up if he sees us, and I can't endure him."

Now, I must remark that my friend, though very far from insensible to the humoristic side of the major's character, was not always in the vein to enjoy it; and when so indisposed he could invest the object of his dislike with something little short of antipathy. "Promise me," said he, as Monsoon came towards us, – "promise me, you'll not ask him to dinner." Before I could make any reply, the major was shaking a hand of either of us, and rapturously expatiating over his good luck at meeting us. "Mrs. M.," said he, "has got a dreary party of old ladies to dine with her, and I have come out here to find some pleasant fellow to

join me, and take our mutton-chop together."

"We're behind our time, Major," said my friend, "sorry to leave you so abruptly, but must push on. Eh, Lorrequer," added he, to evoke corroboration on my part.

"Harry says nothing of the kind," replied Monsoon, "he says, or he's going to say, 'Major, I have a nice bit of dinner waiting for me at home, enough for two, will feed three, or if there be a short-coming, nothing easier than to eke out the deficiency by another bottle of Moulton; come along with us then, Monsoon, and we shall be all the merrier for your company.'"

Repeating his last words, "Come along, Monsoon," etc., I passed my arm within his, and away we went. For a moment my friend tried to get free and leave me, but I held him fast and carried him along in spite of himself. He was, however, so chagrined and provoked that till the moment we reached my door he never uttered a word, nor paid the slightest attention to Monsoon, who talked away in a vein that occasionally made gravity all but impossible.

Our dinner proceeded drearily enough, the diplomatist's stiffness never relaxed for a moment, and my own awkwardness damped all my attempts at conversation. Not so, however, Monsoon, he ate heartily, approved of everything, and pronounced my wine to be exquisite. He gave us a perfect discourse on sherry and Spanish wines in general, told us the secret of the Amontillado flavor, and explained that process of browning by boiling down wine which some are so fond

of in England. At last, seeing perhaps that the protection had little charm for us, with his accustomed tact, he diverged into anecdote. “I was once fortunate enough,” said he, “to fall upon some of that choice sherry from the St. Lucas Luentas which is always reserved for royalty. It was a pale wine, delicious in the drinking, and leaving no more flavor in the mouth than a faint dryness that seemed to say, another glass. Shall I tell you how I came by it?” And scarcely pausing for reply, he told the story of having robbed his own convoy, and stolen the wine he was in charge of for safe conveyance.

I wish I could give any, even the weakest idea of how he narrated that incident, – the struggle that he portrayed between duty and temptation, and the apologetic tone of his voice in which he explained that the frame of mind that succeeds to any yielding to seductive influences, is often, in the main, more profitable to a man than is the vain-glorious sense of having resisted a temptation. “Meekness is the mother of all the virtues,” said he, “and there is no being meek without frailty.” The story, told as he told it, was too much for the diplomatist’s gravity, he resisted all signs of attention as long as he was able, and at last fairly roared out with laughter.

As soon as I myself recovered from the effects of his drollery, I said, “Major, I have a proposition to make you. Let me tell the story in print, and I’ll give you five naps.”

“Are you serious, Harry?” asked he. “Is this on honor?”

“On honor, assuredly,” I replied.

"Let me have the money down, on the nail, and I'll give you leave to have me and my whole life, every adventure that ever befell me, ay, and if you like, every moral reflection that my experiences have suggested."

"Done!" cried I, "I agree."

"Not so fast," cried the diplomatist, "we must make a protocol of this; the high contracting parties must know what they give and what they receive, I'll draw out the treaty."

He did so at full length on a sheet of that solemn blue-tinted paper, so dedicated to despatch purposes; he duly set fourth the concession and the consideration. We each signed the document; he witnessed and sealed it; and Monsoon pocketed my five napoleons, filling a bumper to any success the bargain might bring me, and of which I have never had reason to express deep disappointment.

This document, along with my university degree, my commission in a militia regiment, and a vast amount of letters very interesting to me, was seized by the Austrian authorities on the way from Como to Florence, in the August of 1847, being deemed part of a treasonable correspondence, – probably purposely allegorical in form, – and never restored to me. I fairly own that I'd give all the rest willingly to repossess myself of the Monsoon treaty, not a little for the sake of that quaint old autograph, faintly shaken by the quiet laugh with which he wrote it.

That I did not entirely fail in giving my major some faint

resemblance to the great original from whom I copied him, I may mention that he was speedily recognized in print by the Marquis of Londonderry, the well-known Sir Charles Stuart of the Peninsular campaign. "I know that fellow well," said he, "he once sent me a challenge, and I had to make him a very humble apology. The occasion was this: I had been out with a single aide-de-camp to make a reconnaissance in front of Victor's division; and to avoid attracting any notice, we covered over our uniform with two common gray overcoats which reached to the feet, and effectually concealed our rank as officers. Scarcely, however, had we topped a hill which commanded the view of the French, than a shower of shells flew over and around us. Amazed to think how we could have been so quickly noticed, I looked around me, and discovered, quite close in my rear, your friend Monsoon with what he called his staff, – a popinjay set of rascals dressed out in green and gold, and with more plumes and feathers than the general staff ever boasted. Carried away by momentary passion at the failure of my reconnaissance, I burst out with some insolent allusion to the harlequin assembly which had drawn the French fire upon us. Monsoon saluted me respectfully, and retired without a word; but I had scarcely reached my quarters when a 'friend' of his waited on me with a message, a very categorical message it was, too, 'it must be a meeting or an ample apology.' I made the apology, a most full one, for the major was right, and I had not a fraction of reason to sustain me in my conduct, and we have been the best of friends

ever since."

I myself had heard the incident before this from Monsoon, but told among other adventures whose exact veracity I was rather disposed to question, and did not therefore accord it all the faith that was its due; and I admit that the accidental corroboration of this one event very often served to puzzle me afterwards, when I listened to stories in which the major seemed a second Munchausen, but might, like in this of the duel, have been among the truest and most matter-of-fact of historians. May the reader be not less embarrassed than myself, is my sincere, if not very courteous, prayer.

I have no doubt myself, that often in recounting some strange incident, – a personal experience it always was, – he was himself more amused by the credulity of the hearers, and the amount of interest he could excite in them, than were they by the story. He possessed the true narrative gusto, and there was a marvellous instinct in the way in which he would vary a tale to suit the tastes of an audience; while his moralizings were almost certain to take the tone of a humoristic quiz on the company.

Though fully aware that I was availing myself of the contract that delivered him into my hands, and dining with me two or three days a week, he never lapsed into any allusion to his appearance in print; and the story had been already some weeks published before he asked me to lend him "that last thing – he forgot the name of it – I was writing."

Of Frank Webber I have said, in a former notice, that he was

one of my earliest friends, my chum in college, and in the very chambers where I have located Charles O'Malley, in Old Trinity. He was a man of the highest order of abilities, and with a memory that never forgot, but ruined and run to seed by the idleness that came of a discursive, uncertain temperament. Capable of anything, he spent his youth in follies and eccentricities; every one of which, however, gave indications of a mind inexhaustible in resources, and abounding in devices and contrivances that none other but himself would have thought of. Poor fellow, he died young; and perhaps it is better it should have been so. Had he lived to a later day, he would most probably have been found a foremost leader of Fenianism; and from what I knew of him, I can say he would have been a more dangerous enemy to English rule than any of those dealers in the petty larceny of rebellion we have lately seen among us.

I have said that of Mickey Free I had not one but one thousand types. Indeed, I am not quite sure that in my last visit to Dublin, I did not chance on a living specimen of the "Free" family, much readier in repartée, quicker with an apropos, and droller in illustration than my own Mickey. This fellow was "boots" at a great hotel in Sackville Street; and I owe him more amusement and some heartier laughs than it has been always my fortune to enjoy in a party of wits. His criticisms on my sketches of Irish character were about the shrewdest and the best I ever listened to; and that I am not bribed to this by any flattery, I may remark that they were more often severe than complimentary, and that he hit

every blunder of image, every mistake in figure, of my peasant characters, with an acuteness and correctness which made me very grateful to know that his daily occupations were limited to blacking boots, and not polishing off authors.

I believe I have now done with my confessions, except I should like to own that this story was the means of according me a more heartfelt glow of satisfaction, a more gratifying sense of pride, than anything I ever have or ever shall write, and in this wise. My brother, at that time the rector of an Irish parish, once forwarded to me a letter from a lady unknown to him, but who had heard he was the brother of "Harry Lorrequer," and who addressed him not knowing where a letter might be directed to myself. The letter was the grateful expression of a mother, who said, "I am the widow of a field officer, and with an only son, for whom I obtained a presentation to Woolwich; but seeing in my boy's nature certain traits of nervousness and timidity which induced me to hesitate on embarking him in the career of a soldier, I became very unhappy and uncertain which course to decide on.

"While in this state of uncertainty, I chanced to make him a birthday present of 'Charles O'Malley,' the reading of which seemed to act like a charm on his whole character, inspiring him with a passion for movement and adventure, and spiriting him to an eager desire for a military life. Seeing that this was no passing enthusiasm, but a decided and determined bent, I accepted the cadetship for him; and his career has been not alone distinguished as a student, but one which has marked him out for an almost

hare-brained courage, and for a dash and heroism that give high promise for his future.

"Thank your brother for me," wrote she, "a mother's thanks for the welfare of an only son; and say how I wish that my best wishes for him and his could recompense him for what I owe him."

I humbly hope that it may not be imputed to me as unpardonable vanity, – the recording of this incident. It gave me an intense pleasure when I heard it; and now, as I look back on it, it invests this story for myself with an interest which nothing else that I have written can afford me.

I have now but to repeat what I have declared in former editions, my sincere gratitude for the favor the public still continues to bestow on me, – a favor which probably associates the memory of this book with whatever I have since done successfully, and compels me to remember that to the popularity of "Charles O'Malley" I am indebted for a great share of that kindliness in criticism, and that geniality in judgment, which – for more than a quarter of a century – my countrymen have graciously bestowed on their faithful friend and servant,

CHARLES LEVER. TRIESTE, 1872.

CHAPTER I

DALY'S CLUB-HOUSE

The rain was dashing in torrents against the window-panes, and the wind sweeping in heavy and fitful gusts along the dreary and deserted streets, as a party of three persons sat over their wine, in that stately old pile which once formed the resort of the Irish Members, in College Green, Dublin, and went by the name of Daly's Club-House. The clatter of falling tiles and chimney-pots, the jarring of the window-frames, and howling of the storm without seemed little to affect the spirits of those within as they drew closer to a blazing fire before which stood a small table covered with the remains of a dessert, and an abundant supply of bottles, whose characteristic length of neck indicated the rarest wines of France and Germany; while the portly magnum of claret – the wine *par excellence* of every Irish gentleman of the day – passed rapidly from hand to hand, the conversation did not languish, and many a deep and hearty laugh followed the stories which every now and then were told, as some reminiscence of early days was recalled, or some trait of a former companion remembered.

One of the party, however, was apparently engrossed by other

thoughts than those of the mirth and merriment around; for in the midst of all he would turn suddenly from the others, and devote himself to a number of scattered sheets of paper, upon which he had written some lines, but whose crossed and blotted sentences attested how little success had waited upon his literary labors. This individual was a short, plethoric-looking, white-haired man of about fifty, with a deep, round voice, and a chuckling, smothering laugh, which, whenever he indulged not only shook his own ample person, but generally created a petty earthquake on every side of him. For the present, I shall not stop to particularize him more closely; but when I add that the person in question was a well-known member of the Irish House of Commons, whose acute understanding and practical good sense were veiled under an affected and well-dissembled habit of blundering that did far more for his party than the most violent and pointed attacks of his more accurate associates, some of my readers may anticipate me in pronouncing him to be Sir Harry Boyle. Upon his left sat a figure the most unlike him possible. He was a tall, thin, bony man, with a bolt-upright air and a most saturnine expression; his eyes were covered by a deep green shade, which fell far over his face, but failed to conceal a blue scar that crossing his cheek ended in the angle of his mouth, and imparted to that feature, when he spoke, an apparently abortive attempt to extend towards his eyebrow; his upper lip was covered with a grizzly and ill-trimmed mustache, which added much to the ferocity of his look, while a thin and

pointed beard on his chin gave an apparent length to the whole face that completed its rueful character. His dress was a single-breasted, tightly buttoned frock, in one button-hole of which a yellow ribbon was fastened, the decoration of a foreign service, which conferred upon its wearer the title of count; and though Billy Considine, as he was familiarly called by his friends, was a thorough Irishman in all his feelings and affections, yet he had no objection to the designation he had gained in the Austrian army. The Count was certainly no beauty, but somehow, very few men of his day had a fancy for telling him so. A deadlier hand and a steadier eye never covered his man in the Phoenix; and though he never had a seat in the House, he was always regarded as one of the government party, who more than once had damped the ardor of an opposition member by the very significant threat of "setting Billy at him." The third figure of the group was a large, powerfully built, and handsome man, older than either of the others, but not betraying in his voice or carriage any touch of time. He was attired in the green coat and buff vest which formed the livery of the club; and in his tall, ample forehead, clear, well-set eye, and still handsome mouth, bore evidence that no great flattery was necessary at the time which called Godfrey O'Malley the handsomest man in Ireland.

"Upon my conscience," said Sir Harry, throwing down his pen with an air of ill-temper, "I can make nothing of it! I have got into such an infernal habit of making bulls, that I can't write sense when I want it!"

"Come, come," said O'Malley, "try again, my dear fellow. If you can't succeed, I'm sure Billy and I have no chance."

"What have you written? Let us see," said Considine, drawing the paper towards him, and holding it to the light. "Why, what the devil is all this? You have made him 'drop down dead after dinner of a lingering illness brought on by the debate of yesterday.'"

"Oh, impossible!"

"Well, read it yourself; there it is. And, as if to make the thing less credible, you talk of his 'Bill for the Better Recovery of Small Debts.' I'm sure, O'Malley, your last moments were not employed in that manner."

"Come, now," said Sir Harry, "I'll set all to rights with a postscript. 'Any one who questions the above statement is politely requested to call on Mr. Considine, 16 Kildare Street, who will feel happy to afford him every satisfaction upon Mr. O'Malley's decease, or upon miscellaneous matters."

"Worse and worse," said O'Malley. "Killing another man will never persuade the world that I'm dead."

"But we'll wake you, and have a glorious funeral."

"And if any man doubt the statement, I'll call him out," said the Count.

"Or, better still," said Sir Harry, "O'Malley has his action at law for defamation."

"I see I'll never get down to Galway at this rate," said O'Malley; "and as the new election takes place on Tuesday week, time presses. There are more writs flying after me this instant

than for all the government boroughs."

"And there will be fewer returns, I fear," said Sir Harry.

"Who is the chief creditor?" asked the Count.

"Old Stapleton, the attorney in Fleet Street, has most of the mortgages."

"Nothing to be done with him in this way?" said Considine, balancing the corkscrew like a hair trigger.

"No chance of it."

"May be," said Sir Harry, "he might come to terms if I were to call and say, 'You are anxious to close accounts, as your death has just taken place.' You know what I mean."

"I fear so should he, were you to say so. No, no, Boyle, just try a plain, straightforward paragraph about my death; we'll have it in Falkner's paper to-morrow. On Friday the funeral can take place, and, with the blessing o' God, I'll come to life on Saturday at Athlone, in time to canvass the market."

"I think it wouldn't be bad if your ghost were to appear to old Timins the tanner, in Naas, on your way down. You know he arrested you once before."

"I prefer a night's sleep," said O'Malley. "But come, finish the squib for the paper."

"Stay a little," said Sir Harry, musing; "it just strikes me that if ever the matter gets out I may be in some confounded scrape. Who knows if it is not a breach of privilege to report the death of a member? And to tell you truth, I dread the Sergeant and the Speaker's warrant with a very lively fear."

"Why, when did you make his acquaintance?" said the Count.

"Is it possible you never heard of Boyle's committal?" said O'Malley. "You surely must have been abroad at the time. But it's not too late to tell it yet."

"Well, it's about two years since old Townsend brought in his Enlistment Bill, and the whole country was scoured for all our voters, who were scattered here and there, never anticipating another call of the House, and supposing that the session was just over. Among others, up came our friend Harry, here, and the night he arrived they made him a 'Monk of the Screw,' and very soon made him forget his senatorial dignities. On the evening after his reaching town, the bill was brought in, and at two in the morning the division took place, – a vote was of too much consequence not to look after it closely, – and a Castle messenger was in waiting in Exchequer Street, who, when the debate was closing, put Harry, with three others, into a coach, and brought them down to the House. Unfortunately, however, they mistook their friends, voted against the bill, and amidst the loudest cheering of the opposition, the government party were defeated. The rage of the ministers knew no bounds, and looks of defiance and even threats were exchanged between the ministers and the deserters. Amidst all this poor Harry fell fast asleep and dreamed that he was once more in Exchequer Street, presiding among the monks, and mixing another tumbler. At length he awoke and looked about him. The clerk was just at the instant reading out, in his usual routine manner, a clause of the new

bill, and the remainder of the House was in dead silence. Harry looked again around on every side, wondering where was the hot water, and what had become of the whiskey bottle, and above all, why the company were so extremely dull and ungenial. At length, with a half-shake, he roused up a little, and giving a look of unequivocal contempt on every side, called out, 'Upon my soul, you're pleasant companions; but I'll give you a chant to enliven you!' So saying, he cleared his throat with a couple of short coughs, and struck up, with the voice of a Stentor, the following verse of a popular ballad: —

'And they nibbled away, both night and day,
Like mice in a round of Glo'ster;
Great rogues they were all, both great and small,
From Flood to Leslie Foster.
Great rogues all.

Chorus, boys!' If he was not joined by the voices of his friends in the song, it was probably because such a roar of laughing never was heard since the walls were roofed over. The whole House rose in a mass, and my friend Harry was hurried over the benches by the sergeant-at-arms, and left for three weeks in Newgate to practise his melody."

"All true," said Sir Harry; "and worse luck to them for not liking music. But come, now, will this do? 'It is our melancholy duty to announce the death of Godfrey O'Malley, Esq., late member for the county of Galway, which took place on Friday

evening, at Daly's Club-House. This esteemed gentleman's family – one of the oldest in Ireland, and among whom it was hereditary not to have any children – '"

Here a burst of laughter from Considine and O'Malley interrupted the reader, who with the greatest difficulty could be persuaded that he was again bulling it.

"The devil fly away with it," said he; "I'll never succeed."

"Never mind," said O'Malley, "the first part will do admirably; and let us now turn our attention to other matters."

A fresh magnum was called for, and over its inspiring contents all the details of the funeral were planned; and as the clock struck four the party separated for the *night*, well satisfied with the result of their labors.

CHAPTER II

THE ESCAPE

When the dissolution of Parliament was announced the following morning in Dublin, its interest in certain circles was manifestly increased by the fact that Godfrey O'Malley was at last open to arrest; for as in olden times certain gifted individuals possessed some happy immunity against death by fire or sword, so the worthy O'Malley seemed to enjoy a no less valuable privilege, and for many a year had passed among the myrmidons of the law as writ-proof. Now, however, the charm seemed to have yielded; and pretty much with the same feeling as a storming party may be supposed to experience on the day that a breach is reported as practicable, did the honest attorneys retained in the various suits against him rally round each other that morning in the Four Courts.

Bonds, mortgages, post-obits, promissory notes – in fact, every imaginable species of invention for raising the O'Malley exchequer for the preceding thirty years – were handed about on all sides, suggesting to the mind of an uninterested observer the notion that had the aforesaid O'Malley been an independent and absolute monarch, instead of merely being the member for

Galway, the kingdom over whose destinies he had been called to preside would have suffered not a little from a depreciated currency and an extravagant issue of paper. Be that as it might, one thing was clear, – the whole estates of the family could not possibly pay one fourth of the debt; and the only question was one which occasionally arises at a scanty dinner on a mail-coach road, – who was to be the lucky individual to carve the joint, where so many were sure to go off hungry?

It was now a trial of address between these various and highly gifted gentlemen who should first pounce upon the victim; and when the skill of their caste is taken into consideration, who will doubt that every feasible expedient for securing him was resorted to? While writs were struck against him in Dublin, emissaries were despatched to the various surrounding counties to procure others in the event of his escape. *Ne exeats* were sworn, and water-bailiffs engaged to follow him on the high seas; and as the great Nassau balloon did not exist in those days, no imaginable mode of escape appeared possible, and bets were offered at long odds that within twenty-four hours the late member would be enjoying his *otium cum dignitate* in his Majesty's jail of Newgate.

Expectation was at the highest, confidence hourly increasing, success all but certain, when in the midst of all this high-bounding hope the dreadful rumor spread that O'Malley was no more. One had seen it just five minutes before in the evening edition of Falkner's paper; another heard it in the courts; a third overheard the Chief-Justice stating it to the Master of the Rolls;

and lastly, a breathless witness arrived from College Green with the news that Daly's Club-House was shut up, and the shutters closed. To describe the consternation the intelligence caused on every side is impossible; nothing in history equals it, – except, perhaps, the entrance of the French army into Moscow, deserted and forsaken by its former inhabitants. While terror and dismay, therefore, spread amidst that wide and respectable body who formed O'Malley's creditors, the preparations for his funeral were going on with every rapidity. Relays of horses were ordered at every stage of the journey, and it was announced that, in testimony of his worth, a large party of his friends were to accompany his remains to Portumna Abbey, – a test much more indicative of resistance in the event of any attempt to arrest the body, than of anything like reverence for their departed friend.

Such was the state of matters in Dublin when a letter reached me one morning at O'Malley Castle, whose contents will at once explain the writer's intention, and also serve to introduce my unworthy self to my reader. It ran thus: —

> DALY'S, about eight in the evening.
>
> Dear Charley, – Your uncle Godfrey, whose debts (God pardon him!) are more numerous than the hairs of his wig, was obliged to die here last night. We did the thing for him completely; and all doubts as to the reality of the event are silenced by the circumstantial detail of the newspaper, "that he was confined six weeks to his bed from a cold he caught, ten days ago, while on guard."
>
> Repeat this; for it is better we had all the same story till

he comes to life again, which, may be, will not take place before Tuesday or Wednesday. At the same time, canvass the county for him, and say he'll be with his friends next week, and up in Woodford and the Scariff barony. Say he died a true Catholic; it will serve him on the hustings. Meet us in Athlone on Saturday, and bring your uncle's mare with you. He says he'd rather ride home. And tell Father Mac Shane, to have a bit of dinner ready about four o'clock, for the corpse can get nothing after he leaves Mountmellick. No more now, from

Yours ever,

HARRY BOYLE

To CHARLES O'MALLEY, Esq.,

O'Malley Castle, Galway.

