

LEVER CHARLES JAMES

SIR JASPER CAREW: HIS
LIFE AND EXPERIENCE

Charles Lever

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Содержание

CHAPTER I. SOME “NOTICES OF MY FATHER AND MOTHER”	6
CHAPTER II. THE ILLUSTRATION OF AN ADAGE	12
CHAPTER III. A FATHER AND DAUGHTER	16
CHAPTER IV. A BREAKFAST AND ITS CONSEQUENCES	21
CHAPTER V. JOE RAPER	27
CHAPTER VI. TWO FRIENDS AND THEIR CONFIDENCES	33
CHAPTER VII. SHOWING HOW CHANCE IS BETTER THAN DESIGN	38
CHAPTER VIII. A STATE TRUMPETER	43
CHAPTER IX. A GENTLEMAN USHER	50
CHAPTER X. THE COMPANY AT CASTLE CAREW	54
CHAPTER XI. POLITICS AND NEWSPAPERS	65
CHAPTER XII. SHOWING THAT “WHAT IS CRADLED IN SHAME IS HEARSED IN	71
CHAPTER XIII. A MIDNIGHT RENCONTRE	75
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	78

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NOTICE

It has been constantly observed by writers of travels that to gain credence for any of the strange incidents of their journeys, they have been compelled to omit many of the most eventful passages of their lives. “The gentlemen,” and still more the ladies, “who live at home at ease” take, indeed, but little account of those adventures which are the daily lot of more precarious existences, and are too prone to set down as marvellous, or worse, events which have comparatively little remarkable for those whose fortunes have thrown them on the highways of the world.

I make this remark in part to deprecate some of the criticism which I have seen pronounced upon these Memoirs. It has been said: How could any man have met so many adventures? and my answer is simply: By change of place. Nothing more is required. The pawn on the chess-board has a life of a very uneventful character, simply because his progress is slow, methodical, and unchanging. Not so the knight, who, with all the errantry of his race, dashes here and there, encountering every rank and condition of men, – continually in difficulties himself, or the cause of them to others. What the knight is to the chess-board, the adventurer is to real life. The same wayward fortune and zig-zag course belongs to each, and each is sure to have his share in nearly every great event that occurs about him. But I also refer to this subject on another account. Tale-writers are blamed for the introduction of incidents which have little bearing on the main story, or whose catastrophes are veiled in obscurity. But I would humbly ask, Are not these exactly the very traits of real life? Is not every man’s course checkered with incidents, and crossed by people who never affect his actual career? Do not things occur every week singular enough to demand a record, and yet, to all seeming, not in any way bearing upon our fortunes? While I need but appeal to universal experience to corroborate me when I say that life is little else than a long series of uncompleted adventures, I do not employ the strongest of all argument on this occasion, and declare that in writing my Memoirs I had no choice but to set down the whole or nothing, because I am aware that some sceptical folk would like to imagine *me* a shade, and *my story* a fiction!

I am quite conscious of some inaccuracies; for aught I know, there may be many in these pages; but I wrote most of them in very old age, away from books, and still further away from the friends who might have afforded me their counsel and guidance. I wrote with difficulty and from memory, – that is, from a memory in which a fact often faded while I transcribed it, and where it demanded all my efforts to call up the incidents, without, at the same time, summoning a dozen others, irrelevant and unwarranted.

These same pages, with all their faults, have been a solace to many a dreary hour, when, alone and companionless, I have sat in the stillness of a home that no footsteps resound in, and by a hearth where none confronts me. They would be still richer in comfort if I thought they could cheer some heart lonely as my own, and make pain or sorrow forget something of its sting. I scarcely dare to hope for this, but I *wish* it heartily! And if there be aught of presumption in the thought, pray set it down amongst the other errors and short-comings of

Jasper Carew.

Palazzo Guidotte, Senegaqlia, Jan. 1855.

CHAPTER I. SOME “NOTICES OF MY FATHER AND MOTHER”

It has sometimes occurred to me that the great suits of armor we see in museums, the huge helmets that come down like extinguishers on the penny candles of modern humanity, the enormous cuirasses and gigantic iron gloves, were neither more nor less than downright and deliberate cheats practised by the “Gents” of those days for the especial humbugging of us, their remote posterity. It might, indeed, seem a strange and absurd thing that any people should take so much pains, and incur so much expense, just for the sake of mystifying generations then unborn. Still, I was led to this conclusion by observing and reflecting on a somewhat similar phenomenon in our own day; and indeed it was the only explanation I was ever able to come to, respecting those great mansions that we Irish gentlemen are so fond of rearing on our estates, “totally regardless of expense,” and just as indifferent to all the circumstances of our fortune, and all the requirements of our station, – the only real difference being, that our forefathers were satisfied with quizzing their descendants, whereas we, with a livelier appreciation of fun, prefer enjoying the joke in our own day.

Perhaps I am a little too sensitive on this point; but my reader will forgive any excess of irritability when I tell him that to this national ardor for brick and mortar – this passion for cutstone and stucco – it is I owe, not only some of the mischances of my life, but also a share of what destiny has in store for those that are to come after me. We came over to Ireland with Cromwell; my ancestor, I believe, and I don’t desire to hide the fact, was a favorite trumpeter of Old Noll. He was a powerful, big-boned, slashing trooper, with a heavy hand on a sabre, and a fine deep, bass voice in the conventicle; and if his Christian name was a little inconvenient for those in a hurry, – he was called Bind-your-kings-in-chains-and-your-nobles-in-links-of-iron Carew, – it was of the less consequence, as he was always where he ought to be, without calling. It was said that in the eyes of his chief his moderation was highly esteemed, and that this virtue was never more conspicuous than in his choice of a recompense for his services; since, instead of selecting some fine, rich tract of Meath or Queen’s County, some fruitful spot on the Shannon or the Blackwater, with a most laudable and exemplary humility he pitched upon a dreary and desolate region in the County Wicklow, – picturesque enough in point of scenery, but utterly barren and uncultivated. Here, at a short distance from the opening of the Vale of Arklow, he built a small house, contiguous to which, after a few years, was to be seen an outlandish kind of scaffolding, – a composite architecture between a draw-well and a gallows; and which, after various conjectures about its use, – some even suggesting that it was a new apparatus “to raise the Devil,” – turned out to be the machinery for working a valuable lead mine which, by “pure accident,” my fortunate ancestor had just discovered there.

It was not only lead, but copper ore was found there, and at last silver; so that in the course of three generations the trumpeter’s descendants became amongst the very richest of the land; and when my father succeeded to the estate, he owned almost the entire country between Newrath Bridge and Arklow. There were seventeen townlands in our possession, and five mines in full work. In one of these, gold was found, and several fine crystals of topaz and beryl, – a few specimens of which are yet to be seen in the Irish Academy. It has been often remarked that men of ability rarely or never transmit their gifts to the generation succeeding them. Nature would seem to set her face against monopolies, and at least, so far as intellect is concerned, to be a genuine “Free-Trader.” There is another and very similar fact, however, which has not attracted so much notice. It is this: that not only the dispositions and tastes of successive generations change and alternate, but that their luck follows the same law, and that after a good run of fortune for maybe a century or two, there is certain to come a turn; and thus it is that these ups and downs, which are only remarked in the lives of individuals, are occurring in the wider ocean of general humanity. The common incident that we so often hear

of a man winning an enormous sum and losing every farthing of it, down to the very half-crown he began with, is just the type of many a family history, – the only difference being that the event which in one case occupied a night, in the other was spread over two, or maybe three, hundred years.