When this not over-clear document reached me I was the sole inhabitant of O'Malley Castle, – a very ruinous pile of incongruous masonry, that stood in a wild and dreary part of the county of Galway, bordering on the Shannon. On every side stretched the property of my uncle, or at least what had once been so; and indeed, so numerous were its present claimants that he would have been a subtle lawyer who could have pronounced upon the rightful owner. The demesne around the castle contained some well-grown and handsome timber, and as the soil was undulating and fertile, presented many features of beauty; beyond it, all was sterile, bleak, and barren. Long tracts of brown heath-clad mountain or not less unprofitable valleys of tall and waving fern were all that the eye could discern, except

where the broad Shannon, expanding into a tranquil and glassy lake, lay still and motionless beneath the dark mountains, a few islands, with some ruined churches and a round tower, alone breaking the dreary waste of water.

Here it was that I passed my infancy and my youth; and here I now stood, at the age of seventeen, quite unconscious that the world contained aught fairer and brighter than that gloomy valley with its rugged frame of mountains.

When a mere child, I was left an orphan to the care of my worthy uncle. My father, whose extravagance had well sustained the family reputation, had squandered a large and handsome property in contesting elections for his native county, and in keeping up that system of unlimited hospitality for which Ireland in general, and Galway more especially, was renowned. The result was, as might be expected, ruin and beggary. He died, leaving every one of his estates encumbered with heavy debts, and the only legacy he left to his brother was a boy four years of age, entreating him with his last breath, "Be anything you like to him, Godfrey, but a father, or at least such a one as I have proved."

Godfrey O'Malley some short time previous had lost his wife, and when this new trust was committed to him he resolved never to remarry, but to rear me up as his own child and the inheritor of his estates. How weighty and onerous an obligation this latter might prove, the reader can form some idea. The intention was, however, a kind one; and to do my uncle justice, he loved me

with all the affection of a warm and open heart.

From my earliest years his whole anxiety was to fit me for the part of a country gentleman, as he regarded that character, – namely, I rode boldly with fox-hounds; I was about the best shot within twenty miles of us; I could swim the Shannon at Holy Island; I drove four-in-hand better than the coachman himself; and from finding a hare to hooking a salmon, my equal could not be found from Killaloe to Banagher. These were the staple of my endowments. Besides which, the parish priest had taught me a little Latin, a little French, a little geometry, and a great deal of the life and opinions of Saint Jago, who presided over a holy well in the neighborhood, and was held in very considerable repute.

When I add to this portraiture of my accomplishments that I was nearly six feet high, with more than a common share of activity and strength for my years, and no inconsiderable portion of good looks, I have finished my sketch, and stand before my reader.

It is now time I should return to Sir Harry's letter, which so completely bewildered me that, but for the assistance of Father Roach, I should have been totally unable to make out the writer's intentions. By his advice, I immediately set out for Athlone, where, when I arrived, I found my uncle addressing the mob from the top of the hearse, and recounting his miraculous escapes as a new claim upon their gratitude.

"There was nothing else for it, boys; the Dublin people insisted on my being their member, and besieged the club-house. I

refused; they threatened. I grew obstinate; they furious. 'I'll die first,' said I. 'Galway or nothing!'"

"Hurrah!" from the mob. "O'Malley forever!"

"And ye see, I kept my word, boys, – I did die; I died that evening at a quarter past eight. There, read it for yourselves; there's the paper. Was waked and carried out, and here I am after all, ready to die in earnest for you, but never to desert you."

The cheers here were deafening, and my uncle was carried through the market down to the mayor's house, who, being a friend of the opposite party, was complimented with three groans; then up the Mall to the chapel, beside which father Mac Shane resided. He was then suffered to touch the earth once more; when, having shaken hands with all of his constituency within reach, he entered the house, to partake of the kindest welcome and best reception the good priest could afford him.

My uncle's progress homeward was a triumph. The real secret of his escape had somehow come out, and his popularity rose to a white heat. "An' it's little O'Malley cares for the law, – bad luck to it; it's himself can laugh at judge and jury. Arrest him? Nabocklish! Catch a weasel asleep!" etc. Such were the encomiums that greeted him as he passed on towards home; while shouts of joy and blazing bonfires attested that his success was regarded as a national triumph.

The west has certainly its strong features of identity. Had my uncle possessed the claims of the immortal Howard; had he united in his person all the attributes which confer a lasting and

an ennobling fame upon humanity, – he might have passed on unnoticed and unobserved; but for the man that had duped a judge and escaped the sheriff, nothing was sufficiently flattering to mark their approbation. The success of the exploit was twofold; the news spread far and near, and the very story canvassed the county better than Billy Davern himself, the Athlone attorney.

This was the prospect now before us; and however little my readers may sympathize with my taste, I must honestly avow that I looked forward to it with a most delighted feeling. O'Malley Castle was to be the centre of operations, and filled with my uncle's supporters; while I, a mere stripling, and usually treated as a boy, was to be intrusted with an important mission, and sent off to canvass a distant relation, with whom my uncle was not upon terms, and who might possibly be approachable by a younger branch of the family, with whom he had never any collision.

CHAPTER III

MR. BLAKE

Nothing but the exigency of the case could ever have persuaded my uncle to stoop to the humiliation of canvassing the individual to whom I was now about to proceed as envoy-extraordinary, with full powers to make any or every *amende*, provided only his interest and that of his followers should be thereby secured to the O'Malley cause. The evening before I set out was devoted to giving me all the necessary instructions how I was to proceed, and what difficulties I was to avoid.

"Say your uncle's in high feather with the government party," said Sir Harry, "and that he only votes against them as a *ruse de guerre*, as the French call it."

"Insist upon it that I am sure of the election without him; but that for family reasons he should not stand aloof from me; that people are talking of it in the country."

"And drop a hint," said Considine, "that O'Malley is greatly improved in his shooting."

"And don't get drunk too early in the evening, for Phil Blake has beautiful claret," said another.

"And be sure you don't make love to the red-headed girls,"

added a third; “he has four of them, each more sinfully ugly than the other.”

“You’ll be playing whist, too,” said Boyle; “and never mind losing a few pounds. Mrs. B., long life to her, has a playful way of turning the king.”

“Charley will do it all well,” said my uncle; “leave him alone. And now let us have in the supper.”

It was only on the following morning, as the tandem came round to the door, that I began to feel the importance of my mission, and certain misgivings came over me as to my ability to fulfil it. Mr. Blake and his family, though estranged from my uncle for several years past, had been always most kind and good-natured to me; and although I could not, with propriety, have cultivated any close intimacy with them, I had every reason to suppose that they entertained towards me nothing but sentiments of good-will. The head of the family was a Galway squire of the oldest and most genuine stock, a great sportsman, a negligent farmer, and most careless father; he looked upon a fox as an infinitely more precious part of the creation than a French governess, and thought that riding well with hounds was a far better gift than all the learning of a Parson. His daughters were after his own heart, – the best-tempered, least-educated, most high-spirited, gay, dashing, ugly girls in the county, ready to ride over a four-foot paling without a saddle, and to dance the “Wind that shakes the barley” for four consecutive hours, against all the officers that their hard fate, and the Horse Guards, ever

condemned to Galway.

The mamma was only remarkable for her liking for whist, and her invariable good fortune thereat, – a circumstance the world were agreed in ascribing less to the blind goddess than her own natural endowments.

Lastly, the heir of the house was a stripling of about my own age, whose accomplishments were limited to selling spavined and broken-winded horses to the infantry officers, playing a safe game at billiards, and acting as jackal-general to his sisters at balls, providing them with a sufficiency of partners, and making a strong fight for a place at the supper-table for his mother. These fraternal and filial traits, more honored at home than abroad, had made Mr. Matthew Blake a rather well-known individual in the neighborhood where he lived.

Though Mr. Blake's property was ample, and strange to say for his county, unencumbered, the whole air and appearance of his house and grounds betrayed anything rather than a sufficiency of means. The gate lodge was a miserable mud-hovel with a thatched and falling roof; the gate itself, a wooden contrivance, one half of which was boarded and the other railed; the avenue was covered with weeds, and deep with ruts; and the clumps of young plantation, which had been planted and fenced with care, were now open to the cattle, and either totally uprooted or denuded of their bark and dying. The lawn, a handsome one of some forty acres, had been devoted to an exercise-ground for training horses, and was cut up by their feet beyond all

semblance of its original destination; and the house itself, a large and venerable structure of above a century old, displayed every variety of contrivance, as well as the usual one of glass, to exclude the weather. The hall-door hung by a single hinge, and required three persons each morning and evening to open and shut it; the remainder of the day it lay pensively open; the steps which led to it were broken and falling; and the whole aspect of things without was ruinous in the extreme. Within, matters were somewhat better, for though the furniture was old, and none of it clean, yet an appearance of comfort was evident; and the large grate, blazing with its pile of red-hot turf, the deep-cushioned chairs, the old black mahogany dinner-table, and the soft carpet, albeit deep with dust, were not to be despised on a winter's evening, after a hard day's run with the "Blazers." Here it was, however, that Mr. Philip Blake had dispensed his hospitalities for above fifty years, and his father before him; and here, with a retinue of servants as *gauches* and ill-ordered as all about them, was he accustomed to invite all that the county possessed of rank and wealth, among which the officers quartered in his neighborhood were never neglected, the Miss Blakes having as decided a taste for the army as any young ladies of the west of Ireland; and while the Galway squire, with his cords and tops, was detailing the latest news from Ballinasloe in one corner, the dandy from St. James's Street might be seen displaying more arts of seductive flattery in another than his most accurate *insouciane* would permit him to practise in the elegant salons of London or

Paris, and the same man who would have "cut his brother," for a solecism of dress or equipage, in Bond Street, was now to be seen quietly domesticated, eating family dinners, rolling silk for the young ladies, going down the middle in a country dance, and even descending to the indignity of long whist at "tenpenny" points, with only the miserable consolation that the company were not honest.

It was upon a clear frosty morning, when a bright blue sky and a sharp but bracing air seem to exercise upon the feelings a sense no less pleasurable than the balmiest breeze and warmest sun of summer, that I whipped my leader short round, and entered the precincts of "Gurt-na-Morra." As I proceeded along the avenue, I was struck by the slight traces of repairs here and there evident, – a gate or two that formerly had been parallel to the horizon had been raised to the perpendicular; some ineffectual efforts at paint were also perceptible upon the palings; and, in short, everything seemed to have undergone a kind of attempt at improvement.

When I reached the door, instead of being surrounded, as of old, by a tribe of menials frieze-coated, bare-headed, and bare-legged, my presence was announced by a tremendous ringing of bells from the hands of an old functionary in a very formidable livery, who peeped at me through the hall-window, and whom, with the greatest difficulty, I recognized as my quondam acquaintance, the butler. His wig alone would have graced a king's counsel; and the high collar of his coat, and the

stiff pillory of his cravat denoted an eternal adieu to so humble a vocation as drawing a cork. Before I had time for any conjecture as to the altered circumstances about, the activity of my friend at the bell had surrounded me with "four others worse than himself," at least they were exactly similarly attired; and probably from the novelty of their costume, and the restraints of so unusual a thing as dress, were as perfectly unable to assist themselves or others as the Court of Aldermen would be were they to rig out in plate armor of the fourteenth century. How much longer I might have gone on conjecturing the reasons for the masquerade around, I cannot say; but my servant, an Irish disciple of my uncle's, whispered in my ear, "It's a red-breeches day, Master Charles, – they'll have the hoith of company in the house." From the phrase, it needed little explanation to inform me that it was one of those occasions on which Mr. Blake attired all the hangers-on of his house in livery, and that great preparations were in progress for a more than usually splendid reception.

In the next moment I was ushered into the breakfast-room, where a party of above a dozen persons were most gayly enjoying all the good cheer for which the house had a well-deserved repute. After the usual shaking of hands and hearty greetings were over, I was introduced in all form to Sir George Dashwood, a tall and singularly handsome man of about fifty, with an undress military frock and ribbon. His reception of me was somewhat strange; for as they mentioned my relationship to Godfrey O'Malley, he smiled slightly, and whispered something

to Mr. Blake, who replied, “Oh, no, no; not the least. A mere boy; and besides – ” What he added I lost, for at that moment Nora Blake was presenting me to Miss Dashwood.

If the sweetest blue eyes that ever beamed beneath a forehead of snowy whiteness, over which dark brown and waving hair fell less in curls than masses of locky richness, could only have known what wild work they were making of my poor heart, Miss Dashwood, I trust, would have looked at her teacup or her muffin rather than at me, as she actually did on that fatal morning. If I were to judge from her costume, she had only just arrived, and the morning air had left upon her cheek a bloom that contributed greatly to the effect of her lovely countenance. Although very young, her form had all the roundness of womanhood; while her gay and sprightly manner indicated all the *sans gêne* which only very young girls possess, and which, when tempered with perfect good taste, and accompanied by beauty and no small share of talent, forms an irresistible power of attraction.

Beside her sat a tall, handsome man of about five-and-thirty or perhaps forty years of age, with a most soldierly air, who as I was presented to him scarcely turned his head, and gave me a half-nod of very unequivocal coldness. There are moments in life in which the heart is, as it were, laid bare to any chance or casual impression with a wondrous sensibility of pleasure or its opposite. This to me was one of those; and as I turned from the lovely girl, who had received me with a marked courtesy, to the cold air and repelling *hauteur* of the dark-browed captain, the

blood rushed throbbing to my forehead; and as I walked to my place at the table, I eagerly sought his eye, to return him a look of defiance and disdain, proud and contemptuous as his own. Captain Hammersley, however, never took further notice of me, but continued to recount, for the amusement of those about him, several excellent stories of his military career, which, I confess, were heard with every test of delight by all save me. One thing galled me particularly, – and how easy is it, when you have begun by disliking a person, to supply food for your antipathy, – all his allusions to his military life were coupled with half-hinted and ill-concealed sneers at civilians of every kind, as though every man not a soldier were absolutely unfit for common intercourse with the world, still more for any favorable reception in ladies' society.

The young ladies of the family were a well-chosen auditory, for their admiration of the army extended from the Life Guards to the Veteran Battalion, the Sappers and Miners included; and as Miss Dashwood was the daughter of a soldier, she of course coincided in many of, if not all, his opinions. I turned towards my neighbor, a Clare gentleman, and tried to engage him in conversation, but he was breathlessly attending to the captain. On my left sat Matthew Blake, whose eyes were firmly riveted upon the same person, and who heard his marvels with an interest scarcely inferior to that of his sisters. Annoyed and in ill-temper, I ate my breakfast in silence, and resolved that the first moment I could obtain a hearing from Mr. Blake I would open my

negotiation, and take my leave at once of Gurt-na-Morra.

We all assembled in a large room, called by courtesy the library, when breakfast was over; and then it was that Mr. Blake, taking me aside, whispered, "Charley, it's right I should inform you that Sir George Dashwood there is the Commander of the Forces, and is come down here at this moment to – " What for, or how it should concern me, I was not to learn; for at that critical instant my informant's attention was called off by Captain Hammersley asking if the hounds were to hunt that day.

"My friend Charley here is the best authority upon that matter," said Mr. Blake, turning towards me.

"They are to try the Priest's meadows," said I, with an air of some importance; "but if your guests desire a day's sport, I'll send word over to Brackely to bring the dogs over here, and we are sure to find a fox in your cover."

"Oh, then, by all means," said the captain, turning towards Mr. Blake, and addressing himself to him, – "by all means; and Miss Dashwood, I'm sure, would like to see the hounds throw off."

Whatever chagrin the first part of his speech caused me, the latter set my heart a-throbbing; and I hastened from the room to despatch a messenger to the huntsman to come over to Gurt-na-Morra, and also another to O'Malley Castle to bring my best horse and my riding equipments as quickly as possible.

"Matthew, who is this captain?" said I, as young Blake met me in the hall.

"Oh, he is the aide-de-camp of General Dashwood. A nice

fellow, isn't he?"

"I don't know what you may think," said I, "but I take him for the most impertinent, impudent, supercilious – "

The rest of my civil speech was cut short by the appearance of the very individual in question, who, with his hands in his pockets and a cigar in his mouth, sauntered forth down the steps, taking no more notice of Matthew Blake and myself than the two fox-terriers that followed at his heels.

However anxious I might be to open negotiations on the subject of my mission, for the present the thing was impossible; for I found that Sir George Dashwood was closeted closely with Mr. Blake, and resolved to wait till evening, when chance might afford me the opportunity I desired.

As the ladies had retired to dress for the hunt, and as I felt no peculiar desire to ally myself with the unsocial captain, I accompanied Matthew to the stable to look after the cattle, and make preparations for the coming sport.

"There's Captain Hammersley's mare," said Matthew, as he pointed out a highly bred but powerful English hunter. "She came last night; for as he expected some sport, he sent his horses from Dublin on purpose. The others will be here to-day."

"What is his regiment?" said I, with an appearance of carelessness, but in reality feeling curious to know if the captain was a cavalry or infantry officer.

"The – th Light Dragoons,"

"You never saw him ride?" said I.

"Never; but his groom there says he leads the way in his own country."

"And where may that be?"

"In Leicestershire, no less," said Matthew.

"Does he know Galway?"

"Never was in it before. It's only this minute he asked Moses Daly if the ox-fences were high here."

"Ox-fences! Then he does not know what a wall is?"

"Devil a bit; but we'll teach him."

"That we will," said I, with as bitter a resolution to impart the instruction as ever schoolmaster did to whip Latin grammar into one of the great unbreeched.

"But I had better send the horses down to the Mill," said Matthew; "we'll draw that cover first."

So saying, he turned towards the stable, while I sauntered alone towards the road by which I expected the huntsman. I had not walked half a mile before I heard the yelping of the dogs, and a little farther on I saw old Brackely coming along at a brisk trot, cutting the hounds on each side, and calling after the stragglers.

"Did you see my horse on the road, Brackely?" said I.

"I did, Misther Charles; and troth, I'm sorry to see him. Sure yerself knows better than to take out the Badger, the best steeple-chaser in Ireland, in such a country as this, – nothing but awkward stone-fences, and not a foot of sure ground in the whole of it."

"I know it well, Brackely; but I have my reasons for it."

"Well, may be you have; what cover will your honor try first?"

"They talk of the Mill," said I; "but I'd much rather try Morran-a-Gowl."

"Morran-a-Gowl! Do you want to break your neck entirely?"

"No, Brackely, not mine."

"Whose, then, alannah?"

"An English captain's, the devil fly away with him! He's come down here to-day, and from all I can see is a most impudent fellow; so, Brackely – "

"I understand. Well, leave it to me; and though I don't like the only deer-park wall on the hill, we'll try it this morning with the blessing. I'll take him down by Woodford, over the Devil's Mouth, – it's eighteen foot wide this minute with the late rains, – into the four callows; then over the stone-walls, down to Dangan; then take a short cast up the hill, blow him a bit, and give him the park wall at the top. You must come in then fresh, and give him the whole run home over Sleibhmich. The Badger knows it all, and takes the road always in a fly, – a mighty distressing thing for the horse that follows, more particularly if he does not understand a stony country. Well, if he lives through this, give him the sunk fence and the stone wall at Mr. Blake's clover-field, for the hounds will run into the fox about there; and though we never ride that leap since Mr. Malone broke his neck at it, last October, yet upon an occasion like this, and for the honor of Galway – "

"To be sure, Brackely; and here's a guinea for you, and now

trot on towards the house. They must not see us together, or they might suspect something. But, Brackely," said I, calling out after him, "if he rides at all fair, what's to be done?"

"Troth, then, myself doesn't know. There is nothing so bad west of Athlone. Have ye a great spite again him?"

"I have," said I, fiercely.

"Could ye coax a fight out of him?"

"That's true," said I; "and now ride on as fast as you can."

Brackely's last words imparted a lightness to my heart and my step, and I strode along a very different man from what I had left the house half an hour previously.

CHAPTER IV

THE HUNT

Although we had not the advantages of a southerly wind and cloudy sky, the day towards noon became strongly over-cast, and promised to afford us good scenting weather; and as we assembled at the meet, mutual congratulations were exchanged upon the improved appearance of the day. Young Blake had provided Miss Dashwood with a quiet and well-trained horse, and his sisters were all mounted as usual upon their own animals, giving to our turnout quite a gay and lively aspect. I myself came to cover upon a hackney, having sent Badger with a groom, and longed ardently for the moment when, casting the skin of my great-coat and overalls, I should appear before the world in my well-appointed "cords and tops." Captain Hammersley had not as yet made his appearance, and many conjectures were afloat as to whether "he might have missed the road, or changed his mind," or "forgot all about it," as Miss Dashwood hinted.

"Who, pray, pitched upon this cover?" said Caroline Blake, as she looked with a practised eye over the country on either side.

"There is no chance of a fox late in the day at the Mill," said the huntsman, inventing a lie for the occasion.

"Then of course you never intend us to see much of the sport; for after you break cover, you are entirely lost to us."

"I thought you always followed the hounds," said Miss Dashwood, timidly.

"Oh, to be sure we do, in any common country, but here it is out of the question; the fences are too large for any one, and if I am not mistaken, these gentlemen will not ride far over this. There, look yonder, where the river is rushing down the hill: that stream, widening as it advances, crosses the cover nearly midway, – well, they must clear that; and then you may see these walls of large loose stones nearly five feet in height. That is the usual course the fox takes, unless he heads towards the hills and goes towards Dangan, and then there's an end of it; for the deer-park wall is usually a pull up to every one except, perhaps, to our friend Charley yonder, who has tried his fortune against drowning more than once there."

"Look, here he comes," said Matthew Blake, "and looking splendidly too, – a little too much in flesh perhaps, if anything."

"Captain Hammersley!" said the four Miss Blakes, in a breath. "Where is he?"

"No; it's the Badger I'm speaking of," said Matthew, laughing, and pointing with his finger towards a corner of the field where my servant was leisurely throwing down a wall about two feet high to let him pass.

"Oh, how handsome! What a charger for a dragoon!" said Miss Dashwood.