When my father succeeded to the family property, Ireland was enjoying her very palmiest days of prosperity. The spirit of her nationality, without coming into actual collision with England, yet had begun to assume an attitude of proud hostility, – a species of haughty defiance, – the first effect of which was to develop and call forth all the native ardor and daring of a bold and generous people. It was in the celebrated year '82; and, doubtless, there are some yet living who can recall to memory the glorious enthusiasm of the "Volunteers." The character of the political excitement was eminently suited to the nature of the people. The themes were precisely those which lay fastest hold of enthusiastic temperaments. Liberty and Independence were in every mouth. From the glowing eloquence of the Parliament House, – the burning words and heart-stirring sentences of Grattan and Ponsonby, – they issued forth to mingle in all the exciting din of military display, – the tramp of armed battalions, and the crash and glitter of mounted squadrons. To these succeeded those festive meetings, resounding with all the zeal of patriotic toasts, – brilliant displays of those convivial accomplishments for which the Irish gentlemen of that day were so justly famed. There was something peculiarly splendid and imposing in the spectacle of the nation at that moment; but, like the grand groupings we witness upon the stage, all the gorgeousness of the display was only to intimate that the curtain was about to fall!

But to come back to personal matters. At the first election which occurred after his accession to the property, my father was returned for Wicklow, by a large majority, in opposition to the Government candidate; and thus, at the age of twenty-two, entered upon life with all the glowing ardor of a young patriot, – rich, well-looking, and sufficiently gifted to be flattered into the self-confidence of actual ability.

Parliamentary conflicts have undergone a change just as great as those of actual warfare. In the times I speak of, tactical skill and subtlety would have availed but little, in comparison with their present success. The House was then a species of tournament, where he who would break his lance with the most valiant tilter was always sure of an antagonist. The marshalling of party, the muster of adherents, was not, as it now is, all-sufficient against the daring eloquence of a solitary opponent; and if, as is very probable, men were less under the guidance of great political theorems, they were assuredly not less earnest and devoted than we now see them. The contests of the House were carried beyond its walls, and political opponents became deadly enemies, ready to stake life at any moment in defence of their opinions. It was the school of the period; nor can it be better illustrated than by the dying farewell of a great statesman, whose last legacy to his son was in the words: "Be always ready with the pistol." This great maxim, and the maintenance of a princely style of living, were the two golden rules of the time. My father was a faithful disciple of the sect.

In the course of a two years' tour on the Continent, he signaled himself by various adventures, the fame of which has not yet faded from the memory of some survivors. The splendor of his retinue was the astonishment of foreign courts; and the journals of the time constantly chronicled the princely magnificence of his entertainments, and the costly extravagance of his household. Wagers were the fashionable pastime of the period; and to the absurd extent to which this passion was carried, are we in all probability now indebted for that character of eccentricity by which our countrymen are known over all Europe.

The most perilous exploits, the most reckless adventures, ordeals of personal courage, strength, endurance, and address, were invented as the subject of these wagers; and there was nothing too desperately hazardous, nor too absurdly ridiculous, as not to find a place in such contests. My father had run the gauntlet through all, and in every adventure was said to have acquitted himself with honor and distinction.

Of one only of these exploits do I intend to make mention here; the reason for the selection will soon be palpable to my reader. At the time I speak of, Paris possessed two circles totally distinct in the great world of society. One was that of the Court; the other rallied around the Duc d'Orléans. To this latter my father's youth, wealth, and expensive tastes predisposed him, and he soon became one of the most favored guests of the Palais Royal. Scanty as are the materials which have reached us, there is yet abundant reason to believe that never, in the most abandoned days of the Regency, was there any greater degree of profligacy than then prevailed there. Every vice and debauchery of a corrupt age was triumphant, and even openly defended on the base and calumnious pretence that the company was at least as moral as that of the "Petit Trianon." My father, I have said, was received into this set with peculiar honor. His handsome figure, his winning manners, an easy disposition, and an ample fortune were ready recommendations in his favor, and he speedily became the chosen associate of the Prince.

Amongst his papers are to be found the unerring proofs of what this friendship cost him. Continued losses at play had to be met by loans of money, at the most ruinous rates of interest; and my poor father's memoranda are filled with patriarchal names that too surely attest the nature of such transactions. It would seem, however, that fortune at last took a turn, – at least, the more than commonly wasteful extravagance of his life at one period would imply that he was a winner. These gambling contests between the Duke and himself had latterly become like personal conflicts, wherein each staked skill, fortune, and address on the issue, – duels which involved passions just as deadly as any whose arbitrament was ever decided by sword or pistol! As luck favored my father, the Duke's efforts to raise money were not less strenuous, and frequently as costly, as his own; while on more than one occasion the jewelled decorations of his rank – his very sword – were the pledges of the play-table. At last, so decidedly had been the run against him that the Prince was forced to accept of loans from my father to enable him to continue the contest. Even this alternative, however, availed nothing. Loss followed upon loss, till at length, one night, when fortune had seemed to have utterly forsaken him, the Prince suddenly rose from the table, and saying, "Wait a moment, I'll make one 'coup' more," disappeared from the room. When he returned, his altered looks almost startled my father. The color had entirely deserted his cheeks; his very lips were bloodless; his eyes were streaked with red vessels; and when he tried to speak, his first words were inaudible. Pressing my father down again upon the seat from which he had arisen, he leaned over his shoulder, and whispered in a voice low and broken, —

"I have told you, Chevalier, that I would make one 'coup' more. This sealed note contains the stake I now propose to risk. You are at liberty to set any sum you please against it. I can only say, it is all that now remains to me of value in the world. One condition, however, I must stipulate for; it is this: If you win" – here he paused, and a convulsive shudder rendered him for some seconds unable to continue – "if you win, that you leave France within three days, and that you do not open this paper till within an hour after your departure."

My father was not only disconcerted by the excessive agitation of his manner, but he was little pleased with a compact, the best issue of which would compel him to quit Paris and all its fascinations at a very hour's notice. He tried to persuade the Prince that there was no necessity for so heavy a venture; that he was perfectly ready to advance any sum his Royal Highness could name; that fortune, so persecuting as she seemed, should not be pushed further, at least for the present. In fact, he did everything which ingenuity could prompt to decline the wager. But the more eagerly he argued, the more resolute and determined became the Duke; till at last, excited by his losses, and irritated by an opposition to which he was but little accustomed, the Prince cut short the discussion by the insolent taunt "that the Chevalier was probably right, and deemed it safer to retain what he had won, than risk it by another venture."

"Enough, sir; I am quite ready," replied my father, and reseated himself at the table.

"There's my stake, then," said the Prince, throwing a sealed envelope on the cloth.

“Your Royal Highness must correct me if I am in error,” said my father, “and make mine beneath what it ought to be.” At the same moment he pushed all the gold before him – several thousand louis – into the middle of the table.

The Prince never spoke nor moved; and my father, after in vain waiting for some remark, said,

“I perceive, sir, that I have miscalculated. These are all that I have about me;” and he drew from his pocket a mass of bank-notes of considerable amount. The Prince still maintained silence.

“If your Royal Highness will not vouchsafe to aid me, I must only trust to my unguided reason, and, however conscious of the inferiority of the venture, I can but stake all that I possess. Yes, sir, such is my stake.”

The Prince bowed formally and coldly, and pushed the cards towards my father. The fashionable game of the day was called Barocco, in which, after certain combinations, the hand to whom fell the Queen of Spades became the winner. So evenly had gone the fortune of the game that all now depended on this card. My father was the dealer, and turned up each card slowly, and with a hand in which not the slightest tremor could be detected. The Prince, habitually the very ideal of a gambler’s cold impassiveness, was agitated beyond all his efforts to control, and sat with his eyes riveted on the game; and when the fatal card fell at length from my father’s hand, his arms dropped powerless at either side of him, and with a low groan he sank fainting on the floor.

He was quickly removed by his attendants, and my father never saw him after! All his efforts to obtain an audience were in vain; and when his entreaties became more urgent, he was given significantly to understand that the Prince was personally indisposed to receive him. Another and stronger hint was also supplied, in the-shape of a letter from the Minister of Police, inclosing my father’s passport, and requiring his departure, by way of Calais, within a given time.