Any other mode of praising my steed would have been much more acceptable. The word "dragoon" was a thorn in my tenderest part that rankled and lacerated at every stir. In a moment I was in the saddle, and scarcely seated when at once all the *mauvais honte* of boyhood left me, and I felt every inch a man. I often look back to that moment of my life, and comparing it with similar ones, cannot help acknowledging how purely is the self-possession which so often wins success the result of some slight and trivial association. My confidence in my horsemanship suggested moral courage of a very different kind; and I felt that Charles O'Malley curvetting upon a thorough-bred, and the same man ambling upon a shelty, were two and very dissimilar individuals.

"No chance of the captain," said Matthew, who had returned from a *reconnaissance* upon the road; "and after all it's a pity, for the day is getting quite favorable."

While the young ladies formed pickets to look out for the gallant *militaire*, I seized the opportunity of prosecuting my acquaintance with Miss Dashwood, and even in the few and passing observations that fell from her, learned how very different an order of being she was from all I had hitherto seen of country belles. A mixture of courtesy with *naïveté;* a wish to please, with a certain feminine gentleness, that always flatters a man, and still more a boy that fain would be one, – gained momentarily more and more upon me, and put me also on my mettle to prove to my fair companion that I was not altogether

a mere uncultivated and unthinking creature, like the remainder of those about me.

"Here he is at last," said Helen Blake, as she cantered across a field waving her handkerchief as a signal to the captain, who was now seen approaching at a brisk trot.

As he came along, a small fence intervened; he pressed his horse a little, and as he kissed hands to the fair Helen, cleared it in a bound, and was in an instant in the midst of us.

"He sits his horse like a man, Misther Charles," said the old huntsman; "troth, we must give him the worst bit of it."

Captain Hammersley was, despite all the critical acumen with which I canvassed him, the very beau-ideal of a gentleman rider; indeed, although a very heavy man, his powerful English thorough-bred, showing not less bone than blood, took away all semblance of overweight; his saddle was well fitting and well placed, as also was his large and broad-reined snaffle; his own costume of black coat, leathers, and tops was in perfect keeping, and even to his heavy-handled hunting-whip I could find nothing to cavil at. As he rode up he paid his respects to the ladies in his usual free and easy manner, expressed some surprise, but no regret, at hearing that he was late, and never deigning any notice of Matthew or myself, took his place beside Miss Dashwood, with whom he conversed in a low undertone.

"There they go!" said Matthew, as five or six dogs, with their heads up, ran yelping along a furrow, then stopped, howled again, and once more set off together. In an instant all was commotion

in the little valley below us. The huntsman, with his hand to his mouth, was calling off the stragglers, and the whipper-in followed up the leading dogs with the rest of the pack. "They've found! They're away!" said Matthew; and as he spoke a yell burst from the valley, and in an instant the whole pack were off at full speed. Rather more intent that moment upon showing off my horsemanship than anything else, I dashed spurs into Badger's sides, and turned him towards a rasping ditch before me; over we went, hurling down behind us a rotten bank of clay and small stones, showing how little safety there had been in topping instead of clearing it at a bound. Before I was well-seated again the captain was beside me. "Now for it, then," said I; and away we went. What might be the nature of his feelings I cannot pretend to state, but my own were a strange *mélange* of wild, boyish enthusiasm, revenge, and recklessness. For my own neck I cared little, – nothing; and as I led the way by half a length, I muttered to myself, "Let him follow me fairly this day, and I ask no more."

The dogs had got somewhat the start of us; and as they were in full cry, and going fast, we were a little behind. A thought therefore struck me that, by appearing to take a short cut upon the hounds, I should come down upon the river where its breadth was greatest, and thus, at one coup, might try my friend's mettle and his horse's performance at the same time. On we went, our speed increasing, till the roar of the river we were now approaching was plainly audible. I looked half around, and now perceived the captain was standing in his stirrups, as if to obtain a view of

what was before him; otherwise his countenance was calm and unmoved, and not a muscle betrayed that he was not cantering on a parade. I fixed myself firmly in my seat, shook my horse a little together, and with a shout whose import every Galway hunter well knows rushed him at the river. I saw the water dashing among the large stones; I heard it splash; I felt a bound like the *ricochet* of a shot; and we were over, but so narrowly that the bank had yielded beneath his hind legs, and it needed a bold effort of the noble animal to regain his footing. Scarcely was he once more firm, when Hammersley flew by me, taking the lead, and sitting quietly in his saddle, as if racing. I know of little in my after-life like the agony of that moment; for although I was far, very far, from wishing real ill to him, yet I would gladly have broken my leg or my arm if he could not have been able to follow me. And now, there he was, actually a length and a half in advance! and worse than all, Miss Dashwood must have witnessed the whole, and doubtless his leap over the river was better and bolder than mine. One consolation yet remained, and while I whispered it to myself I felt comforted again. "His is an English mare. They understand these leaps; but what can he make of a Galway wall?" The question was soon to be solved. Before us, about three fields, were the hounds still in full cry; a large stone-wall lay between, and to it we both directed our course together. "Ha!" thought I, "he is floored at last," as I perceived that the captain held his course rather more in hand, and suffered me to lead. "Now, then, for it!" So saying, I rode at the largest part I could find, well

knowing that Badger's powers were here in their element. One spring, one plunge, and away we were, galloping along at the other side. Not so the captain; his horse had refused the fence, and he was now taking a circuit of the field for another trial of it.

"Pounded, by Jove!" said I, as I turned round in my saddle to observe him. Once more she came at it, and once more balked, rearing up, at the same time, almost so as to fall backward.

My triumph was complete; and I again was about to follow the hounds, when, throwing a look back, I saw Hammersley clearing the wall in a most splendid manner, and taking a stretch of at least thirteen feet beyond it. Once more he was on my flanks, and the contest renewed. Whatever might be the sentiments of the riders (mine I confess to), between the horses it now became a tremendous struggle. The English mare, though evidently superior in stride and strength, was slightly overweighted, and had not, besides, that cat-like activity an Irish horse possesses; so that the advantages and disadvantages on either side were about equalized. For about half an hour now the pace was awful. We rode side by side, taking our leaps at exactly the same instant, and not four feet apart. The hounds were still considerably in advance, and were heading towards the Shannon, when suddenly the fox doubled, took the hillside, and made for Dangan. "Now, then, comes the trial of strength," I said, half aloud, as I threw my eye up a steep and rugged mountain, covered with wild furze and tall heath, around the crest of which ran, in a zigzag direction, a broken and dilapidated wall, once the enclosure of a deer park.

This wall, which varied from four to six feet in height, was of solid masonry, and would, in the most favorable ground, have been a bold leap. Here, at the summit of a mountain, with not a yard of footing, it was absolutely desperation.

By the time that we reached the foot of the hill, the fox, followed closely by the hounds, had passed through a breach in the wall; while Matthew Blake, with the huntsmen and whipper-in, was riding along in search of a gap to lead the horses through. Before I put spurs to Badger to face the hill, I turned one look towards Hammersley. There was a slight curl, half-smile, half-sneer, upon his lip that actually maddened me, and had a precipice yawned beneath my feet, I should have dashed at it after that. The ascent was so steep that I was obliged to take the hill in a slanting direction; and even thus, the loose footing rendered it dangerous in the extreme.

At length I reached the crest, where the wall, more than five feet in height, stood frowning above and seeming to defy me. I turned my horse full round, so that his very chest almost touched the stones, and with a bold cut of the whip and a loud halloo, the gallant animal rose, as if rearing, pawed for an instant to regain his balance, and then, with a frightful struggle, fell backwards, and rolled from top to bottom of the hill, carrying me along with him; the last object that crossed my sight, as I lay bruised and motionless, being the captain as he took the wall in a flying leap, and disappeared at the other side. After a few scrambling efforts to rise, Badger regained his legs and stood beside me;

but such was the shock and concussion of my fall that all the objects around seemed wavering and floating before me, while showers of bright sparks fell in myriads before my eyes. I tried to rise, but fell back helpless. Cold perspiration broke over my forehead, and I fainted. From that moment I can remember nothing, till I felt myself galloping along at full speed upon a level table-land, with the hounds about three fields in advance, Hammersley riding foremost, and taking all his leaps coolly as ever. As I swayed to either side upon my saddle, from weakness, I was lost to all thought or recollection, save a flickering memory of some plan of vengeance, which still urged me forward. The chase had now lasted above an hour, and both hounds and horses began to feel the pace at which they were going. As for me, I rode mechanically; I neither knew nor cared for the dangers before me. My eye rested on but one object; my whole being was concentrated upon one vague and undefined sense of revenge. At this instant the huntsman came alongside of me.

"Are you hurted, Misther Charles? Did you fall? Your cheek is all blood, and your coat is torn in two; and, Mother o' God! his boot is ground to powder; he does not hear me! Oh, pull up! pull up, for the love of the Virgin! There's the clover-field and the sunk fence before you, and you'll be killed on the spot!"

"Where?" cried I, with the cry of a madman. "Where's the clover-field; where's the sunk fence? Ha! I see it; I see it now."

So saying, I dashed the rowels into my horse's flanks, and in an instant was beyond the reach of the poor fellow's remonstances.

Another moment I was beside the captain. He turned round as I came up; the same smile was upon his mouth; I could have struck him. About three hundred yards before us lay the sunk fence; its breadth was about twenty feet, and a wall of close brickwork formed its face. Over this the hounds were now clambering; some succeeded in crossing, but by far the greater number fell back, howling, into the ditch.

I turned towards Hammersley. He was standing high in his stirrups, and as he looked towards the yawning fence, down which the dogs were tumbling in masses, I thought (perhaps it was but a thought) that his cheek was paler. I looked again; he was pulling at his horse. Ha! it was true then; he would not face it. I turned round in my saddle, looked him full in the face, and as I pointed with my whip to the leap, called out in a voice hoarse with passion, "Come on!" I saw no more. All objects were lost to me from that moment. When next my senses cleared, I was standing amidst the dogs, where they had just killed. Badger stood blown and trembling beside me, his head drooping and his flanks gored with spur-marks. I looked about, but all consciousness of the past had fled; the concussion of my fall had shaken my intellect, and I was like one but half-awake. One glimpse, short and fleeting, of what was taking place shot through my brain, as old Brackely whispered to me, "By my soul, ye did for the captain there." I turned a vague look upon him, and my eyes fell upon the figure of a man that lay stretched and bleeding upon a door before me. His pale face was crossed with

a purple stream of blood that trickled from a wound beside his eyebrow; his arms lay motionless and heavily at either side. I knew him not. A loud report of a pistol aroused me from my stupor; I looked back. I saw a crowd that broke suddenly asunder and fled right and left. I heard a heavy crash upon the ground; I pointed with my finger, for I could not utter a word.

"It is the English mare, yer honor; she was a beauty this morning, but she's broke her shoulder-bone and both her legs, and it was best to put her out of pain."

CHAPTER V

THE DRAWING-ROOM

On the fourth day following the adventure detailed in the last chapter, I made my appearance in the drawing-room, my cheek well blanched by copious bleeding, and my step tottering and uncertain. On entering the room, I looked about in vain for some one who might give me an insight into the occurrences of the four preceding days; but no one was to be met with. The ladies, I learned, were out riding; Matthew was buying a new setter, Mr. Blake was canvassing, and Captain Hammersley was in bed. Where was Miss Dashwood? – in her room; and Sir George? – he was with Mr. Blake.

"What! Canvassing, too?"

"Troth, that same was possible," was the intelligent reply of the old butler, at which I could not help smiling. I sat down, therefore, in the easiest chair I could find, and unfolding the county paper, resolved upon learning how matters were going on in the political world. But somehow, whether the editor was not brilliant or the fire was hot or that my own dreams were pleasanter to indulge in than his fancies, I fell sound asleep.

How differently is the mind attuned to the active, busy world

of thought and action when awakened from sleep by any sudden and rude summons to arise and be stirring, and when called into existence by the sweet and silvery notes of softest music stealing over the senses, and while they impart awakening thoughts of bliss and beauty, scarcely dissipating the dreamy influence of slumber! Such was my first thought, as, with closed lids, the thrilling chords of a harp broke upon my sleep and aroused me to a feeling of unutterable pleasure. I turned gently round in my chair and beheld Miss Dashwood. She was seated in a recess of an old-fashioned window; the pale yellow glow of a wintry sun at evening fell upon her beautiful hair, and tinged it with such a light as I have often since then seen in Rembrandt's pictures; her head leaned upon the harp, and as she struck its chords at random, I saw that her mind was far away from all around her. As I looked, she suddenly started from her leaning attitude, and parting back her curls from her brow, she preluded a few chords, and then sighed forth, rather than sang, that most beautiful of Moore's melodies, —

"She is far from the land where her young hero sleeps."

Never before had such pathos, such deep utterance of feeling, met my astonished sense; I listened breathlessly as the tears fell one by one down my cheek; my bosom heaved and fell; and when she ceased, I hid my head between my hands and sobbed aloud. In an instant, she was beside me, and placing her hand upon my shoulder, said, —

"Poor dear boy, I never suspected you of being there, or I

should not have sung that mournful air."

I started and looked up; and from what I know not, but she suddenly crimsoned to her very forehead, while she added in a less assured tone, —

"I hope, Mr. O'Malley, that you are much better; and I trust there is no imprudence in your being here."

"For the latter, I shall not answer," said I, with a sickly smile; "but already I feel your music has done me service."

"Then let me sing more for you."

"If I am to have a choice, I should say, Sit down, and let me hear you talk to me. My illness and the doctor together have made wild work of my poor brain; but if you will talk to me – "

"Well, then, what shall it be about? Shall I tell you a fairy tale?"

"I need it not; I feel I am in one this instant."

"Well, then, what say you to a legend; for I am rich in my stores of them?"

"The O'Malleys have their chronicles, wild and barbarous enough without the aid of Thor and Woden."

"Then, shall we chat of every-day matters? Should you like to hear how the election and the canvass go on?"

"Yes; of all things."

"Well, then, most favorably. Two baronies, with most unspeakable names, have declared for us, and confidence is rapidly increasing among our party. This I learned, by chance, yesterday; for papa never permits us to know anything of these matters, – not even the names of the candidates."

"Well, that was the very point I was coming to; for the government were about to send down some one just as I left home, and I am most anxious to learn who it is."

"Then am I utterly valueless; for I really can't say what party the government espouses, and only know of our own."

"Quite enough for me that you wish it success," said I, gallantly. "Perhaps you can tell me if my uncle has heard of my accident?"

"Oh, yes; but somehow he has not been here himself, but sent a friend, – a Mr. Considine, I think; a very strange person he seemed. He demanded to see papa, and it seems, asked him if your misfortune had been a thing of his contrivance, and whether he was ready to explain his conduct about it; and, in fact, I believe he is mad."

"Heaven confound him!" I muttered between my teeth.

"And then he wished to have an interview with Captain Hammersley. However, he is too ill; but as the doctor hoped he might be down-stairs in a week, Mr. Considine kindly hinted that he should wait."

"Oh, then, do tell me how is the captain."

"Very much bruised, very much disfigured, they say," said she, half smiling; "but not so much hurt in body as in mind."

"As how, may I ask?" said I, with an appearance of innocence.

"I don't exactly understand it; but it would appear that there was something like rivalry among you gentlemen *chasseurs* on that luckless morning, and that while you paid the penalty of

a broken head, he was destined to lose his horse and break his arm."

"I certainly am sorry, – most sincerely sorry for any share I might have had in the catastrophe; and my greatest regret, I confess, arises from the fact that I should cause *you* unhappiness."

"*Me*? Pray explain."

"Why, as Captain Hammersley – "

"Mr. O'Malley, you are too young now to make me suspect you have an intention to offend; but I caution you, never repeat this."

I saw that I had transgressed, but how, I most honestly confess, I could not guess; for though I certainly was the senior of my fair companion in years, I was most lamentably her junior in tact and discretion.

The gray dusk of evening had long fallen as we continued to chat together beside the blazing wood embers, – she evidently amusing herself with the original notions of an untutored, unlettered boy, and I drinking deep those draughts of love that nerved my heart through many a breach and battlefield.

Our colloquy was at length interrupted by the entrance of Sir George, who shook me most cordially by the hand, and made the kindest inquiries about my health.

"They tell me you are to be a lawyer. Mr. O'Malley," said he; "and if so, I must advise you to take better care of your headpiece."

“A lawyer, Papa; oh dear me! I should never have thought of his being anything so stupid.”

“Why, silly girl, what would you have a man be?”

“A dragoon, to be sure, Papa,” said the fond girl, as she pressed her arm around his manly figure, and looked up in his face with an expression of mingled pride and affection.

That word sealed my destiny.

CHAPTER VI

THE DINNER

When I retired to my room to dress for dinner, I found my servant waiting with a note from my uncle, to which, he informed me, the messenger expected an answer.

I broke the seal and read: —

> DEAR CHARLEY, – Do not lose a moment in securing old Blake, – if you have not already done so, – as information has just reached me that the government party has promised a cornetcy to young Matthew if he can bring over his father. And these are the people I have been voting with – a few private cases excepted – for thirty odd years!
>
> I am very sorry for your accident. Considine informs me that it will need explanation at a later period. He has been in Athlone since Tuesday, in hopes to catch the new candidate on his way down, and get him into a little private quarrel before the day; if he succeeds, it will save the county much expense, and conduce greatly to the peace and happiness of all parties. But "these things," as Father Roach says, "are in the hands of Providence." You must also persuade old Blake to write a few lines to Simon Mallock, about the Coolnamuck mortgage. We can give him no satisfaction at present, at least such as he looks for; and don't be

philandering any longer where you are, when your health permits a change of quarters.

Your affectionate uncle,
GODFREY O'MALLEY.

P.S. I have just heard from Considine. He was out this morning and shot a fellow in the knee; but finds that after all he was not the candidate, but a tourist that was writing a book about Connemara.

P.S. No. 2. Bear the mortgage in mind, for old Mallock is a spiteful fellow, and has a grudge against me, since I horsewhipped his son in Banagher. Oh, the world, the world! G. O'M.

Until I read this very clear epistle to the end, I had no very precise conception how completely I had forgotten all my uncle's interests, and neglected all his injunctions. Already five days had elapsed, and I had not as much as mooted the question to Mr. Blake, and probably all this time my uncle was calculating on the thing as concluded; but, with one hole in my head and some half-dozen in my heart, my memory was none of the best.

Snatching up the letter, therefore, I resolved to lose no more time, and proceeded at once to Mr. Blake's room, expecting that I should, as the event proved, find him engaged in the very laborious duty of making his toilet.

"Come in, Charley," said he, as I tapped gently at the door. "It's only Charley, my darling. Mrs. B. won't mind you."

"Not the least in life," responded Mrs. B., disposing at the

same time a pair of her husband's corduroys tippet fashion across her ample shoulders, which before were displayed in the plenitude and breadth of coloring we find in a Rubens. "Sit down, Charley, and tell us what's the matter."

As until this moment I was in perfect ignorance of the Adam-and-Eve-like simplicity in which the private economy of Mr. Blake's household was conducted, I would have gladly retired from what I found to be a mutual territory of dressing-room had not Mr. Blake's injunctions been issued somewhat like an order to remain.

"It's only a letter, sir," said I, stuttering, "from my uncle about the election. He says that as his majority is now certain, he should feel better pleased in going to the poll with all the family, you know, sir, along with him. He wishes me just to sound your intentions, – to make out how you feel disposed towards him; and – and, faith, as I am but a poor diplomatist, I thought the best way was to come straight to the point and tell you so."

"I perceive," said Mr. Blake, giving his chin at the moment an awful gash with the razor, – "I perceive; go on."

"Well, sir, I have little more to say. My uncle knows what influence you have in Scariff, and expects you'll do what you can there."

"Anything more?" said Blake, with a very dry and quizzical expression I didn't half like, – "anything more?"

"Oh, yes; you are to write a line to old Mallock."

"I understand; about Coolnamuck, isn't it?"

"Exactly; I believe that's all."

"Well, now, Charley, you may go down-stairs, and we'll talk it over after dinner."

"Yes, Charley dear, go down, for I'm going to draw on my stockings," said the fair Mrs. Blake, with a look of very modest consciousness.

When I had left the room I couldn't help muttering a "Thank God!" for the success of a mission I more than once feared for, and hastened to despatch a note to my uncle, assuring him of the Blake interest, and adding that for propriety's sake I should defer my departure for a day or two longer.

This done, with a heart lightened of its load and in high spirits at my cleverness, I descended to the drawing-room. Here a very large party were already assembled, and at every opening of the door a new relay of Blakes, Burkes, and Bodkins was introduced. In the absence of the host, Sir George Dashwood was "making the agreeable" to the guests, and shook hands with every new arrival with all the warmth and cordiality of old friendship. While thus he inquired for various absent individuals, and asked most affectionately for sundry aunts and uncles not forthcoming, a slight incident occurred which by its ludicrous turn served to shorten the long half-hour before dinner. An individual of the party, a Mr. Blake, had, from certain peculiarities of face, obtained in his boyhood the sobriquet of "Shave-the-wind." This hatchet-like conformation had grown with his growth, and perpetuated upon him a nickname by which alone was he

ever spoken of among his friends and acquaintances; the only difference being that as he came to man's estate, brevity, that soul of wit, had curtailed the epithet to mere "Shave." Now, Sir George had been hearing frequent reference made to him always by this name, heard him ever so addressed, and perceived him to reply to it; so that when he was himself asked by some one what sport he had found that day among the woodcocks, he answered at once, with a bow of very grateful acknowledgment, "Excellent, indeed; but entirely owing to where I was placed in the copse. Had it not been for Mr. Shave there – "

I need not say that the remainder of his speech, being heard on all sides, became one universal shout of laughter, in which, to do him justice, the excellent Shave himself heartily joined. Scarcely were the sounds of mirth lulled into an apparent calm, when the door opened and the host and hostess appeared. Mrs. Blake advanced in all the plenitude of her charms, arrayed in crimson satin, sorely injured in its freshness by a patch of grease upon the front about the same size and shape as the continent of Europe in Arrowsmith's Atlas. A swan's-down tippet covered her shoulders; massive bracelets ornamented her wrists; while from her ears descended two Irish diamond ear-rings, rivalling in magnitude and value the glass pendants of a lustre. Her reception of her guests made ample amends, in warmth and cordiality, for any deficiency of elegance; and as she disposed her ample proportions upon the sofa, and looked around upon the company, she appeared the very impersonation of hospitality.