Whatever share curiosity as to the contents of the paper might have had in my father’s first thoughts, a sense of offended dignity for the manner of his treatment speedily mastered; and as he journeyed along towards the coast, his mind was solely occupied with one impression. To be suddenly excluded from the society in which he had so long mixed, and banished from the country where he had lived with such distinction, were indeed deep personal affronts, and not without severe reflection on his conduct and character.

His impatience to quit a land where he had been so grossly outraged grew greater with every mile he travelled; and although the snow lay heavily on the road, he passed on, regardless of everything but his insulted honor. It was midnight when he reached Calais. The packet, which had sailed in the afternoon, had just re-entered the port, driven back by a hurricane that had almost wrecked her. The passengers, overcome with terror, fatigue, and exhaustion, were crowding into the hotel at the very moment of my father’s arrival. The gale increased in violence at every instant, and the noise of the sea breaking over the old piles of the harbor was now heard like thunder. Indifferent to such warning, my father sent for the captain, and asked him what sum would induce him to put to sea. A positive refusal to accept of any sum was the first reply; but by dint of persuasion, persistence, and the temptation of a large reward, he at last induced him to comply.

To my father’s extreme surprise, he learned that two ladies who had just arrived at the hotel were no less resolutely bent on departure, and, in defiance of the gale, which was now terrific, sent to beg that they might be permitted to take their passage in the vessel. To the landlord, who conveyed this request, my father strongly represented the danger of such an undertaking; that nothing short of an extreme necessity would have induced him to embark in such a hurricane; that the captain, who had undertaken the voyage at his especial entreaty, might, most naturally, object to the responsibility. In a word, he pleaded everything against this request, but was met by the steady, unvarying reply, “That their necessity was not less urgent than his own, and that nothing less than the impossibility should prevent their departure.”

“Be it so, then,” said my father, whose mind was too much occupied with his own cares to bestow much attention on strangers. Indeed, so little of either interest or curiosity did his fellow travellers excite in him that although he assisted them to ascend the ship’s side, he made no effort to see their faces; nor did he address to them a single word. They who cross the narrow strait nowadays, with all the speed of a modern mail-steamer, can scarcely credit how much of actual danger the passage once involved. The communication with the Continent was frequently suspended for several days together; and it was no unusual occurrence to hear of three or even four mails being due from France. So great was the storm on the occasion I refer to that it was full two hours before the vessel could get clear of the port; and even then, with a mainsail closely reefed, and a mere fragment of a foresail, the utmost she could do was to keep the sea. An old and worthless craft, she was ill-suited to such a service; and now, at each stroke of the waves, some bulwark would be washed away, some spar broken, or part of the rigging torn in shreds. The frail timbers creaked and groaned with the working, and already, from the strain, leaks had burst open in many places, and half the crew were at the pumps. My father, who kept the deck without quitting it, saw that the danger was great, and, not improbably, now condemned his own rashness when it was too late. Too proud, however, to confess his shame, he walked hurriedly up and down the poop, only stopping to hold on at those moments when some tremendous lurch almost laid the craft under. In one of these it was that he chanced to look down through the cabin grating, and there beheld an old lady, at prayer, on her knees; her hands held a crucifix before her, and her upturned eyes were full of deep devotion. The lamp which swung to and fro above her head threw a passing light upon her features, and showed that she must once have been strikingly handsome, while even yet the traces were those that bespoke birth and condition. My father in vain sought for her companion, and while he bent down over the grating to look, the captain came up to his side.

“The poor Duchess is terribly frightened,” said he, with an attempt at a smile which only half succeeded.

“How do you call her?” asked my father.

“La Duchesse de Sargance, a celebrated court beauty some forty years ago. She has been always attached to the Duchess of Orleans; or, some say, to the Duke. At least, she enjoys the repute of knowing all his secret intrigues and adventures.”

“The Duke!” said my father, musing; and, suddenly calling to mind his pledge, he drew nigh to the binnacle lamp, and, opening his letter, bent down to read it. A small gold locket fell into his hand, unclasping which, he beheld the portrait of a beautiful girl of eighteen or nineteen. She was represented in the act of binding up her hair; and in the features, the coloring, and the attitude, she seemed the very ideal of a Grecian statue. In the corner of the paper was written the words, “Ma Fille,” “Philippe d’Orléans.”

“Is this possible? can this be real?” cried my father, whose quick intelligence at once seemed to divine all. The next instant he was at the door of the cabin, knocking impatiently to get in.

“Do you know this, madam?” cried he, holding out the miniature towards the Duchess. “Can you tell me aught of this?”

“Is the danger over? Are we safe?” was her exclamation, as she arose from her knees.

“The wind is abating, madam, – the worst is over; and now to my question.”

“She is yours, sir,” said the Duchess, with a deep obeisance. “His Royal Highnesses orders were, not to leave her till she reached England. Heaven grant that we are to see that hour! This is Mademoiselle de Courtois,” continued she, as at the same instant the young lady entered the cabin.

The graceful ease and unaffected demeanor with which she received my father at once convinced him that she at least knew nothing of the terrible compact in which she was involved. Habituated as he was to all the fascinations of beauty, and all the blandishments of manner, there was something to him irresistibly charming in the artless tone with which she spoke of her voyage, and all the pleasure she anticipated from a tour through England.

“You see, sir,” said the Duchess, when they were once more alone together, “Mademoiselle Josephine is a stranger to the position in which she stands. None could have undertaken the task of breaking it to her. Let us trust that she is never to know it.”

“How so, madam? Do you mean that I am to relinquish my right?” cried my father.

“Nothing could persuade me that you would insist upon it, sir.”

“You are wrong, then, madam,” said he, sternly. “To the letter I will maintain it. Mademoiselle de Courtois is mine; and within twenty-four hours the law shall confirm my title, for I will make her my wife.”

I have heard that however honorable my father’s intentions thus proclaimed themselves, the Duchess only could see a very lamentable *mésalliance* in such a union; nor did she altogether disguise from my father that his Royal Highness was very likely to take the same view of the matter. Mademoiselle’s mother was of the best blood of France, and illegitimacy signified little if Royalty but bore its share of the shame. Fortunately the young lady’s scruples were more easily disposed of: perhaps my father understood better how to deal with them; at all events, one thing is certain, Madame de Sargance left Dover for Calais on the same day that my father and his young bride started for London, – perhaps it might be exaggeration to say the happiest, but it is no extravagance to call them – as handsome a pair as ever journeyed the same road on the same errand. I have told some things in this episode which, perhaps, second thoughts would expunge, and I have omitted others that as probably the reader might naturally have looked for. But the truth is, the narrative has not been without its difficulties. I have had to speak of a tone of manners and habits now happily bygone, of which I dare not mark my reprehension with all the freedom I could wish, since one of the chief actors was my father, – its victim, my mother.

CHAPTER II. THE ILLUSTRATION OF AN ADAGE

“Marry in haste,” says the adage, and we all know what occupation leisure will bring with it; unhappily, my father was not to prove the exception to the maxim. It was not that his wife was wanting in any quality which can render married life happy; she was, on the contrary, most rarely gifted with them all. She was young, beautiful, endowed with excellent health and the very best of tempers. The charm of her manner won every class with whom she came into contact. But – alas that there should be a but! – she had been brought up in habits of the most expensive kind. Living in royal palaces, waited on by troops of menials, with costly equipages and splendid retinues ever at her command, only mingling with those whose lives were devoted to pleasure and amusement, conversant with no other themes than those which bore upon gayety and dissipation, she was peculiarly unsuited to the wear and tear of a social system which demanded fully as much of self-sacrifice as of enjoyment. The long lessons my father would read to her of deference to this one, patient endurance of that, how she was to submit to the tiresome prosings of certain notorieties in respect of their political or social eminence, – she certainly heard with most exemplary resignation; but by no effort of her reason, nor, indeed, of imagination, could she attain to the fact why any one should associate with those distasteful to them, nor ever persuade herself that any worldly distinction could possibly be worth having at such a price.

She was quite sure – indeed, her own experience proved it – “that the world was full of pleasant people.” Beauty to gaze on and wit to listen to, were certainly not difficult to be found; why, then, any one should persist in denying themselves the enjoyment derivable from such sources was as great a seeming absurdity as that of him who, turning his back on the rare flowers of a conservatory, would go forth to make his bouquet of the wild flowers and weeds of the roadside. Besides this, in the world wherein she had lived, her own gifts were precisely those which attracted most admiration and exerted most sway; and it was somewhat hard to descend to a system where such a coinage was not accepted as currency, but rather regarded as gilded counters, pretty to look at, but, after all, a mere counterfeit money, unrecognized by the mint.

My father saw all this when it was too late; but he lost no time in vain repinings. On the contrary, having taken a cottage in a secluded part of North Wales, by way of passing the honeymoon in all the conventional isolation that season is condemned to, he devoted himself to that educational process at which I have hinted, and began to instil those principles, to the difficulty of whose acquirement I have just alluded.

I believe that his life at this period was one of as much happiness as ever is permitted to poor mortality in this world; so, at least, his letters to his friends bespeak it. It may be even doubted if the little diversities of taste and disposition between himself and my mother did not heighten the sense of his enjoyment; they assuredly averted that lassitude and ennui which are often the results of a connubial duet unreasonably prolonged. I know, too, that my poor mother often looked back to that place as to the very paradise of her existence. My father had encouraged such magnificent impressions of his ancestral house and demesne that he was obliged to make great efforts to sustain the deception. An entire wing had to be built to complete the symmetry of the mansion. The roof had also to be replaced by another, of more costly construction. In the place of a stucco colonnade, one of polished granite was to be erected. The whole of the furniture was to be exchanged. Massive old cabinets and oaken chairs, handsome enough in their way, were but ill-suited to ceilings of fretted gold, and walls hung in the rich draperies of Lyons. The very mirrors, which had been objects of intense admiration for their size and splendor, were now to be discarded for others of more modern pretensions. The china bowls and cups which for centuries had been regarded as very gems of virtue were thrown indignantly aside, to make place for Sèvres vases and rich groupings of pure Saxon. In fact, all the ordinary comforts and characteristics of a country gentleman’s house were abandoned for the sumptuous and splendid furniture of a palace. To meet such expenses large sums were raised on

loan, and two of the richest mines on the estate were heavily mortgaged. Of course it is needless to say that preparations on such a scale of magnificence attracted a large share of public attention. The newspapers duly chronicled the increasing splendor of "Castle Carew." Scarcely a ship arrived without some precious consignment, either of pictures, marbles, or tapestries; and these announcements were usually accompanied by some semi-mysterious paragraph about the vast wealth of the owner, and the great accession of fortune he had acquired by his marriage. On this latter point nothing was known, beyond the fact that the lady was of an ancient ducal family of France, of immense fortune and eminently beautiful. Even my father's most intimate friends knew nothing beyond this; for, however strange it may sound to our present-day notions, my father was ashamed of her illegitimacy and rightly judged what would be the general opinion of her acquaintances, should the fact become public. At last came the eventful day of the landing in Ireland; and, certainly, nothing could be more enthusiastic nor affectionate than the welcome that met them.

Personally, my father's popularity was very great; politically, he had already secured many admirers, since, even in the few months of his parliamentary life, he had distinguished himself on two or three occasions. His tone was manly and independent; his appearance was singularly prepossessing; and then, as he owned a large estate, and spent his money freely, it would have been hard if such qualities had not made him a favorite in Ireland.

It was almost a procession that accompanied him from the quay to the great hotel of the Drogheda Arms, where they stopped to breakfast.

"I am glad to see you back amongst us, Carew!" said Joe Parsons, one of my father's political advisers, a county member of great weight with the Opposition. "We want every good and true man in his place just now."

"Faith! we missed you sorely at the Curragh meetings, Watty," cried a sporting-looking young fellow, in "tops and leathers." "No such thing as a good handicap, nor a hurdle race for a finish, without you."

"Harry deplores those pleasant evenings you used to spend at three-handed whist, with himself and Dick Morgan," said another, laughing.

"And where's Dick?" asked my father, looking around him on every side.

"Poor Dick!" said the last speaker. "It's no fault of his that he 's not here to shake your hand to-day. He was arrested about six weeks ago, on some bills he passed to Fagan."

"Old Tony alive still?" said my father, laughing. "And what was the amount?" added he, in a whisper.

"A heavy figure, – above two thousand, I believe; but Tony would be right glad to take five hundred."

"And couldn't Dick's friends do that much for him?" asked my father, half indignantly. "Why, when I left this, Dick was the very life of your city. A dinner without him was a failure. Men would rather have met him at the cover than seen the fox. His hearty face and his warm shake-hands were enough to inspire jollity into a Quaker meeting."

"All true, Watty; but there's been a general shipwreck of us all, somehow. Where the money has gone, nobody knows; but every one seems out at elbows. You are the only fellow the sun shines upon."

"Make hay, then, when it does so," said my father, laughing; and, taking but his pocket-book, he scribbled a few lines on a leaf which he tore out. "Give that to Dick, and tell him to come down and dine with us on Friday. You'll join him. Quin and Parsons won't refuse me. – And what do you say, Gervy Power? Can you spare a day from the tennis-court, or an evening from piquet? – Jack Gore, I count upon you. Harvey Hepton will drive you down, for I know you never can pay the post-boys."

"Egad, they 're too well trained to expect it. The rascals always look to me for a hint about the young horses at the Curragh, and, now and then, I do throw a stray five-pound in their way."

"We have not seen madam yet. Are we not to have that honor to-day?" said Parsons.

"I believe not; she's somewhat tired. We had a stormy time of it," said my father, who rather hesitated about introducing his bachelor friends to my mother without some little preparation.

Nor was the caution quite unreasonable. Their style and breeding were totally unlike anything she had ever seen before. The tone of familiarity they used towards each other was the very opposite to that school of courtly distance which even the very nearest in blood or kindred observed in her own country; and lastly, very few of those then present understood anything of French; and my mother's English, at the time I speak of, did not range beyond a few monosyllables, pronounced with an accent that made them all but unintelligible.

"You'll have Kitty Dwyer to call upon you the moment she hears you 're come," said Quin.

"Charmed to see her, if she 'll do us that honor," said my father, laughing.

"You must have no common impudence, then, Watty," said another; "you certainly jilted her."

"Nothing of the kind," replied my father; "she it was who refused me."

"Bother!" broke in an old squire, a certain Bob French of Frenchmount; "Kitty refuse ten thousand a-year, and a good-looking fellow into the bargain! Kitty's no fool; and she knows mankind just as well as she knows horseflesh, – and, faix, that's not saying a trifle."

"How is she looking?" asked my father, rather anxious to change the topic.

"Just as you saw her last. She hurt her back at an ugly fence in Kennedy's park, last winter; but she's all right again, and riding the little black mare that killed Morrissy, as neatly as ever!"

"She's a fine dashing girl!" said my father.

"No, but she's a good girl," said the old squire, who evidently admired her greatly. "She rode eight miles of a dark night, three weeks ago, to bring the doctor to old Hackett's wife, and it raining like a waterfall; and she gave him two guineas for the job. Ay, faith, and maybe at the same time, two guineas was two guineas to her."

"Why, Mat Dwyer is not so hard-up as that comes to?" exclaimed my father.

"Is n't he, faith? I don't believe he knows where to lay his hand on a fifty-pound note this morning. The truth is, Walter, Mat ran himself out for *you*."

"For me! How do you mean for me?"

"Just because he thought you 'd marry Kitty. Oh! you need n't laugh. There 's many more thought the same thing. You remember yourself that you were never out of the house. You used to pretend that Bishop's-Lough was a better cover than your own, – that it was more of a grass country to ride over. Then, when summer came, you took to fishing, as if your bread depended on it; and the devil a salmon you ever hooked."