After several openings and shuttings of the drawing-room door, accompanied by the appearance of old Simon the butler, who counted the party at least five times before he was certain that the score was correct, dinner was at length announced. Now came a moment of difficulty, and one which, as testing Mr. Blake's tact, he would gladly have seen devolve upon some other shoulders; for he well knew that the marshalling a room full of mandarins, blue, green, and yellow, was "cakes and gingerbread" to ushering a Galway party in to dinner.

First, then, was Mr. Miles Bodkin, whose grandfather would have been a lord if Cromwell had not hanged him one fine morning. Then Mrs. Mosey Blake's first husband was promised the title of Kilmacud if it was ever restored; whereas Mrs. French of Knocktunmor's mother was then at law for a title. And lastly, Mrs. Joe Burke was fourth cousin to Lord Clanricarde, as is or will be every Burke from this to the day of judgment. Now, luckily for her prospects, the lord was alive; and Mr. Blake, remembering a very sage adage about "dead lions," etc., solved the difficulty at once by gracefully tucking the lady under his arm and leading the way. The others soon followed, the priest of Portumna and my unworthy self bringing up the rear.

When, many a year afterwards, the hard ground of a mountain bivouac, with its pitiful portion of pickled cork-tree yclept mess-beef, and that pyroligneous aquafortis they call corn-brandy have been my hard fare, I often looked back to that day's dinner with a most heart-yearning sensation, – a turbot as big as the

Waterloo shield, a sirloin that seemed cut from the sides of a rhinoceros, a sauce-boat that contained an oyster-bed. There was a turkey, which singly would have formed the main army of a French dinner, doing mere outpost duty, flanked by a picket of ham and a detached squadron of chickens carefully ambushed in a forest of greens; potatoes, not disguised *à la maître d'hôtel* and tortured to resemble bad macaroni, but piled like shot in an ordnance-yard, were posted at different quarters; while massive decanters of port and sherry stood proudly up like standard bearers amidst the goodly array. This was none of your austere "great dinners," where a cold and chilling *plateau* of artificial nonsense cuts off one-half of the table from intercourse with the other; when whispered sentences constitute the conversation, and all the friendly recognition of wine-drinking, which renews acquaintance and cements an intimacy, is replaced by the ceremonious filling of your glass by a lackey; where smiles go current in lieu of kind speeches, and epigram and smartness form the substitute for the broad jest and merry story. Far from it. Here the company ate, drank, talked, laughed, – did all but sing, and certainly enjoyed themselves heartily. As for me, I was little more than a listener; and such was the crash of plates, the jingle of glasses, and the clatter of voices, that fragments only of what was passing around reached me, giving to the conversation of the party a character occasionally somewhat incongruous. Thus such sentences as the following ran foul of each other every instant: —

"No better land in Galway" – "where could you find such

facilities" – "for shooting Mr. Jones on his way home" – "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" – "kiss" – "Miss Blake, she's the girl with a foot and ankle" – "Daly has never had wool on his sheep" – "how could he" – "what does he pay for the mountain" – "four and tenpence a yard" – "not a penny less" – "all the cabbage-stalks and potato-skins" – "with some bog stuff through it" – "that's the thing to" – "make soup, with a red herring in it instead of salt" – "and when he proposed for my niece, ma'am, says he" – "mix a strong tumbler, and I'll make a shake-down for you on the floor" – "and may the Lord have mercy on your soul" – "and now, down the middle and up again" – "Captain Magan, my dear, he is the man" – "to shave a pig properly" – "it's not money I'm looking for, says he, the girl of my heart" – "if she had not a wind-gall and two spavins" – "I'd have given her the rights of the church, of coorse," said Father Roach, bringing up the rear of this ill-assorted jargon.

Such were the scattered links of conversation I was condemned to listen to, till a general rise on the part of the ladies left us alone to discuss our wine and enter in good earnest upon the more serious duties of the evening.

Scarcely was the door closed when one of the company, seizing the bell-rope, said, "With your leave, Blake, we'll have the 'dew' now."

"Good claret, – no better," said another; "but it sits mighty cold on the stomach."

"There's nothing like the groceries, after all, – eh, Sir

George?" said an old Galway squire to the English general, who acceded to the fact, which he understood in a very different sense.

"Oh, punch, you are my darlin'," hummed another, as a large, square, half-gallon decanter of whiskey was placed on the table, the various decanters of wine being now ignominiously sent down to the end of the board without any evidence of regret on any face save Sir George Dashwood's, who mixed his tumbler with a very rebellious conscience.

Whatever were the noise and clamor of the company before, they were nothing to what now ensued. As one party were discussing the approaching contest, another was planning a steeple-chase, while two individuals, unhappily removed from each other the entire length of the table, were what is called "challenging each other's effects" in a very remarkable manner, – the process so styled being an exchange of property, when each party, setting an imaginary value upon some article, barters it for another, the amount of boot paid and received being determined by a third person, who is the umpire. Thus a gold breast-pin was swopped, as the phrase is, against a horse; then a pair of boots, then a Kerry bull, etc., – every imaginable species of property coming into the market. Sometimes, as matters of very dubious value turned up, great laughter was the result. In this very national pastime, a Mr. Miles Bodkin, a noted fire-eater of the west, was a great proficient; and it is said he once so completely succeeded in despoiling an uninitiated hand, that after winning in

succession his horse, gig, harness, etc., he proceeded *seriatim* to his watch, ring, clothes, and portmanteau, and actually concluded by winning all he possessed, and kindly lent him a card-cloth to cover him on his way to the hotel. His success on the present occasion was considerable, and his spirits proportionate. The decanter had thrice been replenished, and the flushed faces and thickened utterance of the guests evinced that from the cold properties of the claret there was but little to dread. As for Mr. Bodkin, his manner was incapable of any higher flight, when under the influence of whiskey, than what it evinced on common occasions; and as he sat at the end of the table fronting Mr. Blake, he assumed all the dignity of the ruler of the feast, with an energy no one seemed disposed to question. In answer to some observations of Sir George, he was led into something like an oration upon the peculiar excellences of his native country, which ended in a declaration that there was nothing like Galway.

"Why don't you give us a song, Miles? And may be the general would learn more from it than all your speech-making."

"To be sure," cried the several voices together, – "to be sure; let us hear the 'Man for Galway'!"

Sir George having joined most warmly in the request, Mr. Bodkin filled up his glass to the brim, bespoke a chorus to his chant, and clearing his voice with a deep hem, began the following ditty, to the air which Moore has since rendered immortal by the beautiful song, "Wreath the Bowl," etc. And, although the words are well known in the west, for the

information of less-favored regions, I here transcribe —

THE MAN FOR GALWAY

To drink a toast,
A proctor roast,
Or bailiff as the case is;
To kiss your wife,
Or take your life
At ten or fifteen paces;
To keep game-cocks, to hunt the fox,
To drink in punch the Solway,
With debts galore, but fun far more, —
Oh, that's "the man for Galway."
CHORUS: With debts, etc.

The King of Oude
Is mighty proud,
And so were onst the *Caysars*;
But ould Giles Eyre
Would make them stare,
Av he had them with the Blazers.
To the devil I fling – ould Runjeet Sing,
He's only a prince in a small way,
And knows nothing at all of a six-foot wall;
Oh, he'd never "do for Galway."
CHORUS: With debts, etc.

Ye think the Blakes
Are no "great shakes;"
They're all his blood relations.
And the Bodkins sneeze
At the grim Chinese,
For they come from the *Phenaycians*.
So fill the brim, and here's to him
Who'd drink in punch the Solway,
With debts galore, but fun far more, —
Oh, that's "the man for Galway."
CHORUS: With debts, etc.

I much fear that the reception of this very classic ode would not be as favorable in general companies as it was on the occasion I first heard it; for certainly the applause was almost deafening, and even Sir George, the defects of whose English education left some of the allusions out of his reach, was highly amused, and laughed heartily.

The conversation once more reverted to the election; and although I was too far from those who seemed best informed on the matter to hear much, I could catch enough to discover that the feeling was a confident one. This was gratifying to me, as I had some scruples about my so long neglecting my uncle's cause.

"We have Scariff to a man," said Bodkin.

"And Mosey's tenantry," said another. "I swear, though there's not a freehold registered on the estate, that they'll vote, every

mother's son of them, or devil a stone of the court-house they'll leave standing on another."

"And may the Lord look to the returning officer!" said a third, throwing up his eyes.

"Mosey's tenantry are droll boys; and like their landlord, more by token, they never pay any rent."

"And what for shouldn't they vote?" said a dry-looking little old fellow in a red waistcoat; "when I was the dead agent – "

"The dead agent!" interrupted Sir George, with a start.

"Just so," said the old fellow, pulling down his spectacles from his forehead, and casting a half-angry look at Sir George, for what he had suspected to be a doubt of his veracity.

"The general does not know, may be, what that is," said some one.

"You have just anticipated me," said Sir George; "I really am in most profound ignorance."

"It is the dead agent," says Mr. Blake, "who always provides substitutes for any voters that may have died since the last election. A very important fact in statistics may thus be gathered from the poll-books of this county, which proves it to be the healthiest part of Europe, – a freeholder has not died in it for the last fifty years."

"The 'Kiltopher boys' won't come this time; they say there's no use trying to vote when so many were transported last assizes for perjury."

"They're poor-spirited creatures," said another.

"Not they, – they are as decent boys as any we have; they're willing to wreck the town for fifty shillings' worth of spirits. Besides, if they don't vote for the county, they will for the borough."

This declaration seemed to restore these interesting individuals to favor; and now all attention was turned towards Bodkin, who was detailing the plan of a grand attack upon the polling-booths, to be headed by himself. By this time, all the prudence and guardedness of the party had given way; whiskey was in the ascendant, and every bold stroke of election policy, every cunning artifice, every ingenious device, was detailed and applauded in a manner which proved that self-respect was not the inevitable gift of "mountain dew."

The mirth and fun grew momentarily more boisterous, and Miles Bodkin, who had twice before been prevented proposing some toast by a telegraphic signal from the other end of the table, now swore that nothing should prevent him any longer, and rising with a smoking tumbler in his hand, delivered himself as follows: —

"No, no, Phil Blake, ye needn't be winkin' at me that way; it's little I care for the spawn of the ould serpent. [Here great cheers greeted the speaker, in which, without well knowing why, I heartily joined.] I'm going to give a toast, boys, – a real good toast, none of your sentimental things about wall-flowers or the vernal equinox, or that kind of thing, but a sensible, patriotic, manly, intrepid toast, – toast you must drink in the most

universal, laborious, and awful manner: do ye see now? [Loud cheers.] If any man of you here present doesn't drain this toast to the bottom [here the speaker looked fixedly at me, as did the rest of the company] – then, by the great-gun of Athlone, I'll make him eat the decanter, glass-stopper and all, for the good of his digestion: d'ye see now?"

The cheering at this mild determination prevented my hearing what followed; but the peroration consisted in a very glowing eulogy upon some person unknown, and a speedy return to him as member for Galway. Amidst all the noise and tumult at this critical moment, nearly every eye at the table was turned upon me; and as I concluded that they had been drinking my uncle's health, I thundered away at the mahogany with all my energy. At length the hip-hipping over, and comparative quiet restored, I rose from my seat to return thanks; but, strange enough, Sir George Dashwood did so likewise. And there we both stood, amidst an uproar that might well have shaken the courage of more practised orators; while from every side came cries of "Hear, hear!" – "Go on, Sir George!" – "Speak out, General!" – "Sit down, Charley!" – "Confound the boy!" – "Knock the legs from under him!" etc. Not understanding why Sir George should interfere with what I regarded as my peculiar duty, I resolved not to give way, and avowed this determination in no very equivocal terms. "In that case," said the general, "I am to suppose that the young gentleman moves an amendment to your proposition; and as the etiquette is in his favor, I yield." Here he resumed

his place amidst a most terrific scene of noise and tumult, while several humane proposals as to my treatment were made around me, and a kind suggestion thrown out to break my neck by a near neighbor. Mr. Blake at length prevailed upon the party to hear what I had to say, – for he was certain I should not detain them above a minute. The commotion having in some measure subsided, I began: "Gentlemen, as the adopted son of the worthy man whose health you have just drunk – " Heaven knows how I should have continued; but here my eloquence was met by such a roar of laughing as I never before listened to. From one end of the board to the other it was one continued shout, and went on, too, as if all the spare lungs of the party had been kept in reserve for the occasion. I turned from one to the other; I tried to smile, and seemed to participate in the joke, but failed; I frowned; I looked savagely about where I could see enough to turn my wrath thitherward, – and, as it chanced, not in vain; for Mr. Miles Bodkin, with an intuitive perception of my wishes, most suddenly ceased his mirth, and assuming a look of frowning defiance that had done him good service upon many former occasions, rose and said: —

"Well, sir, I hope you're proud of yourself. You've made a nice beginning of it, and a pretty story you'll have for your uncle. But if you'd like to break the news by a letter the general will have great pleasure in franking it for you; for, by the rock of Cashel, we'll carry him in against all the O'Malley's that ever cheated the sheriff."

Scarcely were the words uttered, when I seized my wineglass, and hurled it with all my force at his head; so sudden was the act, and so true the aim, that Mr. Bodkin measured his length upon the floor ere his friends could appreciate his late eloquent effusion. The scene now became terrific; for though the redoubted Miles was *hors-de-combat*, his friends made a tremendous rush at, and would infallibly have succeeded in capturing me, had not Blake and four or five others interposed. Amidst a desperate struggle, which lasted for some minutes, I was torn from the spot, carried bodily up-stairs, and pitched headlong into my own room; where, having doubly locked the door on the outside, they left me to my own cool and not over-agreeable reflections.

CHAPTER VII

THE FLIGHT FROM GURT-NA-MORRA

It was by one of those sudden and inexplicable revulsions which occasionally restore to sense and intellect the maniac of years standing, that I was no sooner left alone in my chamber than I became perfectly sober. The fumes of the wine – and I had drunk deeply – were dissipated at once; my head, which but a moment before was half wild with excitement, was now cool, calm, and collected; and stranger than all, I, who had only an hour since entered the dining-room with all the unsuspecting freshness of boyhood, became, by a mighty bound, a man, – a man in all my feelings of responsibility, a man who, repelling an insult by an outrage, had resolved to stake his life upon the chance. In an instant a new era in life had opened before me; the light-headed gayety which fearlessness and youth impart was replaced by one absorbing thought, – one all-engrossing, all-pervading impression, that if I did not follow up my quarrel with Bodkin, I was dishonored and disgraced, my little knowledge of such matters not being sufficient to assure me that I was now the aggressor, and that any further steps in the affair should come from his side.

So thoroughly did my own griefs occupy me, that I had no thought for the disappointment my poor uncle was destined to meet with in hearing that the Blake interest was lost to him, and the former breach between the families irreparably widened by the events of the evening. Escape was my first thought; but how to accomplish it? The door, a solid one of Irish oak, doubly locked and bolted, defied all my efforts to break it open; the window was at least five-and-twenty feet from the ground, and not a tree near to swing into. I shouted, I called aloud, I opened the sash, and tried if any one outside were within hearing; but in vain. Weary and exhausted, I sat down upon my bed and ruminated over my fortunes. Vengeance – quick, entire, decisive vengeance – I thirsted and panted for; and every moment I lived under the insult inflicted on me seemed an age of torturing and maddening agony. I rose with a leap; a thought had just occurred to me. I drew the bed towards the window, and fastening the sheet to one of the posts with a firm knot, I twisted it into a rope, and let myself down to within about twelve feet of the ground, when I let go my hold, and dropped upon the grass beneath safe and uninjured. A thin, misty rain was falling, and I now perceived, for the first time, that in my haste I had forgotten my hat; this thought, however, gave me little uneasiness, and I took my way towards the stable, resolving, if I could, to saddle my horse and get off before any intimation of my escape reached the family.

When I gained the yard, all was quiet and deserted; the servants were doubtless enjoying themselves below stairs, and I

met no one on the way. I entered the stable, threw the saddle upon "Badger," and before five minutes from my descent from the window, was galloping towards O'Malley Castle at a pace that defied pursuit, had any one thought of it.

It was about five o'clock on a dark, wintry morning as I led my horse through the well-known defiles of out-houses and stables which formed the long line of offices to my uncle's house. As yet no one was stirring; and as I wished to have my arrival a secret from the family, after providing for the wants of my gallant gray, I lifted the latch of the kitchen-door – no other fastening being ever thought necessary, even at night – and gently groped my way towards the stairs; all was perfectly still, and the silence now recalled me to reflection as to what course I should pursue. It was all-important that my uncle should know nothing of my quarrel, otherwise he would inevitably make it his own, and by treating me like a boy in the matter, give the whole affair the very turn I most dreaded. Then, as to Sir Harry Boyle, he would most certainly turn the whole thing into ridicule, make a good story, perhaps a song out of it, and laugh at my notions of demanding satisfaction. Considine, I knew, was my man; but then he was at Athlone, – at least so my uncle's letter mentioned. Perhaps he might have returned; if not, to Athlone I should set off at once. So resolving, I stole noiselessly up-stairs, and reached the door of the count's chamber; I opened it gently and entered; and though my step was almost imperceptible to myself, it was quite sufficient to alarm the watchful occupant of the room, who, springing up

in his bed, demanded gruffly, "Who's there?"

"Charles, sir," said I, shutting the door carefully, and approaching his bedside. "Charles O'Malley, sir. I'm come to have a bit of your advice; and as the affair won't keep, I have been obliged to disturb you."

"Never mind, Charley," said the count; "sit down, there's a chair somewhere near the bed, – have you found it? There! Well now, what is it? What news of Blake?"

"Very bad; no worse. But it is not exactly *that* I came about; I've got into a scrape, sir."

"Run off with one of the daughters," said Considine. "By jingo, I knew what those artful devils would be after."

"Not so bad as that," said I, laughing. "It's just a row, a kind of squabble; something that must come – "

"Ay, ay," said the count, brightening up; "say you so, Charley? Begad, the young ones will beat us all out of the field. Who is it with, – not old Blake himself; how was it? Tell me all."

I immediately detailed the whole events of the preceding chapter, as well as his frequent interruptions would permit, and concluded by asking what farther step was now to be taken, as I was resolved the matter should be concluded before it came to my uncle's ears.

"There you are all right; quite correct, my boy. But there are many points I should have wished otherwise in the conduct of the affair hitherto."

Conceiving that he was displeased at my petulance and

boldness, I was about to commence a kind of defence, when he added, —

"Because, you see," said he, assuming an oracular tone of voice, "throwing a wine-glass, with or without wine, in a man's face is merely, as you may observe, a mark of denial and displeasure at some observation he may have made, – not in any wise intended to injure him, further than in the wound to his honor at being so insulted, for which, of course, he must subsequently call you out. Whereas, Charley, in the present case, the view I take is different; the expression of Mr. Bodkin, as regards your uncle, was insulting to a degree, – gratuitously offensive, – and warranting a blow. Therefore, my boy, you should, under such circumstances, have preferred aiming at him with a decanter: a cut-glass decanter, well aimed and low, I have seen do effective service. However, as you remark it was your first thing of the kind, I am pleased with you – very much pleased with you. Now, then, for the next step." So saying, he arose from his bed, and striking a light with a tinder-box, proceeded to dress himself as leisurely as if for a dinner party, talking all the while.

"I will just take Godfrey's tax-cart and the roan mare on to Meelish, put them up at the little inn, – it is not above a mile from Bodkin's; and I'll go over and settle the thing for you. You must stay quiet till I come back, and not leave the house on any account. I've got a case of old broad barrels there that will answer you beautifully; if you were anything of a shot, I'd give you my own cross handles, but they'd only spoil your shooting."

"I can hit a wine-glass in the stem at fifteen paces," said I, rather nettled at the disparaging tone in which he spoke of my performance.

"I don't care sixpence for that; the wine-glass had no pistol in his hand. Take the old German, then; see now, hold your pistol thus, – no finger on the guard there, these two on the trigger. They are not hair-triggers; drop the muzzle a bit; bend your elbow a trifle more; sight your man outside your arm, – outside, mind, – and take him in the hip, and if anywhere higher, no matter."

By this time the count had completed his toilet, and taking the small mahogany box which contained his peace-makers under his arm, led the way towards the stables. When we reached the yard, the only person stirring there was a kind of half-witted boy, who, being about the house, was employed to run of messages from the servants, walk a stranger's horse, or to do any of the many petty services that regular domestics contrive always to devolve upon some adopted subordinate. He was seated upon a stone step formerly used for mounting, and though the day was scarcely breaking, and the weather severe and piercing, the poor fellow was singing an Irish song, in a low monotonous tone, as he chafed a curb chain between his hands with some sand. As we came near he started up, and as he pulled off his cap to salute us, gave a sharp and piercing glance at the count, then at me, then once more upon my companion, from whom his eyes were turned to the brass-bound box beneath his arm, – when, as if seized with a sudden impulse, he started on his feet, and set off towards

the house with the speed of a greyhound, not, however, before Considine's practised eye had anticipated his plan; for throwing down the pistol-case, he dashed after him, and in an instant had seized him by the collar.

"It won't do, Patsey," said the count; "you can't double on me."

"Oh, Count, darlin', Mister Considine avick, don't do it, don't now," said the poor fellow, falling on his knees, and blubbering like an infant.

"Hold your tongue, you villain, or I'll cut it out of your head," said Considine.

"And so I will; but don't do it, don't for the love of – "

"Don't do what, you whimpering scoundrel? What does he think I'll do?"

"Don't I know very well what you're after, what you're always after too? Oh, wirra, wirra!" Here he wrung his hands, and swayed himself backwards and forwards, a true picture of Irish grief.

"I'll stop his blubbering," said Considine, opening the box and taking out a pistol, which he cocked leisurely, and pointed at the poor fellow's head; "another syllable now, and I'll scatter your brains upon that pavement."

"And do, and divil thank you; sure, it's your trade."

The coolness of the reply threw us both off our guard so completely that we burst out into a hearty fit of laughing.

"Come, come," said the count, at last, "this will never do; if he goes on this way, we'll have the whole house about us. Come,

then, harness the roan mare; and here's half a crown for you."

"I wouldn't touch the best piece in your purse," said the poor boy; "sure it's blood-money, no less."

The words were scarcely spoken, when Considine seized him by the collar with one hand, and by the wrist with the other, and carried him over the yard to the stable, where, kicking open the door, he threw him on a heap of stones, adding, "If you stir now, I'll break every bone in your body;" a threat that seemed certainly considerably increased in its terrors, from the rough gripe he had already experienced, for the lad rolled himself up like a ball, and sobbed as if his heart were breaking.