A roar of laughter from the surrounders showed how they relished the confusion of my father's manner.

"Even all that will scarcely amount to an offer of marriage," said he, in half pique.

"Nobody said it would," retorted the other; "but when you teach a girl to risk her life, four days in the week, over the highest fences in a hunting country, – when she gives up stitching and embroidery, to tying flies and making brown hackles, – when she 'd rather drive a tandem than sit quiet in a coach and four, – why, she's as good as spoiled for any one else. 'Tis the same with women as with young horses, – every one likes to break them in for himself. Some like a puller; others prefer a light mouth; and there's more that would rather go along without having to think at all, sure that, no matter how rough the road, there would be neither a false step nor stumble in it."

"And what's become of MacNaghten?" asked my father, anxious to change the topic.

"Scheming, scheming, just the same as ever. I 'm sure I wonder he 's not here to-day. May I never! if that's not his voice I hear on the stairs. Talk of the devil – "

"And you're sure to see Dan MacNaghten," cried my father; and the next moment he was heartily shaking hands with a tall, handsome man who, though barely thirty, was yet slightly bald on the top of the head. His eyes were blue and large; their expression full of the joyous merriment of a happy schoolboy, – a temperament that his voice and laugh fully confirmed.

“Watty, boy, it ‘s as good as a day rule to have a look at you again,” cried he. “There’s not a man can fill your place when you ‘re away, – devil a one.”

“There he goes, – there he goes!” muttered old French, with a sly wink at the others.

“Ireland wasn’t herself without you, my boy,” continued MacNaghten. “We were obliged to put up with Tom Burke’s harriers and old French’s claret; and the one has no more scent than the other has bouquet.”

French’s face at this moment elicited such a roar of laughter as drowned the remainder of the speech.

“‘T was little time you had either to run with the one or drink the other, Dan,” said he; “for you were snug in Kilmainham the whole of the winter.”

“*Otium cum dignitate*,” said Dan. “I spent my evenings in drawing up a bill for the better recovery of small debts.”

“How so, Dan?”

“Lending enough more, to bring the debtor into the superior courts, – trying him for murder instead of manslaughter.”

“Faith, you’d do either if you were put to it,” said French, who merely heard the words, without understanding the context.

Dan MacNaghten was now included in my father’s invitation to Castle Carew; and, after a few other allusions to past events and absent friends, they all took their leave, and my father hastened to join his bride.

“You thought them very noisy, my dear,” said my father, in reply to a remark of hers. “They, I have no doubt, were perfectly astonished at their excessive quietness, – an air of decorum only assumed because they heard you were in the next room.”

“They were not afraid of me, I trust,” said she, smiling. “Not exactly afraid,” said my father, with a very peculiar smile.

CHAPTER III. A FATHER AND DAUGHTER

The celebrated money-lender and bill-discounter of Dublin in the times we speak of, was a certain Mr. Fagan, popularly called “The Grinder,” from certain peculiarities in his dealings with those who stood in need of his aid. He had been, and indeed so had his father before him, a fruit-seller, in a quarter of the city called Mary’s Abbey, – a trade which he still affected to carry on, although it was well known that the little transactions of the front shop bore no imaginable proportion to the important events which were conducted in the small and gloomy back-parlor behind it.

It was a period of unbounded extravagance. Few even of the wealthiest lived within their incomes. Many maintained a style and pretension far beyond their fortunes, the first seeds of that crop of ruin whose harvest we are now witnessing. By large advances on mortgage, and great loans at moments of extreme pressure, the Grinder had amassed an immense fortune, at the same time that he possessed a very considerable influence in many counties, in whose elections he took a deep although secret interest.

If money-getting and money-hoarding was the great passion of his existence, it was in reality so in furtherance of two objects, on which he seemed to have set his whole heart. One of these was the emancipation of the Catholics; the other, the elevation of his only child, a daughter, to rank and station, by means of a high marriage.

On these two themes his every thought was fixed; and however closely the miser’s nature had twined itself around his own, all the thirst for gain, all the greed of usury, gave way before these master-passions. So much was he under their guidance that no prospect of advantage ever withdrew him from their prosecution; and he who looked for the Grinder’s aid, must at least have appeared to him as likely to contribute towards one or other of these objects.

Strange as it may seem to our modern notions, the political ambition seemed easier of success than the social. With all their moneyed embarrassments, the higher classes of Ireland refused to stoop to an alliance with the families of the rich plebeians, and were much more ready to tamper with their conscience on questions of state, than to abate a particle of their pride on a matter of family connection. In this way, Mr. Fagan could command many votes in the House from those who would have indignantly refused his invitation to a dinner.

In pursuit of this plan, he had given his daughter the best education that money could command. She had masters in every modern language, and in every fashionable accomplishment. She was naturally clever and quick of apprehension, and possessed considerable advantages in person and deportment. Perhaps an overweening sense of her own importance, in comparison with those about her, imparted a degree of assumption to her manner, or perhaps this was instilled into her as a suitable lesson for some future position; but so was it, that much of the gracefulness of her youth was impaired by this fault, which gradually settled down into an almost stern and defiant hardness of deportment, – a quality little likely to be popular in high society.

A false position invariably engenders a false manner, and hers was eminently so. Immeasurably above those with whom she associated, she saw a great gulf between her and that set with whose habits and instincts she had been trained to assimilate. To condescend to intimacy with her father’s guests, was to undo all the teachings of her life; and yet how barren seemed every hope of ascending to anything higher! No young proprietor had attained his majority for some years back, without being canvassed by the Grinder as a possible match for his daughter. He well knew the pecuniary circumstances of them all. To some he had lent largely; and yet somehow, although his emissaries were active in spreading the intelligence that Bob Fagan’s daughter would have upwards of three hundred thousand pounds.

It seemed a point of honor amongst this class that none should descend to such a union, nor stoop to an alliance with the usurer. If, in the wild orgies of after-dinner in the mad debauchery of the

mess-table, some reckless spendthrift would talk of marrying Polly Fagan, a burst of mockery and laughter was certain to hail the proposition. In fact, any alternative of doubtful honesty, any stratagem to defeat a creditor, seemed a more honorable course than such a project.

There were kind friends – mayhap amongst them were some disappointed suitors – ready to tell Polly how she was regarded by this set; and this consciousness on her part did not assuredly add to the softness of a manner that each day was rendering her more cold and severe; and, from despising those of her own rank, she now grew to hate that above her.

It so chanced that my father was one of those on whom Fagan had long speculated for a son-in-law. There was something in the careless ease of his character that suggested the hope that he might not be very difficult of persuasion; and, as his habits of expense required large and prompt supplies, the Grinder made these advances with a degree of liberality that could not fail to be flattering to a young heir.

On more than one occasion, the money was paid down before the lawyers had completed the documents; and this confidence in my father's honor had greatly predisposed him in Fagan's favor. The presumptuous idea of an alliance with him would have, of course, routed such impressions, but this never occurred to my father. It is very doubtful that he could have brought himself to believe the thing possible. So secret had been my father's marriage that none, even of his most intimate friends, knew of it till within a short time before he arrived in Ireland. The great outlay at Castle Carew of course attracted its share of gossip, but all seemed to think that these were the preparations for an event not yet decided on. This also was Fagan's reading of it; and he watched with anxious intensity every step and detail of that costly expenditure in which his now last hope was centred.

"He must come to me for all this; I alone can be the paymaster here," was his constant reflection, as he surveyed plans which required a princely fortune to execute, and which no private income could possibly have supported by a suitable style of living. "A hundred thousand pounds will pay for all," was the consolatory thought with which he solaced himself for this extravagance.

The frequent calls for money, the astounding sums demanded from time to time, did indeed alarm Fagan. The golden limit of a hundred thousand had long been passed, and yet came no sign of retrenchment; on the contrary, the plans for the completion of the Castle were on a scale of even greater magnificence.