Very few minutes sufficed us now to harness the mare in the tax-cart, and when all was ready, Considine seized the whip, and locking the stable-door upon Patsey, was about to get up, when a sudden thought struck him. "Charley," said he, "that fellow will find some means to give the alarm; we must take him with us." So saying, he opened the door, and taking the poor fellow by the collar, flung him at my feet in the tax-cart.

We had already lost some time, and the roan mare was put to her fastest speed to make up for it. Our pace became, accordingly, a sharp one; and as the road was bad, and the tax-cart no "patent inaudible," neither of us spoke. To me this was a great relief. The events of the last few days had given them the semblance of years, and all the reflection I could muster was little enough to make anything out of the chaotic mass, – love, mischief, and misfortune, – in which I had been involved since

my leaving O'Malley Castle.

"Here we are, Charley," said Considine, drawing up short at the door of a little country ale-house, or, in Irish parlance, *shebeen*, which stood at the meeting of four bleak roads, in a wild and barren mountain tract beside the Shannon. "Here we are, my boy! Jump out and let us be stirring."

"Here, Patsey, my man," said the count, unravelling the prostrate and doubly knotted figure at our feet; "lend a hand, Patsey." Much to my astonishment, he obeyed the summons with alacrity, and proceeded to unharness the mare with the greatest despatch. My attention was, however, soon turned from him to my own more immediate concerns, and I followed my companion into the house.

"Joe," said the count to the host, "is Mr. Bodkin up at the house this morning?"

"He's just passed this way, sir, with Mr. Malowney of Tillnamuck, in the gig, on their way from Mr. Blake's. They stopped here to order horses to go over to O'Malley Castle, and the gossoon is gone to look for a pair."

"All right," said Considine, and added, in a whisper, "we've done it well, Charley, to be beforehand, or the governor would have found it all out and taken the affair into his own hands. Now all you have to do is to stay quietly here till I come back, which will not be above an hour at farthest. Joe, send me the pony; keep an eye on Patsey, that he doesn't play us a trick. The short way to Mr. Bodkin's is through Scariff. Ay, I know it well; good-by,

Charley. By the Lord, we'll pepper him!"

These were the last words of the worthy count as he closed the door behind him, and left me to my own not very agreeable reflections. Independently of my youth and perfect ignorance of the world, which left me unable to form any correct judgment on my conduct, I knew that I had taken a great deal of wine, and was highly excited when my unhappy collision with Mr. Bodkin occurred. Whether, then, I had been betrayed into anything which could fairly have provoked his insulting retort or not, I could not remember; and now my most afflicting thought was, what opinion might be entertained of me by those at Blake's table; and above all, what Miss Dashwood herself would think, and what narrative of the occurrence would reach her. The great effort of my last few days had been to stand well in her estimation, to appear something better in feeling, something higher in principle, than the rude and unpolished squirearchy about me; and now here was the end of it! What would she, what could she, think, but that I was the same punch-drinking, rowing, quarrelling bumpkin as those whom I had so lately been carefully endeavoring to separate myself from? How I hated myself for the excess to which passion had betrayed me, and how I detested my opponent as the cause of all my present misery. "How very differently," thought I, "her friend the captain would have conducted himself. His quiet and gentlemanly manner would have done fully as much to wipe out any insult on his honor as I could do, and after all, would neither have disturbed the harmony

of a dinner-table, nor made himself, as I shuddered to think I had, a subject of rebuke, if not of ridicule." These harassing, torturing reflections continued to press on me, and I paced the room with my hands clasped and the perspiration upon my brow. "One thing is certain, – I can never see her again," thought I; "this disgraceful business must, in some shape or other, become known to her, and all I have been saying these last three days rise up in judgment against this one act, and stamp me an impostor! I that decried – nay, derided – our false notion of honor. Would that Considine were come! What can keep him now?" I walked to the door; a boy belonging to the house was walking the roan before the door. "What had, then, become of Pat?" I inquired; but no one could tell. He had disappeared shortly after our arrival, and had not been seen afterwards. My own thoughts were, however, too engrossing to permit me to think more of this circumstance, and I turned again to enter the house, when I saw Considine advancing up the road at the full speed of his pony.

"Out with the mare, Charley! Be alive, my boy! – all's settled." So saying, he sprang from the pony and proceeded to harness the roan with the greatest haste, informing me in broken sentences, as he went on with all the arrangements.

"We are to cross the bridge of Portumna. They won the ground, and it seems Bodkin likes the spot; he shot Peyton there three years ago. Worse luck now, Charley, you know; by all the rule of chance, he can't expect the same thing twice, – never four by honors in two deals. Didn't say that, though. A sweet meadow,

I know it well; small hillocks, like molehills; all over it. Caught him at breakfast; I don't think he expected the message to come from us, but said it was a very polite attention, – and so it was, you know."

So he continued to ramble on as we once more took our seats in the tax-cart and set out for the ground.

"What are you thinking of, Charley?" said the count, as I kept silent for some minutes.

"I'm thinking, sir, if I were to kill him, what I must do after."

"Right, my boy; nothing like that, but I'll settle all for you. Upon my conscience, if it wasn't for the chance of his getting into another quarrel and spoiling the election, I'd go back for Godfrey; he'd like to see you break ground so prettily. And you say you're no shot?"

"Never could do anything with the pistol to speak of, sir," said I, remembering his rebuke of the morning.

"I don't mind that. You've a good eye; never take it off him after you're on the ground, – follow him everywhere. Poor Callaghan, that's gone, shot his man always that way. He had a way of looking without winking that was very fatal at a short distance; a very good thing to learn, Charley, when you have a little spare time."

Half-an-hour's sharp driving brought us to the river side, where a boat had been provided by Considine to ferry us over. It was now about eight o'clock, and a heavy, gloomy morning. Much rain had fallen overnight, and the dark and lowering

atmosphere seemed charged with more. The mountains looked twice their real size, and all the shadows were increased to an enormous extent. A very killing kind of light it was, as the count remarked.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DUEL

As the boatmen pulled in towards the shore we perceived, a few hundred yards off, a group of persons standing, whom we soon recognized as our opponents. "Charley," said the count, grasping my arm tightly, as I stood up to spring on the land, – "Charley, although you are only a boy, as I may say, I have no fear for your courage; but still more than that is needful here. This Bodkin is a noted duellist, and will try to shake your nerve. Now, mind that you take everything that happens quite with an air of indifference; don't let him think that he has any advantage over you, and you'll see how the tables will be turned in your favor."

"Trust to me, Count" said I; "I'll not disgrace you."

He pressed my hand tightly, and I thought that I discerned something like a slight twitch about the corners of his grim mouth, as if some sudden and painful thought had shot across his mind; but in a moment he was calm, and stern-looking as ever.

"Twenty minutes late, Mr. Considine," said a short, red-faced little man, with a military frock and foraging cap, as he held out his watch in evidence.

"I can only say, Captain Malowney, that we lost no time since

we parted. We had some difficulty in finding a boat; but in any case, we are here *now*, and that, I opine, is the important part of the matter."

"Quite right, – very just indeed. Will you present me to your young friend. Very proud to make your acquaintance, sir; your uncle and I met more than once in this kind of way. I was out with him in '92, – was it? no, I think it was '93, – when he shot Harry Burgoyne, who, by-the-bye, was called the crack shot of our mess; but, begad, your uncle knocked his pistol hand to shivers, saying, in his dry way, 'He must try the left hand this morning.' Count, a little this side, if you please."

While Considine and the captain walked a few paces apart from where I stood, I had leisure to observe my antagonist, who stood among a group of his friends, talking and laughing away in great spirits. As the tone they spoke in was not of the lowest, I could catch much of their conversation at the distance I was from them. They were discussing the last occasion that Bodkin had visited this spot, and talking of the fatal event which happened then.

"Poor devil," said Bodkin, "it wasn't his fault; but you see some of the – th had been showing white feathers before that, and he was obliged to go out. In fact, the colonel himself said, 'Fight, or leave the corps.' Well, out he came; it was a cold morning in February, with a frost the night before going off in a thin rain. Well, it seems he had the consumption or something of that sort, with a great cough and spitting of blood, and this weather made

him worse; and he was very weak when he came to the ground. Now, the moment I got a glimpse of him, I said to myself, 'He's pluck enough, but as nervous as a lady;' for his eye wandered all about, and his mouth was constantly twitching. 'Take off your great-coat, Ned,' said one of his people, when they were going to put him up; 'take it off, man.' He seemed to hesitate for an instant, when Michael Blake remarked, 'Arrah, let him alone; it's his mother makes him wear it, for the cold he has.' They all began to laugh at this; but I kept my eye upon him, and I saw that his cheek grew quite livid and a kind of gray color, and his eyes filled up. 'I have you now,' said I to myself, and I shot him through the lung."

"And this poor fellow," thought I, "was the only son of a widowed mother." I walked from the spot to avoid hearing further, and felt, as I did so, something like a spirit of vengeance rising within me, for the fate of one so untimely cut off.

"Here we are, all ready," said Malowney, springing over a small fence into the adjoining field. "Take your ground, gentlemen."

Considine took my arm and walked forward. "Charley," said he, "I am to give the signal; I'll drop my glove when you are to fire, but don't look at me at all. I'll manage to catch Bodkin's eye; and do you watch him steadily, and fire when he does."

"I think that the ground we are leaving behind us is rather better," said some one.

"So it is," said Bodkin; "but it might be troublesome to carry

the young gentleman down that way, – here all is fair and easy."

The next instant we were placed; and I well remember the first thought that struck me was, that there could be no chance of either of us escaping.

"Now then," said the count, "I'll walk twelve paces, turn and drop this glove; at which signal you fire, and *together* mind. The man who reserves his shot falls by my hand." This very summary denunciation seemed to meet general approbation, and the count strutted forth. Notwithstanding the advice of my friend, I could not help turning my eyes from Bodkin to watch the retiring figure of the count. At length he stopped; a second or two elapsed; he wheeled rapidly round, and let fall the glove. My eye glanced towards my opponent; I raised my pistol and fired. My hat turned half round upon my head, and Bodkin fell motionless to the earth. I saw the people around me rush forward; I caught two or three glances thrown at me with an expression of revengeful passion; I felt some one grasp me round the waist, and hurry me from the spot; and it was at least ten minutes after, as we were skimming the surface of the broad Shannon, before I could well collect my scattered faculties to remember all that was passing, as Considine, pointing to the two bullet-holes in my hat, remarked, "Sharp practice, Charley; it was the overcharge saved you."

"Is he killed, sir?" I asked.

"Not quite, I believe, but as good. You took him just above the hip."

"Can he recover?" said I, with a voice tremulous from

agitation, which I vainly endeavored to conceal from my companion.

"Not if the doctor can help it," said Considine; "for the fool keeps poking about for the ball. But now let's think of the next step, – you'll have to leave this, and at once, too."

Little more passed between us. As we rowed towards the shore, Considine was following up his reflections, and I had mine, – alas! too many and too bitter to escape from.

As we neared the land a strange spectacle caught our eye. For a considerable distance along the coast crowds of country people were assembled, who, forming in groups and breaking into parties of two and three, were evidently watching with great anxiety what was taking place at the opposite side. Now, the distance was at least a mile, and therefore any part of the transaction which had been enacting there must have been quite beyond their view. While I was wondering at this, Considine cried out suddenly, "Too infamous, by Jove! We're murdered men!"

"What do you mean?" said I.

"Don't you see that?" said he, pointing to something black which floated from a pole at the opposite side of the river.

"Yes; what is it?"

"It's his coat they've put upon an oar to show the people he's killed, – that's all. Every man here's his tenant; and look – there! They're not giving us much doubt as to their intention."

Here a tremendous yell burst forth from the mass of people

along the shore, which rising to a terrific cry sunk gradually down to a low wailing, then rose and fell again several times as the Irish death-cry filled the air and rose to Heaven, as if imploring vengeance on a murderer.

The appalling influence of the *keen*, as it is called, had been familiar to me from my infancy; but it needed the awful situation I was placed in to consummate its horrors. It was at once my accusation and my doom. I knew well – none better – the vengeful character of the Irish peasant of the west, and that my death was certain I had no doubt. The very crime that sat upon my heart quailed its courage and unnerved my arm. As the boatmen looked from us towards the shore and again at our faces, they, as if instinctively, lay upon their oars, and waited for our decision as to what course to pursue.

"Rig the spritsail, my boys," said Considine, "and let her head lie up the river; and be alive, for I see they're bailing a boat below the little reef there, and will be after us in no time."

The poor fellows, who, although strangers to us, sympathizing in what they perceived to be our imminent danger, stepped the light spar which acted as mast, and shook out their scanty rag of canvas in a minute. Considine meanwhile went aft, and steadying her head with an oar, held the small craft up to the wind till she lay completely over, and as she rushed through the water, ran dipping her gun-wale through the white foam.

"Where can we make without tacking, boys?" inquired the count.

"If it blows on as fresh, sir, we'll run you ashore within half a mile of the Castle."

"Put an oar to leeward," said Considine, "and keep her up more to the wind, and I promise you, my lads, you will not go home fresh and fasting if you land us where you say."

"Here they come," said the other boatman, as he pointed back with his finger towards a large yawl which shot suddenly from the shore, with six sturdy fellows pulling at their oars, while three or four others were endeavoring to get up their rigging, which appeared tangled and confused at the bottom of the boat; the white splash of water which fell each moment beside her showing that the process of bailing was still continued.

"Ah, then, may I never – av it isn't the ould 'Dolphin' they have launched for the cruise," said one of our fellows.

"What's the 'Dolphin,' then?"

"An ould boat of the Lord's [Lord Clanricarde's] that didn't see water, except when it rained, these four years, and is sun-cracked from stem to stern."

"She can sail, however," said Considine, who watched with a painful anxiety the rapidity of her course through the water.

"Nabocklish, she was a smuggler's jolly-boat, and well used to it. Look how they're pulling. God pardon them, but they're in no blessed humor this morning."

"Lay out upon your oars, boys; the wind's failing us," cried the count, as the sail flapped lazily against the mast.

"It's no use, yer honor," said the elder. "We'll be only breaking

our hearts to no purpose. They're sure to catch us."

"Do as I bade you, at all events. What's that ahead of us there?"

"The Oat Rock, sir. A vessel with grain struck there and went down with all aboard, four years last winter. There's no channel between it and the shore, – all sunk rocks, every inch of it. There's the breeze."

The canvas fell over as he spoke, and the little craft lay down to it till the foaming water bubbled over her lee bow.

"Keep her head up, sir; higher – higher still."

But Considine little heeded the direction, steering straight for the narrow channel the man alluded to.

"Tear and ages, but you're going right for the cloch na quirka!"

"Arrah, an' the devil a taste I'll be drowned for your devarsion!" said the other, springing up.

"Sit down there, and be still," roared Considine, as he drew a pistol from the case at his feet, "if you don't want some leaden ballast to keep you so! Here, Charley, take this, and if that fellow stirs hand or foot – you understand me."

The two men sat sulkily in the bottom of the boat, which now was actually flying through the water. Considine's object was a clear one. He saw that in sailing we were greatly overmatched, and that our only chance lay in reaching the narrow and dangerous channel between Oat Rock and the shore, by which we should distance the pursuit, the long reef of rocks that ran out beyond requiring a wide berth to escape from. Nothing but the danger behind us could warrant so rash a daring. The whole

channel was dotted with patches of white and breaking foam, – the sure evidence of the mischief beneath, – while here and there a dash of spurting spray flew up from the dark water, where some cleft rock lay hid below the flood. Escape seemed impossible; but who would not have preferred even so slender a chance with so frightful an alternative behind him? As if to add terror to the scene, Considine had scarcely turned the boat ahead of the channel when a tremendous blackness spread over all around, the thunder pealed forth, and amidst the crashing of the hail and the bright glare of lightning a squall struck us and laid us nearly keel uppermost for several minutes. I well remember we rushed through the dark and blackened water, our little craft more than half filled, the oars floating off to leeward, and we ourselves kneeling on the bottom planks for safety. Roll after roll of loud thunder broke, as it were, just above our heads; while in the swift dashing rain that seemed to hiss around us every object was hidden, and even the other boat was lost to our view. The two poor fellows – I shall never forget their expression. One, a devout Catholic, had placed a little leaden image of a saint before him in the bow, and implored its intercession with a torturing agony of suspense that wrung my very heart. The other, apparently less alive to such consolations as his Church afforded, remained with his hands clasped, his mouth compressed, his brows knitted, and his dark eyes bent upon me with the fierce hatred of a deadly enemy; his eyes were sunken and bloodshot, and all told of some dreadful conflict within. The wild ferocity of his look fascinated

my gaze, and amidst all the terrors of the scene I could not look from him. As I gazed, a second and more awful squall struck the boat; the mast went over, and with a loud report like a pistol-shot smashed at the thwart and fell over, trailing the sail along the milky sea behind us. Meanwhile the water rushed clean over us, and the boat seemed settling. At this dreadful moment the sailor's eye was bent upon me, his lips parted, and he muttered, as if to himself, "This it is to go to sea with a murderer." Oh, God! the agony of that moment! the heartfelt and accusing conscience that I was judged and doomed! that the brand of Cain was upon my brow! that my fellow-men had ceased forever to regard me as a brother! that I was an outcast and a wanderer forever! I bent forward till my forehead fell upon my knees, and I wept. Meanwhile the boat flew through the water, and Considine, who alone among us seemed not to lose his presence of mind, cut away the mast and sent it overboard. The storm began now to abate; and as the black mass of cloud broke from around us we beheld the other boat, also dismasted, far behind us, while all on board of her were employed in bailing out the water with which she seemed almost sinking. The curtain of mist that had hidden us from each other no sooner broke than they ceased their labors for a moment, and looking towards us, burst forth into a yell so wild, so savage, so dreadful, my very heart quailed as its cadence fell upon my ear.

"Safe, my boy," said Considine, clapping me on the shoulder, as he steered the boat forth from its narrow path of danger, and

once more reached the broad Shannon, – “safe, Charley; though we’ve had a brush for it.” In a minute more we reached the land, and drawing our gallant little craft on shore, set out for O’Malley Castle.

CHAPTER IX

THE RETURN

O'Malley Castle lay about four miles from the spot we landed at, and thither accordingly we bent our steps without loss of time. We had not, however, proceeded far, when, before us on the road, we perceived a mixed assemblage of horse and foot, hurrying along at a tremendous rate. The mob, which consisted of some hundred country people, were armed with sticks, scythes, and pitchforks, and although not preserving any very military aspect in their order of march, were still a force quite formidable enough to make us call a halt, and deliberate upon what we were to do.

"They've outflanked us, Charley," said Considine; "however, all is not yet lost. But see, they've got sight of us; here they come."

At these words, the vast mass before us came pouring along, splashing the mud on every side, and huzzaing like so many Indians. In the front ran a bare-legged boy, waving his cap to encourage the rest, who followed him at about fifty yards behind.

"Leave that fellow for me," said the count, coolly examining the lock of his pistol; "I'll pick him out, and load again in time for his friends' arrival. Charley, is that a gentleman I see far back in the crowd? Yes, to be sure it is? He's on a large horse

– now he's pressing forward; so let – no – oh – ay, it's Godfrey O'Malley himself, and these are our own people." Scarcely were the words out when a tremendous cheer arose from the multitude, who, recognizing us at the same instant, sprang from their horses and ran forward to welcome us. Among the foremost was the scarecrow leader, whom I at once perceived as poor Patsey, who, escaping in the morning, had returned at full speed to O'Malley Castle, and raised the whole country to my rescue. Before I could address one word to my faithful followers I was in my uncle's arms.

"Safe, my boy, quite safe?"

"Quite safe, sir."

"No scratch anywhere?"

"Nothing but a hat the worse, sir," said I, showing the two bullet-holes in my headpiece.

His lip quivered as he turned and whispered something into Considine's ear, which I heard not; but the count's reply was, "Devil a bit, as cool as you see him this minute."

"And Bodkin, what of him?"

"This day's work's his last," said Considine; "the ball entered here. But come along, Godfrey; Charley's new at this kind of thing, and we had better discuss matters in the house."

Half-an-hour's brisk trot – for we were soon supplied with horses – brought us back to the Castle, much to the disappointment of our cortege, who had been promised a *scrimmage*, and went back in very ill-humor at the breach of

contract.

The breakfast-room, as we entered, was filled with my uncle's supporters, all busily engaged over poll-books and booth tallies, in preparation for the eventful day of battle. These, however, were immediately thrown aside to hasten round me and inquire all the details of my duel. Considine, happily for me, however, assumed all the dignity of an historian, and recounted the events of the morning so much to my honor and glory, that I, who only a little before felt crushed and bowed down by the misery of my late duel, began, amidst the warm congratulations and eulogiums about me, to think I was no small hero, and in fact, something very much resembling "the man for Galway." To this feeling a circumstance that followed assisted in contributing. While we were eagerly discussing the various results likely to arise from the meeting, a horse galloped rapidly to the door and a loud voice called out, "I can't get off, but tell him to come here." We rushed out and beheld Captain Malowney, Mr. Bodkin's second, covered with mud from head to foot, and his horse reeking with foam and sweat. "I am hurrying on to Athlone for another doctor; but I've called to tell you that the wound is not supposed to be mortal, – he may recover yet." Without waiting for another word, he dashed spurs into his nag and rattled down the avenue at full gallop. Mr. Bodkin's dearest friend on earth could not have received the intelligence with more delight; and I now began to listen to the congratulations of my friends with a more tranquil spirit. My uncle, too, seemed much relieved by the information, and heard

with great good temper my narrative of the few days at Gurt-na-Morra. “So then,” said he, as I concluded, “my opponent is at least a gentleman; that is a comfort.”

“Sir George Dashwood,” said I, “from all I have seen, is a remarkably nice person, and I am certain you will meet with only the fair and legitimate opposition of an opposing candidate in him, – no mean or unmanly subterfuge.”

“All right, Charley. Well, now, your affair of this morning must keep you quiet for a few days, come what will; by Monday next, when the election takes place, Bodkin’s fate will be pretty clear, one way or the other, and if matters go well, you can come into town; otherwise, I have arranged with Considine to take you over to the Continent for a year or so; but we’ll discuss all this in the evening. Now I must start on a canvass. Boyle expects to meet you at dinner to-day; he is coming from Athlone on purpose. Now, good-by!”