It was to assure himself as to the truth of these miraculous narratives, to see with his own eyes the splendors of which he had heard so much, that Fagan once undertook a journey down to Castle Carew. For reasons the motives of which may be as well guessed as described, he was accompanied by his daughter. Seeming to be engaged on a little tour of the county, they arrived at the village inn at nightfall, and the following morning readily obtained the permission to visit the grounds and the mansion.

Perhaps there is no higher appreciation of landscape beauty than that of him who emerges from the dark and narrow street of some busy city, – from its noise, and smoke, and din, – from its vexatious cares and harassing duties, and strolls out, of a bright spring morning, through the grassy fields and leafy lanes of a rural country; there is a repose, a sense of tranquil calm in the scene, so refreshing to those whose habitual rest comes of weariness and exhaustion. No need is there of the painter's eye nor the poet's fancy to enjoy to the utmost that rich combination of sky, and wood, and glassy lake.

There may be nothing of artistic excellence in the appreciation, but the sense of pleasure, of happiness even, is to the full as great.

It was in such a mood that Fagan found himself that morning slowly stealing along a woodland-path, his daughter at his side; halting wherever a chance opening afforded a view of the landscape, they walked leisurely on, each, as it were, respecting the other's silence. Not that their secret thoughts were indeed alike, – far from it! The daughter had marked the tranquil look, the unembarrassed expression of those features so habitually agitated and careworn: she saw the sense of relief even one day, one single day of rest, had brought with it. Why should it not be always thus? thought she. He

needs no longer to toil and strive. His might be a life of quietude and peace. Our fortune is far above our wants, beyond even our wishes. We might at last make friendships, real friendships, amongst those who would look on us as equals and neighbors, not as usurers and oppressors.

While such was passing in the daughter's mind, the father's thoughts ran thus: Can she see these old woods, these waving lawns, these battlemented towers, topping the great oaks of centuries, and yet not wish to be their mistress? Does no ambition stir her heart to think, These might be mine? He scanned her features closely, but in her drooping eyelids and pensive look he could read no signs of the spirit he sought for.

"Polly," said he, at length, "this is finer, far finer than I expected; the timber is better grown, the demesne itself more spacious. I hardly looked for such a princely place."

"It is very beautiful," said she, pensively.

"A proud thing to be the owner of, Polly, – a proud thing! This is not the home of some wealthy citizen; these trees are like blazons of nobility, girl."

"One might be very happy here, father," said she, in the same low voice.

"The very thought of my own mind, Polly," cried he, eagerly. "The highest in the land could ask for nothing better. The estate has been in his family for four or five generations. The owner of such a place has but to choose what he would become. If he be talented, and with capacity for public life, think of him in Parliament, taking up some great question, assailing some time-worn abuse, – some remnant of that barbarous code that once enslaved us, – and standing forward as the leader of an Irish party. How gracefully patriotism would sit on one who could call this his own! Not the sham patriotism of your envious plebeian, nor the mock independence of the needy lawyer, but the sturdy determination to make his country second to none. There 's the Castle itself," cried he, suddenly, as they emerged into an open space in front of the building; and, amazed at the spacious and splendid edifice before them, they both stood several minutes in silent admiration.

"I scarcely thought any Irish gentleman had a fortune to suit this," said she, at length.

"You are right, Polly; nor has Carew himself. The debts he will have incurred to build that Castle will hamper his estate, and cripple him and those that are to come after him. Nothing short of a large sum of ready money, enough to clear off every mortgage and incumbrance at once, could enable this young fellow to save them. Even then, his style should not be the spendthrift waste they say he is fond of. A princely household he might have, nobly maintained, and perfect in all its details, but with good management, girl. You must remember that, Polly."

She started at this direct appeal to herself; and, as her cheeks grew crimson with conscious shame, she turned away to avoid his glance, – not that the precaution was needed, for he was far too much immersed in his own thoughts to observe her. Polly had on more than one occasion seen through the ambitious schemes of her father. She had detected many a deep-laid plot he had devised to secure for her that eminence and station he longed for. Deep and painful were the wounds of her offended pride at the slights, the insults of these defeated plans. Resentments that were to last her lifetime had grown of them, and in her heart a secret grudge towards that class from which they sprung. Over and over had she endeavored to summon up courage to tell him that, to her, these schemes were become hateful; that all dignity, all self-respect, were sacrificed in this unworthy struggle. At last came the moment of hardihood; and in a few words, at first broken and indistinct, but more assured and distinct as she went on, she said that she, at least, could never partake in his ambitious views.

"I have seen you yourself, father, after a meeting with one of these – these high and titled personages, come home pale, careworn, and ill. The contumely of their manner had so offended you that you sat down to your meal without appetite. You could not speak to me; or, in a few words you dropped, I could read the bitter chagrin that was corroding your heart. You owed to me, that in the very moment of receiving favors from you, they never forgot the wide difference of rank that separated you, – nay more, that they accepted your services as a rightful homage to their high estate, and made you feel a kind of serfdom in your very generosity."

“Why all this? To what end do you tell me these things, girl?” cried he, angrily, while his cheek trembled with passion.

“Because if I conceal them longer, – if I do not speak them, – they will break my heart,” said she, in an accent of deepest emotion; “because the grief they give me has worn me to very wretchedness. Is it not clear to you, father, that they wish none of us, – that our blood is not their blood, nor our traditions their traditions?”

“Hold – stop – be silent, I say, or you will drive me distracted,” said he, grasping her wrist in a paroxysm of rage.

“I will speak out,” said she, resolutely. “The courage I now feel may, perhaps, never return to me. There is nothing humiliating in our position, save what we owe to ourselves; there is no meanness in our rank in life, save when we are ashamed of it! Our efforts to be what we were not born to be, what we ought not to be, what we cannot be, – these may, indeed, make us despicable and ridiculous, for there are things in this world, father, that not even gold can buy.”

“By Heaven, that is not true!” said he, fiercely. “There never yet was that in rank, honor, and distinction that was not ticketed with its own price! Our haughtiest nobility – the proudest duke in the land – knows well what his alliance with a plebeian order has done for him. Look about you, girl. Who are these marchionesses, these countesses, who sweep past us in their pride? The daughters of men of my own station, – the wealthy traders of the country – ”

“And what is their position, father? A living lie. What is their haughty carriage? The assumption of a state they were not born to, – the insolent pretension to despise all amidst which they passed their youth, their earliest friendships, their purest, best days. Let them, on the other hand, cling to these; let them love what has grown into their natures from infancy, – the home, the companions of their happy childhood, – and see how the world will scoff at their vulgarity, their innate degeneracy, their low-born habits: vulgar if generous, vulgar when saving; their costly tastes a reproach, their parsimony a sneer.”

There was a passionate energy in her tone and manner, which, heightening the expression of her handsome features, made her actually beautiful; and her father half forgot the opposition to his opinions, in his admiration of her. As he still gazed at her, the sharp sound of a horse’s canter was heard behind them; and, on turning round, they saw advancing towards them a young man, mounted on a blood horse, which he rode with all the careless ease of one accustomed to the saddle; his feet dangling loosely out of the stirrups, and one hand thrust into the pocket of his shooting-jacket.

“Stand where you are!” he cried, as the father and daughter were about to move aside, and give him room to pass; and immediately after he rushed his horse at the huge trunk of a fallen beech-tree, and cleared it with a spring.

“He ‘ll be perfect at timber, when he gets a little cooler in temper,” said he, turning on his saddle; and then, recognizing Fagan, he reined short in, and called out, “Halloo, Tony! who ever expected to see you here? – Miss Polly, your servant. A most unexpected pleasure this,” added he, springing from his saddle, and advancing towards them with his hat off.

“It is not often I indulge myself with a holiday, Mr. MacNaghten,” said Fagan, as though half ashamed of the confession.

“So much the worse for you, Fagan, and for your handsome daughter here, – not to speak of the poor thriftless devils, like myself, who are the objects of your industrious hours. Eh, Tony, is n’t that true?” and he laughed heartily at his impudent joke.