When my uncle had gone, I sank into a chair and fell into a musing fit over all the changes a few hours had wrought in me. From a mere boy whose most serious employment was stocking the house with game or inspecting the kennel, I had sprung at once into man’s estate, was complimented for my coolness, praised for my prowess, lauded for my discretion, by those who were my seniors by nearly half a century; talked to in a tone of confidential intimacy by my uncle, and, in a word, treated in all respects as an equal, – and such was all the work of a few hours. But so it is; the eras in life are separated by a narrow

boundary, – some trifling accident, some casual *rencontre* impels us across the Rubicon, and we pass from infancy to youth, from youth to manhood, from manhood to age, less by the slow and imperceptible step of time than by some one decisive act or passion which, occurring at a critical moment, elicits a long latent feeling, and impresses our existence with a color that tinges us for many a long year. As for me, I had cut the tie which bound me to the careless gayety of boyhood with a rude gash. In three short days I had fallen deeply, desperately in love, and had wounded, if not killed, an antagonist in a duel. As I meditated on these things, I was aroused by the noise of horses' feet in the yard beneath. I opened the window and beheld no less a person than Captain Hammersley. He was handing a card to a servant, which he was accompanying by a verbal message; the impression of something like hostility on the part of the captain had never left my mind, and I hastened down-stairs just in time to catch him as he turned from the door.

"Ah, Mr. O'Malley!" said he, in a most courteous tone. "They told me you were not at home."

I apologized for the blunder, and begged of him to alight and come in.

"I thank you very much, but, in fact, my hours are now numbered here. I have just received an order to join my regiment; we have been ordered for service, and Sir George has most kindly permitted my giving up my staff appointment. I could not, however, leave the country without shaking hands with you. I

owe you a lesson in horsemanship, and I'm only sorry that we are not to have another day together."

"Then you are going out to the Peninsula?" said I.

"Why, we hope so; the commander-in-chief, they say, is in great want of cavalry, and we scarcely less in want of something to do. I'm sorry you are not coming with us."

"Would to Heaven I were!" said I, with an earnestness that almost made my brain start.

"Then, why not?"

"Unfortunately, I am peculiarly situated. My worthy uncle, who is all to me in this world, would be quite alone if I were to leave him; and although he has never said so, I know he dreads the possibility of my suggesting such a thing to him: so that, between his fears and mine, the matter is never broached by either party, nor do I think ever can be."

"Devilish hard – but I believe you are right; something, however, may turn up yet to alter his mind, and if so, and if you do take to dragooning, don't forget George Hammersley will be always most delighted to meet you; and so good-by, O'Malley, good-by."

He turned his horse's head and was already some paces off, when he returned to my side, and in a lower tone of voice said, —

"I ought to mention to you that there has been much discussion on your affair at Blake's table, and only one opinion on the matter among all parties, – that you acted perfectly right. Sir George Dashwood, – no mean judge of such things, – quite approves of

your conduct, and, I believe, wishes you to know as much; and now, once more, good-by."

CHAPTER X

THE ELECTION

The important morning at length arrived, and as I looked from my bed-room window at daybreak, the crowd of carriages of all sorts and shapes decorated with banners and placards; the incessant bustle; the hurrying hither and thither; the cheering as each new detachment of voters came up, mounted on jaunting-cars, or on horses whose whole caparison consisted in a straw rope for a bridle, and a saddle of the same frail material, – all informed me that the election day was come. I lost no further time, but proceeded to dress with all possible despatch. When I appeared in the breakfast-room, it was already filled with some seventy or eighty persons of all ranks and ages, mingled confusedly together, and enjoying the hospitable fare of my uncle's house, while they discussed all the details and prospects of the election. In the hall, the library, the large drawing-room, too, similar parties were also assembled, and as newcomers arrived, the servants were busy in preparing tables before the door and up the large terrace that ran the entire length of the building. Nothing could be more amusing than the incongruous mixture of the guests, who, with every variety of

eatable that chance or inclination provided, were thus thrown into close contact, having only this in common, – the success of the cause they were engaged in. Here was the old Galway squire, with an ancestry that reached to Noah, sitting side by side with the poor cotter, whose whole earthly possession was what, in Irish phrase, is called a "potato garden," – meaning the exactly smallest possible patch of ground out of which a very Indian-rubber conscience could presume to vote. Here sat the old simple-minded, farmer-like man, in close conversation with a little white-foreheaded, keen-eyed personage, in a black coat and eye-glass, – a flash attorney from Dublin, learned in flaws of the registry, and deep in the subtleties of election law. There was an Athlone horse-dealer, whose habitual daily practices in imposing the halt, the lame, and the blind upon the unsuspecting, for beasts of blood and mettle, well qualified him for the trickery of a county contest. Then there were scores of squireen gentry, easily recognized on common occasions by a green coat, brass buttons, dirty cords, and dirtier top-boots, a lash-whip, and a half-bred fox-hound; but now, fresh-washed for the day, they presented something the appearance of a swell mob, adjusted to the meridian of Galway. A mass of frieze-coated, brow-faced, bullet-headed peasantry filled up the large spaces, dotted here and there with a sleek, roguish-eyed priest, or some low electioneering agent detailing, for the amusement of the company, some of those cunning practices of former times which if known to the proper authorities would in all

likelihood cause the talented narrator to be improving the soil of Sidney, or fishing on the banks of the Swan river; while at the head and foot of each table sat some personal friend of my uncle, whose ready tongue, and still readier pistol, made him a personage of some consequence, not more to his own people than to the enemy. While of such material were the company, the fare before them was no less varied: here some rubicund squire was deep in amalgamating the contents of a venison pasty with some of Sneyd's oldest claret; his neighbor, less ambitious, and less erudite in such matters, was devouring rashers of bacon, with liberal potations of potteen; some pale-cheeked scion of the law, with all the dust of the Four Courts in his throat, was sipping his humble beverage of black tea beside four sturdy cattle-dealers from Ballinasloe, who were discussing hot whiskey punch and *spoleaion* (boiled beef) at the very primitive hour of eight in the morning. Amidst the clank of decanters, the crash of knives and plates, and the jingling of glasses, the laughter and voices of the guests were audibly increasing; and the various modes of "running a buck" (*Anglicé*, substituting a vote), or hunting a badger, were talked over on all sides, while the price of a *veal* (a calf), or a voter, was disputed with all the energy of debate.

Refusing many an offered place, I went through the different rooms in search of Considine, to whom circumstances of late had somehow greatly attached me.

"Here, Charley," cried a voice I was very familiar with, – "here's a place I've been keeping for you."

"Ah, Sir Harry, how do you do? Any of that grouse-pie to spare?"

"Abundance, my boy; but I'm afraid I can't say as much for the liquor. I have been shouting for claret this half-hour in vain, – do get us some nutriment down here, and the Lord will reward you. What a pity it is," he added, in a lower tone, to his neighbor – "what a pity a quart-bottle won't hold a quart; but I'll bring it before the House one of these days." That he kept his word in this respect, a motion on the books of the Honorable House will bear me witness.

"Is this it?" said he, turning towards a farmer-like old man, who had put some question to him across the table; "is it the apple-pie you'll have?"

"Many thanks to your honor, – I'd like it, av it was wholesome."

"And why shouldn't it be wholesome?" said Sir Harry.

"Troth, then, myself does not know; but my father, I heerd tell, died of an apple-plexy, and I'm afeerd of it."

I at length found Considine, and learned that, as a very good account of Bodkin had arrived, there was no reason why I should not proceed to the hustings; but I was secretly charged not to take any prominent part in the day's proceedings. My uncle I only saw for an instant, – he begged me to be careful, avoid all scrapes, and not to quit Considine. It was past ten o'clock when our formidable procession got under way, and headed towards the town of Galway. The road was, for miles, crowded with

our followers; banners flying and music playing, we presented something of the spectacle of a very ragged army on its march. At every cross-road a mountain-path reinforcement awaited us, and as we wended along, our numbers were momentarily increasing; here and there along the line, some energetic and not over-sober adherent was regaling his auditory with a speech in laudation of the O'Malleys since the days of Moses, and more than one priest was heard threatening the terrors of his Church in aid of a cause to whose success he was pledged and bound. I rode beside the count, who, surrounded by a group of choice spirits, recounted the various happy inventions by which he had, on divers occasions, substituted a personal quarrel for a contest. Boyle also contributed his share of election anecdote, and one incident he related, which, I remember, amused me much at the time.

"Do you remember Billy Calvert, that came down to contest Kilkenny?" inquired Sir Harry.

"What, ever forget him!" said Considine, "with his well-powdered wig and his hessians. There never was his equal for lace ruffles and rings."

"You never heard, may be, how he lost the election?"

"He resigned, I believe, or something of that sort."

"No, no," said another; "he never came forward at all. There's some secret in it; for Tom Butler was elected without a contest."

"Jack, I'll tell you how it happened. I was on my way up from Cork, having finished my own business, and just carried the

day, not without a push for it. When we reached, – Lady Mary was with me, – when we reached Kilkenny, the night before the election, I was not ten minutes in town till Butler heard of it, and sent off express to see me; I was at my dinner when the messenger came, and promised to go over when I'd done. But faith, Tom didn't wait, but came rushing up-stairs himself, and dashed into the room in the greatest hurry.

"'Harry,' says he, 'I'm done for; the corporation of free smiths, that were always above bribery, having voted for myself and my father before, for four pounds ten a man, won't come forward under six guineas and whiskey. Calvert has the money; they know it. The devil a farthing we have; and we've been paying all our fellows that can't read in Hennesy's notes, and you know the bank's broke this three weeks.'

"On he went, giving me a most disastrous picture of his cause, and concluded by asking if I could suggest anything under the circumstances.

"'You couldn't get a decent mob and clear the poll?'

"'I am afraid not,' said he, despondingly.

"'Then I don't see what's to be done, if you can't pick a fight with himself. Will he go out?'

"'Lord knows! They say he's so afraid of that, that it has prevented him coming down till the very day. But he is arrived now; he came in the evening, and is stopping at Walsh's in Patrick Street.'

"'Then I'll see what can be done,' said I.

"'Is that Calvert, the little man that blushes when the Lady-Lieutenant speaks to him?' said Lady Mary.

"'The very man.'

"'Would it be of any use to you if he could not come on the hustings to-morrow?' said she, again.

""Twould gain us the day. Half the voters don't believe he's here at all, and his chief agent cheated all the people on the last election; and if Calvert didn't appear, he wouldn't have ten votes to register. But why do you ask?'

"'Why, that, if you like, I'll bet you a pair of diamond ear-rings he sha'n't show.'

"'Done!' said Butler. 'And I promise a necklace into the bargain, if you win; but I'm afraid you're only quizzing me.'

"'Here's my hand on it,' said she. 'And now let's talk of something else.'"

As Lady Mary never asked my assistance, and as I knew she was very well able to perform whatever she undertook, you may be sure I gave myself very little trouble about the whole affair; and when they came, I went off to breakfast with Tom's committee, not knowing anything that was to be done.

Calvert had given orders that he was to be called at eight o'clock, and so a few minutes before that time a gentle knock came to the door.

'Come in,' said he, thinking it was the waiter, and covering himself up in the clothes; for he was the most bashful creature ever was seen, – 'come in.'

The door opened, and what was his horror to find that a lady entered in her dressing-gown, her hair on her shoulders, very much tossed and dishevelled. The moment she came in, she closed the door and locked it, and then sat leisurely down upon a chair.

Billy's teeth chattered, and his limbs trembled; for this was an adventure of a very novel kind for him. At last he took courage to speak.

'I am afraid, madam,' said he, 'that you are under some unhappy mistake, and that you suppose this chamber is – '

'Mr. Calvert's,' said the lady, with a solemn voice, 'is it not?'

'Yes, madam, I am that person.'

'Thank God!' said the lady, with a very impressive tone. 'Here I am safe.'

Billy grew very much puzzled at these words; but hoping that by his silence the lady would proceed to some explanation, he said no more. She, however, seemed to think that nothing further was necessary, and sat still and motionless, with her hands before her and her eyes fixed on Billy.

'"You seem to forget me, sir?' said she, with a faint smile.

'"I do, indeed, madam; the half-light, the novelty of your costume, and the strangeness of the circumstance altogether must plead for me, if I appear rude enough.'

'"I am Lady Mary Boyle,' said she.

'"I do remember you, madam; but may I ask – '

'"Yes, yes; I know what you would ask. You would say, Why

are you here? How comes it that you have so far outstepped the propriety of which your whole life is an example, that alone, at such a time, you appear in the chamber of a man whose character for gallantry – '

"'Oh, indeed – indeed, my lady, nothing of the kind!'

"'Ah, alas! poor defenceless women learn, too late, how constantly associated is the retiring modesty which decries, with the pleasing powers which ensure success – '

"Here she sobbed, Billy blushed, and the clock struck nine.

"'May I then beg, madam – '

"'Yes, yes, you shall hear it all; but my poor scattered faculties will not be the clearer by your hurrying me. You know, perhaps,' continued she, 'that my maiden name was Rogers?' He of the blankets bowed, and she resumed, 'It is now eighteen years since, that a young, unsuspecting, fond creature, reared in all the care and fondness of doting parents, tempted her first step in life, and trusted her fate to another's keeping. I am that unhappy person; the other, that monster in human guise that smiled but to betray, that won but to ruin and destroy, is he whom you know as Sir Harry Boyle.'

"Here she sobbed for some minutes, wiped her eyes, and resumed her narrative. Beginning at the period of her marriage, she detailed a number of circumstances in which poor Calvert, in all his anxiety to come *au fond* at matters, could never perceive bore upon the question in any way; but as she recounted them all with great force and precision, entreating him to bear in mind

certain circumstances to which she should recur by and by, his attention was kept on the stretch, and it was only when the clock struck ten that he was fully aware how his morning was passing, and what surmises his absence might originate.

"'May I interrupt you for a moment, dear madam? Was it nine or ten o'clock which struck last?'

"'How should I know?' said she, frantically. 'What are hours and minutes to her who has passed long years of misery?'

"'Very true, very true,' replied he, timidly, and rather fearing for the intellect of his fair companion.

She continued. The narrative, however, so far from becoming clearer, grew gradually more confused and intricate; and as frequent references were made by the lady to some previous statement, Calvert was more than once rebuked for forgetfulness and inattention, where in reality nothing less than short-hand could have borne him through.

"'Was it in '93 I said that Sir Harry left me at Tuam?'

"'Upon my life, madam, I am afraid to aver; but it strikes me – '

"'Gracious powers! and this is he whom I fondly trusted to make the depository of my woes! Cruel, cruel man!'

"Here she sobbed considerably for several minutes, and spoke not. A loud cheer of 'Butler forever!' from the mob without now burst upon their hearing, and recalled poor Calvert at once to the thought that the hours were speeding fast and no prospect of the everlasting tale coming to an end.

"'I am deeply, most deeply grieved, my dear madam,' said the little man, sitting up in a pyramid of blankets; 'but hours, minutes, are most precious to me this morning. I am about to be proposed as member for Kilkenny.'

"At these words the lady straightened her figure out, threw her arms at either side, and burst into a fit of laughter which poor Calvert knew at once to be hysterics. Here was a pretty situation! The bell-rope lay against the opposite wall; and even if it did not, would he be exactly warranted in pulling it?

"'May the devil and all his angels take Sir Harry Boyle and his whole connection to the fifth generation!' was his sincere prayer as he sat like a Chinese juggler under his canopy.

"At length the violence of the paroxysm seemed to subside; the sobs became less frequent, the kicking less forcible, and the lady's eyes closed, and she appeared to have fallen asleep.

"'Now is the moment,' said Billy. 'If I could only get as far as my dressing-gown.' So saying, he worked himself down noiselessly to the foot of his bed, looked fixedly at the fallen lids of the sleeping lady, and essayed one leg from the blanket. 'Now or never,' said he, pushing aside the curtain and preparing for a spring. One more look he cast at his companion, and then leaped forth; but just as he lit upon the floor she again roused herself, screaming with horror. Billy fell upon the bed, and rolling himself in the bedclothes, vowed never to rise again till she was out of the visible horizon.

"'What is all this? What do you mean, sir?' said the lady,

reddening with indignation.

"'Nothing, upon my soul, madam; it was only my dressing-gown.'

"'Your dressing-gown!' said she, with an emphasis worthy of Siddons; 'a likely story for Sir Harry to believe, sir! Fie, fie, sir!'

"This last allusion seemed a settler; for the luckless Calvert heaved a profound sigh, and sunk down as if all hope had left him. 'Butler forever!' roared the mob. 'Calvert forever!' cried a boy's voice from without. 'Three groans for the runaway!' answered this announcement; and a very tender inquiry of, 'Where is he?' was raised by some hundred mouths.

"'Madam,' said the almost frantic listener, – 'madam, I must get up! I must dress! I beg of you to permit me!'

"'I have nothing to refuse, sir. Alas, disdain has long been my only portion! Get up, if you will.'

"'But,' said the astonished man, who was well-nigh deranged at the coolness of this reply, – 'but how am I to do so if you sit there?'

"'Sorry for any inconvenience I may cause you; but in the crowded state of the hotel I hope you see the impropriety of my walking about the passages in this costume?'

"'And, great God! madam, why did you come out in it?'

"A cheer from the mob prevented her reply being audible. One o'clock tolled out from the great bell of the cathedral.

"'There's one o'clock, as I live!'

"'I heard it,' said the lady.

"'The shouts are increasing. What is that I hear? "Butler is in!" Gracious mercy! is the election over?'

"The lady stepped to the window, drew aside the curtain, and said, 'Indeed, it would appear so. The mob are cheering Mr. Butler.' A deafening shout burst from the street. 'Perhaps you'd like to see the fun, so I'll not detain you any longer. So, good-by, Mr. Calvert; and as your breakfast will be cold, in all likelihood, come down to No. 4, for Sir Harry's a late man, and will be glad to see you.'"

CHAPTER XI

AN ADVENTURE

As thus we lightened the road with chatting, the increasing concourse of people, and the greater throng of carriages that filled the road, announced that we had nearly reached our destination.

"Considine," said my uncle, riding up to where we were, "I have just got a few lines from Davern. It seems Bodkin's people are afraid to come in; they know what they must expect, and if so, more than half of that barony is lost to our opponent."

"Then he has no chance whatever."

"He never had, in my opinion," said Sir Harry.

"We'll see soon," said my uncle, cheerfully, and rode to the post.

The remainder of the way was occupied in discussing the various possibilities of the election, into which I was rejoiced to find that defeat never entered.

In the goodly days I speak of, a county contest was a very different thing indeed from the tame and insipid farce that now passes under that name: where a briefless barrister, bullied by both sides, sits as assessor; a few drunken voters, a radical

O'Connellite grocer, a demagogue priest, a deputy grand-purple-something from the Trinity College lodge, with some half-dozen followers, shouting, "To the Devil with Peel!" or "Down with Dens!" form the whole *corp-de-ballet*. No, no; in the times I refer to the voters were some thousands in number, and the adverse parties took the field, far less dependent for success upon previous pledge or promise made them than upon the actual stratagem of the day. Each went forth, like a general to battle, surrounded by a numerous and well-chosen staff, – one party of friends, acting as commissariat, attended to the victualling of the voters, that they obtained a due, or rather undue allowance of liquor, and came properly drunk to the poll; others, again, broke into skirmishing parties, and scattered over the country, cut off the enemy's supplies, breaking down their post-chaises, upsetting their jaunting-cars, stealing their poll-books, and kidnapping their agents. Then there were secret-service people, bribing the enemy and enticing them to desert; and lastly, there was a species of sapper-and-miner force, who invented false documents, denied the identity of the opposite party's people, and when hard pushed, provided persons who took bribes from the enemy, and gave evidence afterwards on a petition. Amidst all these encounters of wit and ingenuity, the personal friends of the candidate formed a species of rifle brigade, picking out the enemy's officers, and doing sore damage to their tactics by shooting a proposer or wounding a seconder, – a considerable portion of every leading agent's fee being intended

as compensation for the duels he might, could, would, should, or ought to fight during the election. Such, in brief, was a contest in the olden time. And when it is taken into consideration that it usually lasted a fortnight or three weeks; that a considerable military force was always engaged (for our Irish law permits this), and which, when nothing pressing was doing, was regularly assailed by both parties; that far more dependence was placed in a bludgeon than a pistol; and that the man who registered a vote without a cracked pate was regarded as a kind of natural phenomenon, – some faint idea may be formed how much such a scene must have contributed to the peace of the county, and the happiness and welfare of all concerned in it.

As we rode along, a loud cheer from a road that ran parallel to the one we were pursuing attracted our attention, and we perceived that the cortége of the opposite party was hastening on to the hustings. I could distinguish the Blake girls on horseback among a crowd of officers in undress, and saw something like a bonnet in the carriage-and-four which headed the procession, and which I judged to be that of Sir George Dashwood. My heart beat strongly as I strained my eyes to see if Miss Dashwood was there; but I could not discern her, and it was with a sense of relief that I reflected on the possibility of our not meeting under circumstances wherein our feelings and interests were so completely opposed. While I was engaged in making this survey, I had accidentally dropped behind my companions; my eyes were firmly fixed upon that carriage, and in the faint hope that it

contained the object of all my wishes, I forgot everything else. At length the cortége entered the town, and passing beneath a heavy stone gateway, was lost to my view. I was still lost in revery, when an under-agent of my uncle's rode up.

"Oh, Master Charles!" said he, "what's to be done? They've forgotten Mr. Holmes at Woodford, and we haven't a carriage, chaise, or even a car left to send for him."

"Have you told Mr. Considine?" inquired I.

"And sure you know yourself how little Mr. Considine thinks of a lawyer. It's small comfort he'd give me if I went to tell him. If it was a case of pistols or a bullet mould he'd ride back the whole way himself for them."

"Try Sir Harry Boyle, then."

"He's making a speech this minute before the court-house."

This had sufficed to show me how far behind my companions I had been loitering, when a cheer from the distant road again turned my eyes in that direction; it was the Dashwood carriage returning after leaving Sir George at the hustings. The head of the britska, before thrown open, was now closed, and I could not make out if any one were inside.

"Devil a doubt of it," said the agent, in answer to some question of a farmer who rode beside him; "will you stand to me?"

"Troth, to be sure I will."

"Here goes, then," said he, gathering up his reins and turning his horse towards the fence at the roadside; "follow me now,

boys."

The order was well obeyed; for when he had cleared the ditch, a dozen stout country fellows, well mounted, were beside him. Away they went, at a hunting pace, taking every leap before them, and heading towards the road before us.