“And if it were not for such industry, sir,” said the daughter, sternly, “how many like you would be abroad to-day?”

“By Jove, you are quite right, Miss Polly. It is exactly as you say. Your excellent father is the providence of us younger sons; and I, for one, will never prove ungrateful to him. But pray let us turn to another theme. Shall I show you the grounds and the gardens? The house is in such a mess of confusion that it is scarcely worth seeing. The conservatory, however, and the dairy are nearly

finished; and if you can breakfast on grapes and a pineapple, with fresh cream to wash them down, I 'll promise to entertain you.”

“We ask for nothing better, Mr. MacNaghten,” said Fagan, who was not sorry to prolong an interview that might afford him the information he sought for.

“Now for breakfast, and then for sight-seeing,” said Dan, politely offering his arm to the young lady, and leading the way towards the house.

CHAPTER IV. A BREAKFAST AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

To do the honors of another man's house is a tremendous test of tact. In point of skill or address, we know of few things more difficult. The ease which sits so gracefully on a host becomes assurance when practised by a representative; and there is a species of monarchy about the lord of a household that degenerates into usurpation in the hands of a pretender. It is not improbable, then, Dan MacNaghten's success in this trying part was mainly attributable to the fact that he had never thought of its difficulty. He had gone through a fine property in a few years of dissipation, during which he had played the entertainer so often and so well that nothing seemed to him more natural than a seat at the head of a table, nor any task more simple or agreeable than to dispense its hospitalities.

The servants of the Castle were well accustomed to obey him, and when he gave his orders for breakfast to be speedily laid out in the conservatory, they set about the preparations with zeal and activity. With such promptitude, indeed, were the arrangements made that by the time MacNaghten had conducted his guests to the spot, all was in readiness awaiting them.

The place was admirably chosen, being a central point in the conservatory, from which alleys branched out in different directions; some opening upon little plots of flowers or ornamental shrubbery, others disclosing views of the woodland scenery or the distant mountains beyond it. The table was spread beside a marble basin, into which a little group of sportive Titans were seen spouting. Great Nile lilies floated on the crystal surface, and gold and silver fish flashed and glittered below. The board itself, covered with luscious fruit, most temptingly arranged amidst beautiful flowers, displayed, besides, some gorgeous specimens of Sèvres and Saxony, hastily taken from their packing-cases, while a large vase of silver, richly chased, stood in the centre, and exhibited four views of the Castle, painted in medallions on its sides.

"If you'll sit here, Miss Polly," said MacNaghten, "you'll have a prettier view, for you'll see the lake, and catch a peep, too, of the Swiss Cottage on the crag above it. I must show you the cottage after breakfast. It was a bit of fancy of my own, – copied, I am free to confess, from one I saw in the Oberland. – Fagan, help yourself; you 'll find these cutlets excellent. Our friend Carew has made an admirable choice of a cook."

"You treat us in princely fashion, sir," said Fagan, whose eyes glanced from the splendor before him to his daughter, and there tried to read her thoughts.

"You gave me no time for that; had you told me you were coming down, I'd have tried to receive you properly. As it is, pray make up your mind to stay a day or two, – Carew will be so delighted; nothing flatters him so much as to hear praise of this place."

"Ah, sir, you forget that men like myself have but few holidays."

"So much the worse, Fagan; remember what the adage says about all work and no play. Not, by Jove, but I 'm sure that the converse of the proposition must have its penalty, too; for if not, I should have been a marvellously clever fellow. – Ay, Miss Polly, my life has been all play."

"A greater fault than the other, sir, and with this addition, too, that it makes proselytes," said she, gravely; "my father's theory finds fewer followers."

"And you not one of them?" said MacNaghten, rapidly; while he fixed a look of shrewd inquiry on her.

"Assuredly not," replied she, in a calm and collected tone.

"By Jove, I could have sworn to it," cried he, with a burst of enthusiastic delight. "There, Fagan, you see Miss Polly takes my side, after all."

"I have not said so," rejoined she, gravely. "Gain and waste are nearer relatives than they suspect."

“I must own that I have never known but one of the family,” said Dan, with one of those hearty laughs which seemed to reconcile him to any turn of fortune.

Fagan all this time was ill at ease and uncomfortable; the topic annoyed him, and he gladly took occasion to change it by an allusion to the wine.

“And yet there are people who will tell you not to drink champagne for breakfast,” exclaimed Dan, draining his glass as he spoke; “as if any man could be other than better with this glorious tippie. Miss Polly, your good health, though it seems superfluous to wish you anything.”

She bowed half coldly to the compliment, and Fagan added hurriedly, “We are at least contented with our lot in life, Mr. MacNaghten.”

“Egad, I should think you were, Tony, and no great merit in the resignation, after all. Put yourself in my position, however, – fancy yourself Dan MacNaghten for one brief twenty-four hours. Think of a fellow who began the world – ay, and that not so very long ago either – with something over five thousand a-year, and a good large sum in bank, and who now, as he sits here, only spends five shillings when he writes his name on a stamp; who once had houses and hounds and horses, but who now sits in the rumble, and rides a borrowed hack. If you want to make a virtue of your contentment, Fagan, change places with me.”

“But would you take mine, Mr. MacNaghten? Would you toil, and slave, and fag, – would you shut out the sun, that your daily labor should have no suggestive temptings to enjoyment, – would you satisfy yourself that the world should be to you one everlasting struggle, till at last the very capacity to feel it otherwise was lost to you forever?”

“That’s more than I am able to picture to myself,” said MacNaghten, sipping his wine. “I ‘ve lain in a ditch for two hours with a broken thigh-bone, thinking all the time of the jolly things I ‘d do when I ‘d get well again; I ‘ve spent some very rainy weeks in a debtor’s prison, weaving innumerable enjoyments for the days when I should be at liberty; so that as to any conception of a period when I should not be able to be happy, it ‘s clean and clear beyond me.”

Polly’s eyes were fixed on him as he spoke, and while their expression was almost severe, the heightened color of her cheeks showed that she listened to him with a sense of pleasure.

“I suppose it’s in the family,” continued Dan, gayly. “My poor father used to say that no men have such excellent digestion as those that have nothing to eat.”

“And has it never occurred to you, sir,” said Polly, with a degree of earnestness in her voice and manner, – “has it never occurred to you that this same buoyant temperament could be turned to other and better account than mere “ – she stopped, and blushed, and then, as if by an effort, went on – “mere selfish enjoyment? Do you not feel that he who can reckon on such resources but applies them to base uses when he condescends to make them the accessories of his pleasures? Is there nothing within your heart to whisper that a nature such as this was given for higher and nobler purposes; and that he who has the spirit to confront real danger should not sit down contented with a mere indifference to shame?”

“Polly, Polly!” cried her father, alike overwhelmed by the boldness and the severity of her speech.

“By Jove, the young lady has given me a canter,” cried MacNaghten, who, in spite of all his good temper, grew crimson; “and I only wish the lesson had come earlier. Yes, Miss Polly,” added he, in a voice of more feeling, “it ‘s too late now.”

“You must forgive my daughter, Mr. MacNaghten, – she is not usually so presumptuous,” said Fagan, rising from the table, while he darted a reproving glance towards Polly; “besides, we are encroaching most unfairly on your time.”

“Are you so?” cried Dan, laughing. “I never heard it called mine before! Why, Tony, it’s yours, and everybody’s that has need of it. But if you ‘ll not eat more, let me show you the grounds. They are too extensive for a walk, Miss Polly, so, with your leave, we ‘ll have something to drive; meanwhile I’ll tell the gardener to pluck you some flowers.”

Fagan waited till MacNaghten was out of hearing, and then turned angrily towards his daughter.

“You have given him a sorry specimen of your breeding, Polly; I thought, indeed, you would have known better.”

“You forget already, then, the speech with which he accosted us,” said she, haughtily; “but my memory is better, sir.”