Without thinking further of the matter, I was laughing at the droll effect the line of frieze coats presented as they rode side by side over the stone-walls, when an observation near me aroused my attention.

"Ah, then, av they know anything of Tim Finucane, they'll give it up peaceably; it's little he'd think of taking the coach from under the judge himself."

"What are they about, boys?" said I.

"Goin' to take the chaise-and-four forninst ye, yer honor," said the man.

I waited not to hear more, but darting spurs into my horse's sides, cleared the fence in one bound. My horse, a strong-knit half-breed, was as fast as a racer for a short distance; so that when the agent and his party had come up with the carriage, I was only a few hundred yards behind. I shouted out with all my might, but they either heard not or heeded not, for scarcely was the first man over the fence into the road when the postilion on the leader was felled to the ground, and his place supplied by his slayer; the boy on the wheeler shared the same fate, and in an instant, so well managed was the attack, the carriage was in possession of the assailants. Four stout fellows had climbed into the box and the

rumble, and six others were climbing to the interior, regardless of the aid of steps. By this time the Dashwood party had got the alarm, and returned in full force, not, however, before the other had laid whip to the horses and set out in full gallop; and now commenced the most terrific race I ever witnessed.

The four carriage-horses, which were the property of Sir George, were English thorough-breds of great value, and, totally unaccustomed to the treatment they experienced, dashed forward at a pace that threatened annihilation to the carriage at every bound. The pursuers, though well mounted, were speedily distanced, but followed at a pace that in the end was certain to overtake the carriage. As for myself, I rode on beside the road at the full speed of my horse, shouting, cursing, imploring, execrating, and beseeching at turns, but all in vain; the yells and shouts of the pursuers and pursued drowned all other sounds, except when the thundering crash of the horses' feet rose above all. The road, like most western Irish roads until the present century, lay straight as an arrow for miles, regardless of every opposing barrier, and in the instance in question, crossed a mountain at its very highest point. Towards this pinnacle the pace had been tremendous; but owing to the higher breeding of the cattle, the carriage party had still the advance, and when they reached the top they proclaimed the victory by a cheer of triumph and derision. The carriage disappeared beneath the crest of the mountain, and the pursuers halted as if disposed to relinquish the chase.

"Come on, boys; never give up," cried I, springing over into the road, and heading the party to which by every right I was opposed.

It was no time for deliberation, and they followed me with a hearty cheer that convinced me I was unknown. The next instant we were on the mountain top, and beheld the carriage half way down beneath us, still galloping at full stretch.

"We have them now," said a voice behind me; "they'll never turn Lurra Bridge, if we only press on."

The speaker was right; the road at the mountain foot turned at a perfect right angle, and then crossed a lofty one-arched bridge over a mountain torrent that ran deep and boisterously beneath. On we went, gaining at every stride; for the fellows who rode postilion well knew what was before them, and slackened their pace to secure a safe turning. A yell of victory arose from the pursuers, but was answered by the others with a cheer of defiance. The space was now scarcely two hundred yards between us, when the head of the britska was flung down, and a figure that I at once recognized as the redoubted Tim Finucane, one of the boldest and most reckless fellows in the county, was seen standing on the seat, holding, – gracious Heavens! it was true, – holding in his arms the apparently lifeless figure of Miss Dashwood.

"Hold in!" shouted the ruffian, with a voice that rose high above all the other sounds. "Hold in! or by the Eternal, I'll throw her, body and bones, into the Lurra Gash!" for such was the

torrent called that boiled and foamed a few yards before us.

He had by this time got firmly planted on the hind seat, and held the drooping form on one arm with all the ease of a giant's grasp.

"For the love of God!" said I, "pull up. I know him well; he'll do it to a certainty if you press on."

"And we know you, too," said a ruffianly fellow, with a dark whisker meeting beneath his chin, "and have some scores to settle ere we part – "

But I heard no more. With one tremendous effort I dashed my horse forward. The carriage turned an angle of the road, for an instant was out of sight, another moment I was behind it.

"Stop!" I shouted, with a last effort, but in vain. The horses, maddened and infuriated, sprang forward, and heedless of all efforts to turn them the leaders sprang over the low parapet of the bridge, and hanging for a second by the traces, fell with a crash into the swollen torrent beneath. By this time I was beside the carriage. Finucane had now clambered to the box, and regardless of the death and ruin around, bent upon his murderous object, he lifted the light and girlish form above his head, bent backwards as if to give greater impulse to his effort, when, twining my lash around my wrist, I levelled my heavy and loaded hunting-whip at his head. The weighted ball of lead struck him exactly beneath his hat; he staggered, his hands relaxed, and he fell lifeless to the ground; the same instant I was felled to the earth by a blow from behind, and saw no more.

CHAPTER XII

MICKEY FREE

Nearly three weeks followed the event I have just narrated ere I again was restored to consciousness. The blow by which I was felled – from what hand coming it was never after discovered – had brought on concussion of the brain, and for several days my life was despaired of. As by slow steps I advanced towards recovery, I learned from Considine that Miss Dashwood, whose life was saved by my interference, had testified, in the warmest manner, her gratitude, and that Sir George had, up to the period of his leaving the country, never omitted a single day to ride over and inquire for me.

"You know, of course," said the count, supposing such news was the most likely to interest me, – "you know we beat them?"

"No. Pray tell me all. They've not let me hear anything hitherto."

"One day finished the whole affair. We polled man for man till past two o'clock, when our fellows lost all patience and beat their tallies out of the town. The police came up, but they beat the police; then they got soldiers, but, begad, they were too strong for them, too. Sir George witnessed it all, and knowing besides how

little chance he had of success, deemed it best to give in; so that a little before five o'clock he resigned. I must say no man could behave better. He came across the hustings and shook hands with Godfrey; and as the news of the *scrimmage* with his daughter had just arrived, said that he was sorry his prospect of success had not been greater, that in resigning he might testify how deeply he felt the debt the O'Malleys had laid him under."

"And my uncle, how did he receive his advances?"

"Like his own honest self, – grasped his hand firmly; and upon my soul, I think he was half sorry that he gained the day. Do you know, he took a mighty fancy to that blue-eyed daughter of the old general's. Faith, Charley, if he was some twenty years younger, I would not say but – Come, come, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings; but I have been staying here too long. I'll send up Mickey to sit with you. Mind and don't be talking too much to him."

So saying, the worthy count left the room fully impressed that in hinting at the possibility of my uncle's marrying again, he had said something to ruffle my temper.

For the next two or three weeks my life was one of the most tiresome monotony. Strict injunctions had been given by the doctors to avoid exciting me; and consequently, every one that came in walked on tiptoe, spoke in whispers, and left me in five minutes. Reading was absolutely forbidden; and with a sombre half-light to sit in, and chicken broth to support nature, I dragged out as dreary an existence as any gentleman west of Athlone.

Whenever my uncle or Considine were not in the room, my companion was my own servant, Michael, or as he was better known, "Mickey Free." Now, had Mickey been left to his own free and unrestricted devices, the time would not have hung so heavily; for among Mike's manifold gifts he was possessed of a very great flow of gossiping conversation. He knew all that was doing in the county, and never was barren in his information wherever his imagination could come into play. Mickey was the best hurler in the barony, no mean performer on the violin, could dance the national bolero of "Tatter Jack Walsh" in a way that charmed more than one soft heart beneath a red woolsey bodice, and had, withal, the peculiar free-and-easy devil-may-care kind of off-hand Irish way that never deserted him in the midst of his wiliest and most subtle moments, giving to a very deep and cunning fellow all the apparent frankness and openness of a country lad.

He had attached himself to me as a kind of sporting companion; and growing daily more and more useful, had been gradually admitted to the honors of the kitchen and the prerogatives of cast clothes, without ever having been actually engaged as a servant; and while thus no warrant officer, as, in fact, he discharged all his duties well and punctually, was rated among the ship's company, though no one could say at what precise period he changed his caterpillar existence and became the gay butterfly with cords and tops, a striped vest, and a most knowing jerry hat who stalked about the stable-yard and bullied

the helpers. Such was Mike. He had made his fortune, such as it was, and had a most becoming pride in the fact that he made himself indispensable to an establishment which, before he entered it, never knew the want of him. As for me, he was everything to me. Mike informed me what horse was wrong, why the chestnut mare couldn't go out, and why the black horse could. He knew the arrival of a new covey of partridge quicker than the "Morning Post" does of a noble family from the Continent, and could tell their whereabouts twice as accurately. But his talents took a wider range than field sports afford, and he was the faithful chronicler of every wake, station, wedding, or christening for miles round; and as I took no small pleasure in those very national pastimes, the information was of great value to me. To conclude this brief sketch, Mike was a devout Catholic in the same sense that he was enthusiastic about anything, – that is, he believed and obeyed exactly as far as suited his own peculiar notions of comfort and happiness. Beyond *that*, his scepticism stepped in and saved him from inconvenience; and though he might have been somewhat puzzled to reduce his faith to a rubric, still it answered his purpose, and that was all he wanted. Such, in short, was my valet, Mickey Free, and who, had not heavy injunctions been laid on him as to silence and discretion, would well have lightened my weary hours.

"Ah, then, Misther Charles!" said he, with a half-suppressed yawn at the long period of probation his tongue had been undergoing in silence, – "ah, then, but ye were mighty near it!"

"Near what?" said I.

"Faith, then, myself doesn't well know. Some say it's purgathory; but it's hard to tell."

"I thought you were too good a Catholic, Mickey, to show any doubts on the matter?"

"May be I am; may be I ain't," was the cautious reply.

"Wouldn't Father Roach explain any of your difficulties for you, if you went over to him?"

"Faix, it's little I'd mind his explainings."

"And why not?"

"Easy enough. If you ax ould Miles there, without, what does he be doing with all the powther and shot, wouldn't he tell you he's shooting the rooks, and the magpies, and some other varmint? But myself knows he sells it to Widow Casey, at two-and-fourpence a pound; so belikes, Father Roach may be shooting away at the poor souls in purgathory, that all this time are enjoying the hoith of fine living in heaven, ye understand."

"And you think that's the way of it, Mickey?"

"Troth, it's likely. Anyhow, I know its not the place they make it out."

"Why, how do you mean?"

"Well, then, I'll tell you, Misther Charles; but you must not be saying anything about it afther, for I don't like to talk about these kind of things."

Having pledged myself to the requisite silence and secrecy, Mickey began: —

"May be you heard tell of the way my father, rest his soul wherever he is, came to his end. Well, I needn't mind particulars, but, in short, he was murdered in Ballinasloe one night, when he was baitin' the whole town with a blackthorn stick he had; more by token, a piece of a scythe was stuck at the end of it, – a nate weapon, and one he was mighty partial to; but those murdering thieves, the cattle-dealers, that never cared for diversion of any kind, fell on him and broke his skull.

"Well, we had a very agreeable wake, and plenty of the best of everything, and to spare, and I thought it was all over; but somehow, though I paid Father Roach fifteen shillings, and made him mighty drunk, he always gave me a black look wherever I met him, and when I took off my hat, he'd turn away his head displeased like.

"'Murder and ages,' says I, 'what's this for?' But as I've a light heart, I bore up, and didn't think more about it. One day, however, I was coming home from Athlone market, by myself on the road, when Father Roach overtook me. 'Devil a one a me 'ill take any notice of you now,' says I, 'and we'll see what'll come out of it.' So the priest rid up and looked me straight in the face.

"'Mickey,' says he, – 'Mickey.'

"'Father,' says I.

"'Is it that way you salute your clargy,' says he, 'with your caubeen on your head?'

"'Faix,' says I, 'it's little ye mind whether it's an or aff; for you never take the trouble to say, "By your leave," or "Damn your

soul!" or any other politeness when we meet.'

"'You're an ungrateful creature,' says he; 'and if you only knew, you'd be trembling in your skin before me, this minute.'

"'Devil a tremble,' says I, 'after walking six miles this way.'

"'You're an obstinate, hard-hearted sinner,' says he; 'and it's no use in telling you.'

"'Telling me what?' says I; for I was getting curious to make out what he meant.

"'Mickey,' says he, changing his voice, and putting his head down close to me, – 'Mickey, I saw your father last night.'

"'The saints be merciful to us!' said I, 'did ye?'

"'I did,' says he.

"'Tear an ages,' says I, 'did he tell you what he did with the new corduroys he bought in the fair?'

"'Oh, then, you are a could-hearted creature!' says he, 'and I'll not lose time with you.' With that he was going to ride away, when I took hold of the bridle.

"'Father, darling,' says I, 'God pardon me, but them breeches is goin' between me an' my night's rest; but tell me about my father?'

"'Oh, then, he's in a melancholy state!'

"'Whereabouts is he?' says I.

"'In purgathory,' says he; 'but he won't be there long.'

"'Well,' says I, 'that's a comfort, anyhow.'

"'I am glad you think so,' says he; 'but there's more of the other opinion.'

"'What's *that?*' says I.

"'That hell's worse.'

"'Oh, melia-murther!' says I, 'is that it?'

"'Ay, that's it.'

"Well, I was so terrified and frightened, I said nothing for some time, but trotted along beside the priest's horse.

"'Father,' says I, 'how long will it be before they send him where you know?'

"'It will not be long now,' says he, 'for they're tired entirely with him; they've no peace night or day,' says he. 'Mickey, your father is a mighty hard man.'

"'True for you, Father Roach,' says I to myself; 'av he had only the ould stick with the scythe in it, I wish them joy of his company.'

"'Mickey,' says he, 'I see you're grieved, and I don't wonder; sure, it's a great disgrace to a decent family.'

"'Troth, it is,' says I; 'but my father always liked low company. Could nothing be done for him now, Father Roach?' says I, looking up in the priest's face.

"'I'm greatly afraid, Mickey, he was a bad man, a very bad man.'

"'And ye think he'll go there?' says I.

"'Indeed, Mickey, I have my fears.'

"'Upon my conscience,' says I, 'I believe you're right; he was always a restless crayture.'

"'But it doesn't depind on him,' says the priest, crossly.

"'And, then, who then?' says I.

"'Upon yourself, Mickey Free,' says he, 'God pardon you for it, too!'

"'Upon me?' says I.

"'Troth, no less,' says he; 'how many Masses was said for your father's soul; how many Aves; how many Paters? Answer me.'

"'Devil a one of me knows! – may be twenty.'

"'Twenty, twenty! – no, nor one.'

"'And why not?' says I; 'what for wouldn't you be helping a poor crayture out of trouble, when it wouldn't cost you more nor a handful of prayers?'

"'Mickey, I see,' says he, in a solemn tone, 'you're worse nor a haythen; but ye couldn't be other, ye never come to yer duties.'

"'Well, Father,' says I, Looking very penitent, 'how many Masses would get him out?'

"'Now you talk like a sensible man,' says he. 'Now, Mickey, I've hopes for you. Let me see,' here he went countin' upon his fingers, and numberin' to himself for five minutes. 'Mickey,' says he, 'I've a batch coming out on Tuesday week, and if you were to make great exertions, perhaps your father could come with them; that is, av they have made no objections.'

"'And what for would they?' says I; 'he was always the hoith of company, and av singing's allowed in them parts – '

"'God forgive you, Mickey, but yer in a benighted state,' says he, sighing.

"'Well,' says I, 'how'll we get him out on Tuesday week? For

that's bringing things to a focus.'

"'Two Masses in the morning, fastin',' says Father Roach, half aloud, 'is two, and two in the afternoon is four, and two at vespers is six,' says he; 'six Masses a day for nine days is close by sixty Masses, – say sixty,' says he; 'and they'll cost you – mind, Mickey, and don't be telling it again, for it's only to yourself I'd make them so cheap – a matter of three pounds.'

"'Three pounds!' says I; 'be-gorra ye might as well ax me to give you the rock of Cashel.'

"'I'm sorry for ye, Mickey,' says he, gatherin' up the reins to ride off, – 'I'm sorry for ye; and the time will come when the neglect of your poor father will be a sore stroke agin yourself.'

"'Wait a bit, your reverence,' says I, – 'wait a bit. Would forty shillings get him out?'

"'Av course it wouldn't,' says he.

"'May be,' says I, coaxing, – 'may be, av you said that his son was a poor boy that lived by his indhustry, and the times was bad – '

"'Not the least use,' says he.

"'Arrah, but it's hard-hearted they are,' thinks I. 'Well, see now, I'll give you the money, but I can't afford it all at onst; but I'll pay five shillings a week. Will that do?'

"'I'll do my endayvors,' says Father Roach; 'and I'll speak to them to treat him peaceably in the meantime.'

"'Long life to yer reverence, and do. Well, here now, here's five hogs to begin with; and, musha, but I never thought I'd be

spending my loose change that way.'

"Father Roach put the six tinpinnies in the pocket of his black leather breeches, said something in Latin, bid me good-morning, and rode off.

"Well, to make my story short, I worked late and early to pay the five shillings a week, and I did do it for three weeks regular; then I brought four and fourpence; then it came down to one and tenpence halfpenny, then ninepence, and at last I had nothing at all to bring.

"'Mickey Free,' says the priest, 'ye must stir yourself. Your father is mighty displeased at the way you've been doing of late; and av ye kept yer word, he'd be near out by this time.'

"'Troth,' says I, 'it's a very expensive place.'

"'By coorse it is,' says he; 'sure all the quality of the land's there. But, Mickey, my man, with a little exertion, your father's business is done. What are you jingling in your pocket there?'

"'It's ten shillings, your reverence, I have to buy seed potatoes.'

"'Hand it here, my son. Isn't it better your father would be enjoying himself in paradise, than if ye were to have all the potatoes in Ireland?'

"'And how do ye know,' says I, 'he's so near out?'

"'How do I know, – how do I know, is it? Didn't I see him?'

"'See him! Tear an ages, was you down there again?'

"'I was,' says he; 'I was down there for three quarters of an hour yesterday evening, getting out Luke Kennedy's mother. Decent people the Kennedy's; never spared expense.'

"'And ye seen my father?' says I.

"'I did,' says he; 'he had an ould flannel waistcoat on, and a pipe sticking out of the pocket av it.'

"'That's him,' says I. 'Had he a hairy cap?'

"'I didn't mind the cap,' says he; 'but av coorse he wouldn't have it on his head in that place.'

"'Thrue for you,' says I. 'Did he speak to you?'

"'He did,' says Father Roach; 'he spoke very hard about the way he was treated down there; that they was always jibin' and jeerin' him about *drink*, and fightin', and the course he led up here, and that it was a queer thing, for the matter of ten shillings, he was to be kept there so long.'

"'Well,' says I, taking out the ten shillings and counting it with one hand, 'we must do our best, anyhow; and ye think this'll get him out surely?'

"'I know it will,' says he; 'for when Luke's mother was leaving the place, and yer father saw the door open, he made a rush at it, and, be-gorra, before it was shut he got his head and one shoulder outside av it, – so that, ye see, a thrifle more'll do it.'

"'Faix, and yer reverence,' says I, 'you've lightened my heart this morning.' And I put my money back again in my pocket.

"'Why, what do you mean?' says he, growing very red, for he was angry.

"'Just this,' says I, 'that I've saved my money; for av it was my father you seen, and that he got his head and one shoulder outside the door, oh, then, by the powers!' says I, 'the devil a jail or jailer

from hell to Connaught id hould him. So, Father Roach, I wish you the top of the morning.' And I went away laughing; and from that day to this I never heard more of purgathory; and ye see, Master Charles, I think I was right."

Scarcely had Mike concluded when my door was suddenly burst open, and Sir Harry Boyle, without assuming any of his usual precautions respecting silence and quiet, rushed into the room, a broad grin upon his honest features, and his eyes twinkling in a way that evidently showed me something had occurred to amuse him.

"By Jove, Charley, I mustn't keep it from you; it's too good a thing not to tell you. Do you remember that very essenced young gentleman who accompanied Sir George Dashwood from Dublin, as a kind of electioneering friend?"

"Do you mean Mr. Prettyman?"

"The very man; he was, you are aware, an under-secretary in some government department. Well, it seems that he had come down among us poor savages as much from motives of learned research and scientific inquiry, as though we had been South Sea Islanders; report had gifted us humble Galwayans with some very peculiar traits, and this gifted individual resolved to record them. Whether the election week might have sufficed his appetite for wonders I know not; but he was peaceably taking his departure from the west on Saturday last, when Phil Macnamara met him, and pressed him to dine that day with a few friends at his house. You know Phil; so that when I tell

you Sam Burke, of Greenmount, and Roger Doolan were of the party, I need not say that the English traveller was not left to his own unassisted imagination for his facts. Such anecdotes of our habits and customs as they crammed him with, it would appear, never were heard before; nothing was too hot or too heavy for the luckless cockney, who, when not sipping his claret, was faithfully recording in his tablet the mems. for a very brilliant and very original work on Ireland.

"Fine country, splendid country; glorious people, – gifted, brave, intelligent, but not happy, – alas! Mr. Macnamara, not happy. But we don't know you, gentlemen, – we don't indeed, – at the other side of the Channel. Our notions regarding you are far, very far from just."

"I hope and trust," said old Burke, "you'll help them to a better understanding ere long."

"Such, my dear sir, will be the proudest task of my life. The facts I have heard here this evening have made so profound an impression upon me that I burn for the moment when I can make them known to the world at large. To think – just to think that a portion of this beautiful island should be steeped in poverty; that the people not only live upon the mere potatoes, but are absolutely obliged to wear the skins for raiment, as Mr. Doolan has just mentioned to me!"

"'Which accounts for our cultivation of lumpers,' added Mr. Doolan, 'they being the largest species of the root, and best adapted for wearing apparel.'

"'I should deem myself culpable – indeed I should – did I not inform my countrymen upon the real condition of this great country.'

"'Why, after your great opportunities for judging,' said Phil, 'you ought to speak out. You've seen us in a way, I may fairly affirm, few Englishmen have, and heard more.'

"'That's it, – that's the very thing, Mr. Macnamara. I've looked at you more closely; I've watched you more narrowly; I've witnessed what the French call your *vie intime*.'

"'Begad you have,' said old Burke, with a grin, 'and profited by it to the utmost.'

"'I've been a spectator of your election contests; I've partaken of your hospitality; I've witnessed your popular and national sports; I've been present at your weddings, your fairs, your wakes; but no, – I was forgetting, – I never saw a wake.'

"'Never saw a wake?' repeated each of the company in turn, as though the gentleman was uttering a sentiment of very dubious veracity.

"'Never,' said Mr. Prettyman, rather abashed at this proof of his incapacity to instruct his English friends upon *all* matters of Irish interest.

"'Well, then,' said Macnamara, 'with a blessing, we'll show you one. Lord forbid that we shouldn't do the honors of our poor country to an intelligent foreigner when he's good enough to come among us.'

"'Peter,' said he, turning to the servant behind him, 'who's

dead hereabouts?'

"'Sorra one, yer honor. Since the scrimmage at Portumna the place is peaceable.'

"'Who died lately in the neighborhood?'

"'The widow Macbride, yer honor.'

"'Couldn't they take her up again, Peter? My friend here never saw a wake.'

"'I'm afeered not; for it was the boys roasted her, and she wouldn't be a decent corpse for to show a stranger,' said Peter, in a whisper.

"Mr. Prettyman shuddered at these peaceful indications of the neighborhood, and said nothing.

"'Well, then, Peter, tell Jimmy Divine to take the old musket in my bedroom, and go over to the Clunagh bog, – he can't go wrong. There's twelve families there that never pay a halfpenny rent; and *when it's done*, let him give notice to the neighborhood, and we'll have a rousing wake.'

"'You don't mean, Mr. Macnamara, – you don't mean to say – ' stammered out the cockney, with a face like a ghost.

"'I only mean to say,' said Phil, laughing, 'that you're keeping the decanter very long at your right hand.'

"Burke contrived to interpose before the Englishman could ask any explanation of what he had just heard, – and for some minutes he could only wait in impatient anxiety, – when a loud report of a gun close beside the house attracted the attention of the guests. The next moment old Peter entered, his face radiant

with smiles.

“‘Well, what’s that?’ said Macnamara.

““T was Jimmy, yer honor. As the evening was rainy, he said he’d take one of the neighbors; and he hadn’t to go far, for Andy Moore was going home, and he brought him down at once.’

“‘Did he shoot him?’ said Mr. Prettyman, while cold perspiration broke over his forehead. ‘Did he murder the man?’

“‘Sorra murder,’ said Peter, disdainfully. ‘But why shouldn’t he shoot him when the master bid him?’

“I needn’t tell you more, Charley; but in ten minutes after, feigning some excuse to leave the room, the terrified cockney took flight, and offering twenty guineas for a horse to convey him to Athlone, he left Galway, fully convinced that they don’t yet know us on the other side of the Channel.”

CHAPTER XIII

THE JOURNEY

The election concluded, the turmoil and excitement of the contest over, all was fast resuming its accustomed routine around us, when one morning my uncle informed me that I was at length to leave my native county and enter upon the great world as a student of Trinity College, Dublin. Although long since in expectation of this eventful change, it was with no slight feeling of emotion I contemplated the step which, removing me at once from all my early friends and associations, was to surround me with new companions and new influences, and place before me very different objects of ambition from those I had hitherto been regarding.

My destiny had been long ago decided. The army had had its share of the family, who brought little more back with them from the wars than a short allowance of members and shattered constitutions; the navy had proved, on more than one occasion, that the fate of the O'Malleys did not incline to hanging; so that, in Irish estimation, but one alternative remained, and that was the bar. Besides, as my uncle remarked, with great truth and foresight, "Charley will be tolerably independent of the public,

at all events; for even if they never send him a brief, there's law enough in the family to last *his* time," – a rather novel reason, by-the-bye, for making a man a lawyer, and which induced Sir Harry, with his usual clearness, to observe to me: —

"Upon my conscience, boy, you are in luck. If there had been a Bible in the house, I firmly believe he'd have made you a parson."

Considine alone, of all my uncle's advisers, did not concur in this determination respecting me. He set forth, with an eloquence that certainly converted *me*, that my head was better calculated for bearing hard knocks than unravelling knotty points, that a shako would become it infinitely better than a wig; and declared, roundly, that a boy who began so well and had such very pretty notions about shooting was positively thrown away in the Four Courts. My uncle, however, was firm, and as old Sir Harry supported him, the day was decided against us, Considine murmuring as he left the room something that did not seem quite a brilliant anticipation of the success awaiting me in my legal career. As for myself, though only a silent spectator of the debate, all my wishes were with the count. From my earliest boyhood a military life had been my strongest desire; the roll of the drum, and the shrill fife that played through the little village, with its ragged troop of recruits following, had charms for me I cannot describe; and had a choice been allowed me, I would infinitely rather have been a sergeant in the dragoons than one of his Majesty's learned in the law. If, then, such had been the cherished feeling of many a year, how much more strongly were

my aspirations heightened by the events of the last few days. The tone of superiority I had witnessed in Hammersley, whose conduct to me at parting had placed him high in my esteem; the quiet contempt of civilians implied in a thousand sly ways; the exalted estimate of his own profession, – at once wounded my pride and stimulated my ambition; and lastly, more than all, the avowed preference that Lucy Dashwood evinced for a military life, were stronger allies than my own conviction needed to make me long for the army. So completely did the thought possess me that I felt, if I were not a soldier, I cared not what became of me. Life had no other object of ambition for me than military renown, no other success for which I cared to struggle, or would value when obtained. "*Aut Caesar aut nullus*," thought I; and when my uncle determined I should be a lawyer, I neither murmured nor objected, but hugged myself in the prophecy of Considine that hinted pretty broadly, "the devil a stupider fellow ever opened a brief; but he'd have made a slashing light dragoon."

The preliminaries were not long in arranging. It was settled that I should be immediately despatched to Dublin to the care of Dr. Mooney, then a junior fellow in the University, who would take me into his especial charge; while Sir Harry was to furnish me with a letter to his old friend, Doctor Barret, whose advice and assistance he estimated at a very high price. Provided with such documents I was informed that the gates of knowledge were more than half ajar for me, without an effort upon my part. One only portion of all the arrangements I heard with anything like

pleasure; it was decided that my man Mickey was to accompany me to Dublin, and remain with me during my stay.

It was upon a clear, sharp morning in January, of the year 18 – , that I took my place upon the box-seat of the old Galway mail and set out on my journey. My heart was depressed, and my spirits were miserably low. I had all that feeling of sadness which leave-taking inspires, and no sustaining prospect to cheer me in the distance. For the first time in my life, I had seen a tear glisten in my poor uncle's eye, and heard his voice falter as he said, "Farewell!" Notwithstanding the difference of age, we had been perfectly companions together; and as I thought now over all the thousand kindnesses and affectionate instances of his love I had received, my heart gave way, and the tears coursed slowly down my cheeks. I turned to give one last look at the tall chimneys and the old woods, my earliest friends; but a turn of the road had shut out the prospect, and thus I took my leave of Galway.

My friend Mickey, who sat behind with the guard, participated but little in my feelings of regret. The potatoes in the metropolis could scarcely be as wet as the lumpers in Scariff; he had heard that whiskey was not dearer, and looked forward to the other delights of the capital with a longing heart. Meanwhile, resolved that no portion of his career should be lost, he was lightening the road by anecdote and song, and held an audience of four people, a very crusty-looking old guard included, in roars of laughter. Mike had contrived, with his usual *savoir faire*, to make

himself very agreeable to an extremely pretty-looking country girl, around whose waist he had most lovingly passed his arm under pretence of keeping her from falling, and to whom, in the midst of all his attentions to the party at large, he devoted himself considerably, pressing his suit with all the aid of his native minstrelsy.

"Hould me tight, Miss Matilda, dear."

"My name's Mary Brady, av ye plase."

"Ay, and I do plase.

> 'Oh, Mary Brady, you are my darlin',
> You are my looking-glass from night till morning;
> I'd rayther have ye without one farthen,
> Nor Shusey Gallagher and her house and garden.'

May I never av I wouldn't then; and ye needn't be laughing."

"Is his honor at home?"

This speech was addressed to a gaping country fellow that leaned on his spade to see the coach pass.

"Is his honor at home? I've something for him from Mr. Davern."

Mickey well knew that few western gentlemen were without constant intercourse with the Athlone attorney. The poor countryman accordingly hastened through the fence and pursued the coach with all speed for above a mile, Mike pretending all the time to be in the greatest anxiety for his overtaking them, until at last, as he stopped in despair, a hearty roar of laughter told him

that, in Mickey's *parlance*, he was "sould."

"Taste it, my dear; devil a harm it'll do ye. It never paid the king sixpence."

Here he filled a little horn vessel from a black bottle he carried, accompanying the action with a song, the air to which, if any of my readers feel disposed to sing it, I may observe, bore a resemblance to the well-known, "A Fig for Saint Denis of France."

POTTEEN, GOOD LUCK TO YE, DEAR

Av I was a monarch in state,
Like Romulus or Julius Caysar,
With the best of fine victuals to eat,
And drink like great Nebuchadnezzar,
A rasher of bacon I'd have,
And potatoes the finest was seen, sir,
And for drink, it's no claret I'd crave,
But a keg of ould Mullens's potteen, sir,
With the smell of the smoke on it still.

They talk of the Romans of ould,
Whom they say in their own times was frisky;
But trust me, to keep out the cowld,
The Romans at home here like whiskey.
Sure it warms both the head and the heart,

It's the soul of all readin' and writin';
It teaches both science and art,
And disposes for love or for fightin'.
Oh, potteen, good luck to ye, dear.

This very classic production, and the black bottle which accompanied it, completely established the singer's pre-eminence in the company; and I heard sundry sounds resembling drinking, with frequent good wishes to the provider of the feast, – "Long life to ye, Mr. Free," "Your health and inclinations, Mr. Free," etc.; to which Mr. Free responded by drinking those of the company, "av they were vartuous." The amicable relations thus happily established promised a very lasting reign, and would doubtless have enjoyed such, had not a slight incident occurred which for a brief season interrupted them. At the village where we stopped to breakfast, three very venerable figures presented themselves for places in the inside of the coach; they were habited in black coats, breeches, and gaiters, wore hats of a very ecclesiastic breadth in their brim, and had altogether the peculiar air and bearing which distinguishes their calling, being no less than three Roman Catholic prelates on their way to Dublin to attend a convocation. While Mickey and his friends, with the ready tact which every low Irishman possesses, immediately perceived who and what these worshipful individuals were, another traveller who had just assumed his place on the outside participated but little in the feelings of reverence so manifestly displayed, but gave a sneer of a very

ominous kind as the skirt of the last black coat disappeared within the coach. This latter individual was a short, thick-set, bandy-legged man of about fifty, with an enormous nose, which, whatever its habitual coloring, on the morning in question was of a brilliant purple. He wore a blue coat with bright buttons, upon which some letters were inscribed; and around his neck was fastened a ribbon of the same color, to which a medal was attached. This he displayed with something of ostentation whenever an opportunity occurred, and seemed altogether a person who possessed a most satisfactory impression of his own importance. In fact, had not this feeling been participated in by others, Mr. Billy Crow would never have been deputed by No. 13,476 to carry their warrant down to the west country, and establish the nucleus of an Orange Lodge in the town of Foxleigh; such being, in brief, the reason why he, a very well known manufacturer of "leather continuations" in Dublin, had ventured upon the perilous journey from which he was now returning. Billy was going on his way to town rejoicing, for he had had most brilliant success: the brethren had feasted and fêted him; he had made several splendid orations, with the usual number of prophecies about the speedy downfall of Romanism, the inevitable return of Protestant ascendancy, the pleasing prospect that with increased effort and improved organization they should soon be able to have everything their own way, and clear the Green Isle of the horrible vermin Saint Patrick forgot when banishing the others; and that if Daniel O'Connell (whom might

the Lord confound!) could only be hanged, and Sir Harcourt Lees made Primate of all Ireland, there were still some hopes of peace and prosperity to the country.

Mr. Crow had no sooner assumed his place upon the coach than he saw that he was in the camp of the enemy. Happily for all parties, indeed, in Ireland, political differences have so completely stamped the externals of each party that he must be a man of small penetration who cannot, in the first five minutes he is thrown among strangers, calculate with considerable certainty whether it will be more conducive to his happiness to sing, "Croppies Lie Down," or "The Battle of Ross." As for Billy Crow, long life to him! you might as well attempt to pass a turkey upon M. Audubon for a giraffe, as endeavor to impose a Papist upon him for a true follower of King William. He could have given you more generic distinctions to guide you in the decision than ever did Cuvier to designate an antediluvian mammoth; so that no sooner had he seated himself upon the coach than he buttoned up his great-coat, stuck his hands firmly in his side-pockets, pursed up his lips, and looked altogether like a man that, feeling himself out of his element, resolves to "bide his time" in patience until chance may throw him among more congenial associates. Mickey Free, who was himself no mean proficient in reading a character, at one glance saw his man, and began hammering his brains to see if he could not overreach him. The small portmanteau which contained Billy's wardrobe bore the conspicuous announcement of his name; and as Mickey could

read, this was one important step already gained.

He accordingly took the first opportunity of seating himself beside him, and opened the conversation by some very polite observation upon the other's wearing apparel, which is always in the west considered a piece of very courteous attention. By degrees the dialogue prospered, and Mickey began to make some very important revelations about himself and his master, intimating that the "state of the country" was such that a man of his way of thinking had no peace or quiet in it.

"That's him there, forenent ye," said Mickey, "and a better Protestant never hated Mass. Ye understand."

"What!" said Billy, unbuttoning the collar of his coat to get a fairer view at his companion; "why, I thought you were – "

Here he made some resemblance of the usual manner of blessing oneself.

"Me, devil a more nor yourself, Mr. Crow."

"Why, do you know me, too?"

"Troth, more knows you than you think."

Billy looked very much puzzled at all this; at last he said, —

"And ye tell me that your master there's the right sort?"

"Thrue blue," said Mike, with a wink, "and so is his uncles."

"And where are they, when they are at home?"

"In Galway, no less; but they're here now."

"Where?"

"Here."

At these words he gave a knock of his heel to the coach, as if

to intimate their "whereabouts."

"You don't mean in the coach, do ye?"

"To be sure I do; and troth you can't know much of the west, av ye don't know the three Mr. Trenches of Tallybash! – them's they."

"You don't say so?"

"Faix, but I do."

"May I never drink the 12th of July if I didn't think they were priests."

"Priests!" said Mickey, in a roar of laughter, – "priests!"

"Just priests!"

"Be-gorra, though, ye had better keep that to yourself; for they're not the men to have that same said to them."

"Of course I wouldn't offend them," said Mr. Crow; "faith, it's not me would cast reflections upon such real out-and-outers as they are. And where are they going now?"

"To Dublin straight; there's to be a grand lodge next week. But sure Mr. Crow knows better than me."

Billy after this became silent. A moody revery seemed to steal over him; and he was evidently displeased with himself for his want of tact in not discovering the three Mr. Trenches of Tallybash, though he only caught sight of their backs.

Mickey Free interrupted not the frame of mind in which he saw conviction was slowly working its way, but by gently humming in an undertone the loyal melody of "Croppies Lie Down," fanned the flame he had so dexterously kindled. At

length they reached the small town of Kinnegad. While the coach changed horses, Mr. Crow lost not a moment in descending from the top, and rushing into the little inn, disappeared for a few moments. When he again issued forth, he carried a smoking tumbler of whiskey punch, which he continued to stir with a spoon. As he approached the coach-door he tapped gently with his knuckles; upon which the reverend prelate of Maronia, or Mesopotamia, I forget which, inquired what he wanted.

"I ask your pardon, gentlemen," said Billy, "but I thought I'd make bold to ask you to take something warm this cold day."

"Many thanks, my good friend; but we never do," said a bland voice from within.

"I understand," said Billy, with a sly wink; "but there are circumstances now and then, – and one might for the honor of the cause, you know. Just put it to your lips, won't you?"

"Excuse me," said a very rosy-cheeked little prelate, "but nothing stronger than water – "

"Botheration," thought Billy, as he regarded the speaker's nose. "But I thought," said he, aloud, "that you would not refuse this."

Here he made a peculiar manifestation in the air, which, whatever respect and reverence it might carry to the honest brethren of 13,476, seemed only to increase the wonder and astonishment of the bishops.

"What does he mean?" said one.

"Is he mad?" said another.

"Tear and ages," said Mr. Crow, getting quite impatient at the slowness of his friends' perception, – "tear and ages, I'm one of yourselves."

"One of us," said the three in chorus, – "one of us?"

"Ay, to be sure," here he took a long pull at the punch, – "to be sure I am; here's 'No surrender,' your souls! whoop – " a loud yell accompanying the toast as he drank it.

"Do you mean to insult us?" said Father P – . "Guard, take the fellow."

"Are we to be outraged in this manner?" chorussed the priests.

"'July the 1st, in Oldbridge town,'" sang Billy, "and here it is, 'The glorious, pious, and immortal memory of the great and good – '"

"Guard! Where is the guard?"

"'And good King William, that saved us from Popery – '"

"Coachman! Guard!" screamed Father – .

"'Brass money – '"

"Policeman! policeman!" shouted the priests.

"'Brass money and wooden shoes;' devil may care who hears me!" said Billy, who, supposing that the three Mr. Trenches were skulking the avowal of their principles, resolved to assert the pre-eminence of the great cause single-handed and alone.

"'Here's the Pope in the pillory, and the Devil pelting him with priests.'"

At these words a kick from behind apprised the loyal champion that a very ragged auditory, who for some time past

had not well understood the gist of his eloquence, had at length comprehended enough to be angry. *Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte*, certainly, in an Irish row. "The merest urchin may light the train; one handful of mud often ignites a shindy that ends in a most bloody battle."

And here, no sooner did the *vis-a-tergo* impel Billy forward than a severe rap of a closed fist in the eye drove him back, and in one instant he became the centre to a periphery of kicks, cuffs, pullings, and haulings that left the poor deputy-grand not only orange, but blue.

He fought manfully, but numbers carried the day; and when the coach drove off, which it did at last without him, the last thing visible to the outsides was the figure of Mr. Crow, – whose hat, minus the crown, had been driven over his head down upon his neck, where it remained like a dress cravat, – buffeting a mob of ragged vagabonds who had so completely metamorphosed the unfortunate man with mud and bruises that a committee of the grand lodge might actually have been unable to identify him.

As for Mickey and his friends behind, their mirth knew no bounds; and except the respectable insides, there was not an individual about the coach who ceased to think of and laugh at the incident till we arrived in Dublin and drew up at the Hibernian in Dawson Street.

CHAPTER XIV

DUBLIN

No sooner had I arrived in Dublin than my first care was to present myself to Dr. Mooney, by whom I was received in the most cordial manner. In fact, in my utter ignorance of such persons, I had imagined a college fellow to be a character necessarily severe and unbending; and as the only two very great people I had ever seen in my life were the Archbishop of Tuam and the chief-baron when on circuit, I pictured to myself that a university fellow was, in all probability, a cross between the two, and feared him accordingly.

The doctor read over my uncle's letter attentively, invited me to partake of his breakfast, and then entered upon something like an account of the life before me; for which Sir Harry Boyle had, however, in some degree prepared me.

"Your uncle, I find, wishes you to live in college, – perhaps it is better, too, – so that I must look out for chambers for you. Let me see: it will be rather difficult, just now, to find them." Here he fell for some moments into a musing fit, and merely muttered a few broken sentences, as: "To be sure, if other chambers could be had – but then – and after all, perhaps, as he is young – besides,

Frank will certainly be expelled before long, and then he will have them all to himself. I say, O'Malley, I believe I must quarter you for the present with a rather wild companion; but as your uncle says you're a prudent fellow," – here he smiled very much, as if my uncle had not said any such thing, – "why, you must only take the better care of yourself until we can make some better arrangement. My pupil, Frank Webber, is at this moment in want of a 'chum,' as the phrase is, – his last three having only been domesticated with him for as many weeks; so that until we find you a more quiet resting-place, you may take up your abode with him."

During breakfast, the doctor proceeded to inform me that my destined companion was a young man of excellent family and good fortune who, with very considerable talents and acquirements, preferred a life of rackety and careless dissipation to prospects of great success in public life, which his connection and family might have secured for him. That he had been originally entered at Oxford, which he was obliged to leave; then tried Cambridge, from which he escaped expulsion by being rusticated, – that is, having incurred a sentence of temporary banishment; and lastly, was endeavoring, with what he himself believed to be a total reformation, to stumble on to a degree in the "silent sister."

"This is his third year," said the doctor, "and he is only a freshman, having lost every examination, with abilities enough to sweep the university of its prizes. But come over now, and I'll

present you to him."

I followed him down-stairs, across the court to an angle of the old square where, up the first floor left, to use the college direction, stood the name of Mr. Webber, a large No. 2 being conspicuously painted in the middle of the door and not over it, as is usually the custom. As we reached the spot, the observations of my companion were lost to me in the tremendous noise and uproar that resounded from within. It seemed as if a number of people were fighting pretty much as a banditti in a melodrama do, with considerable more of confusion than requisite; a fiddle and a French horn also lent their assistance to shouts and cries which, to say the best, were not exactly the aids to study I expected in such a place.

Three times was the bell pulled with a vigor that threatened its downfall, when at last, as the jingle of it rose above all other noises, suddenly all became hushed and still; a momentary pause succeeded, and the door was opened by a very respectable looking servant who, recognizing the doctor, at once introduced us into the apartment where Mr. Webber was sitting.

In a large and very handsomely furnished room, where Brussels carpeting and softly cushioned sofas contrasted strangely with the meagre and comfortless chambers of the doctor, sat a young man at a small breakfast-table beside the fire. He was attired in a silk dressing-gown and black velvet slippers, and supported his forehead upon a hand of most lady-like whiteness, whose fingers were absolutely covered with rings

of great beauty and price. His long silky brown hair fell in rich profusion upon the back of his neck and over his arm, and the whole air and attitude was one which a painter might have copied. So intent was he upon the volume before him that he never raised his head at our approach, but continued to read aloud, totally unaware of our presence.

"Dr. Mooney, sir," said the servant.

"Ton dapamey bominos, prosephe, crione Agamemnon" repeated the student, in an ecstasy, and not paying the slightest attention to the announcement.

"Dr. Mooney, sir," repeated the servant, in a louder tone, while the doctor looked around on every side for an explanation of the late uproar, with a face of the most puzzled astonishment.

"Be dakiown para thina dolekoskion enkos" said Mr. Webber, finishing a cup of coffee at a draught.

"Well, Webber, hard at work I see," said the doctor.

"Ah, Doctor, I beg pardon! Have you been long here?" said the most soft and insinuating voice, while the speaker passed his taper fingers across his brow, as if to dissipate the traces of deep thought and study.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.