“His courtesy might have effaced the recollection, I think,” said Fagan, testily.

“His courtesy! Has he not told you himself that every gift he possesses is but an emanation of his selfishness? The man who can be anything so easily, will be nothing if it cost a sacrifice.”

“I don’t care what he is,” said Fagan, in a low, distinct voice, as though he wanted every word to be heard attentively. “For what he has been, and what he will be, I care just as little. It is where he moves, and lives, and exerts influence, – these are what concern me.”

“Are the chance glimpses that we catch of that high world so attractive, father?” said she, in an accent of almost imploring eagerness. “Do they, indeed, requite us for the cost we pay for them? When we leave the vulgar circle of our equals, is it to hear of generous actions, exalted sentiments, high-souled motives; or is it not to find every vice that stains the low pampered up into greater infamy amongst the noble?”

“This is romance and folly, girl. Who ever dreamed it should be otherwise? Nature stamped no nobility on gold, nor made copper plebeian. This has been the work of men; and so of the distinctions among themselves, and it will not do for us to dispute the ordinance. Station is power, wealth is power; he who has neither, is but a slave; he who has both, may be all that he would be!”

A sudden gesture to enforce caution followed these words; and at the same time MacNaghten’s merry voice was heard, singing as he came along, —

“Kneel down there, and say a prayer,
Before my hounds shall eat you.’
‘I have no prayer,’ the Fox replied,
‘For I was bred a Quaker.’

“All right, Miss Polly. Out of compliment to you, I suppose, Kitty Dwyer, that would never suffer a collar over her head for the last six weeks, has consented to be harnessed as gently as a lamb; and my own namesake, ‘Dan the Smasher,’ has been traced up, without as much as one strap broken. They’re a little pair I have been breaking in for Carew; for he’s intolerably lazy, and expects to find his nags trained to perfection. Look at them, how they come along, – no bearing reins, no blinkers. That’s what I call a very neat turn-out.”

The praise was, assuredly, not unmerited, as two highbred black ponies swept past with a beautiful phaeton, and drew up at the door of the conservatory.

The restless eyes, the wide-spread nostrils and quivering flanks of the animals, not less than the noiseless caution of the grooms at their heads, showed that their education had not yet been completed; and so Fagan remarked at once.

“They look rakish, – there’s no denying it!” said Mac-Naghten; “but they are gentleness itself. The only difficulty is to put the traps on them; once fairly on, there’s nothing to apprehend. You are not afraid of them, Miss Polly?” said he, with a strong emphasis on the “you.”

“When you tell me that I need not be, I have no fears,” said she, calmly.

“I must be uncourteous enough to say that I do not concur in the sentiment,” said Fagan; “and, with your leave, Mr. MacNaghten, we will walk.”

“Walk! why, to see anything, you’ll have twelve miles a-foot. It must n’t be thought of, Miss Polly, – I cannot hear of it!” She bowed, as though in half assent; and he continued: “Thanks for the confidence; you shall see it is not misplaced. Now, Fagan – ”

“I am decided, Mr. MacNaghten; I’ll not venture; nor will I permit my daughter to risk her life.”

“Neither would I, I should hope,” said MacNaghten; and, although the words were uttered with something of irritation, there was that in the tone that made Polly blush deeply.

“It’s too bad, by Jove!” muttered he, half aloud, “when a man has so few things that he really can do, to deny his skill in the one he knows best.”

“I am quite ready, sir,” said Polly, in that tone of determination which she was often accustomed to assume, and against which her father rarely or never disputed.

“There now, Fagan, get up into the rumble. I ‘ll not ask you to be the coachman. Come, come, – no more opposition; we shall make them impatient if we keep them standing much longer.”

As he spoke, he offered his arm to Polly, who, with a smile, – the first she had deigned to give him, – accepted it, and then, hastily leading her forward, he handed her into the carriage. In an instant MacNaghten was beside her. With the instinct of hot-tempered cattle, they no sooner felt a hand upon the reins than they became eager to move forward, and, while one pawed the ground with impatience, the other, retiring to the very limit of the pole-strap, prepared for a desperate plunge.

“Up with you, Fagan; be quick – be quick!” cried Dan. “It won’t do to hold them in. Let them go, lads, or they ‘ll smash everything!” and the words were hardly out, when, with a tremendous bound, that carried the front wheels off the road, away they went. “Meet us at the other gate, – they ‘ll show you the way,” cried MacNaghten, as, standing up, he pointed with his whip in the direction he meant. He had no time for more; for all his attention was now needed to the horses, as, each exciting the other, they dashed madly on down the road.

“This comes of keeping them standing,” muttered Dan; “and the scoundrels have curbed them up too tight. You’re not afraid, Miss Polly? By Jove, that was a dash, – Kitty showed her heels over the splash-board. Look at that devil Dan, – see how he ‘s bearing on the pole-piece! – an old trick of his.”

A tremendous cut on his flank now drove him almost furious, and the enraged animal set off at speed.

“We must let them blow themselves, Miss Polly. It all comes of their standing so long. You’re not afraid? – Well, then, they may do their worst.”

By this time the pace had become a tearing gallop, and seeing that nothing short of some miles would suffice to tame them down, MacNaghten turned their heads in the direction of a long avenue which led towards the sea.

It was all in vain that Fagan fastened through the flower-garden, and across a private shrubbery; when he reached the “gate,” there was no sign of the phaeton. The cuckoo and the thrush were the only voices heard in the stillness; and, at intervals, the deep booming of the sea, miles distant, told how unbroken was the silence around. His mind was a conflict of fear and anger; terrible anxieties for his daughter were mixed up with passion at this evidence of her wayward nature, and he walked along, reproaching himself bitterly for having accepted the civilities of MacNaghten.

Fagan’s own schemes for a high alliance for his daughter had made him acquainted with many a counterplot of adventurers against himself. He well knew what a prize Polly Fagan was deemed amongst the class of broken-down and needy spendthrifts who came to him for aid. Often and often had he detected the first steps of such machinations, till at length he had become suspicious of everything and everybody. Now, MacNaghten was exactly the kind of man he most dreaded in this respect. There was that recklessness about him that comes of broken fortune; he was the very type of a desperate adventurer, ready to seize any chance to restore himself to fortune and independence. Who could answer for such a man in such an emergency?

Driven almost mad with these terrors, he now hastened his steps, stopping at times to listen, and at times calling on his daughter in the wildest accents. Without knowing whither he went, he soon lost himself in the mazes of the wood, and wandered on for hours in a state bordering upon distraction. Suspicion had so mastered his reason that he had convinced himself the whole was a deliberate scheme, – that MacNaghten had planned all beforehand. In his disordered fancies, he did

not scruple to accuse his daughter of complicity, and inveighed against her falsehood and treachery in the bitterest words.

And what was Dan MacNaghten doing all this time? Anything, everything, in short, but what he was accused of! In good truth, he had little time for love-making, had such a project even entered his head, so divided were his attentions between the care of the cattle and his task of describing the different scenes through which they passed at speed, – the prospect being like one of those modern inventions called dissolving views, – no sooner presenting an object than superseding it by another. In addition to all this, he had to reconcile Miss Polly to what seemed a desertion of her father; so that, what with his “cares of coachman, cicerone, and consoler,” as he himself afterwards said, it was clean beyond him to slip in even a word on his own part. It is no part of my task to inquire how Polly enjoyed the excursion, or whether the dash of recklessness, so unlike every incident of her daily life, did not repay her for any discomfort of her father’s absence: certain is it that when, after about six miles traversed in less than half an hour, they returned to the Castle, her first sense of apprehension was felt by not finding her father to meet her. No sooner had MacNaghten conducted her to the library than he set out himself in search of Fagan, having despatched messengers in all directions on the same errand. Dan, it must be owned, had far rather have remained to reassure Miss Polly, and convince her that her father’s absence would be but momentary; but he felt that it was a point of duty with him to go – and go he did.

It chanced that, by dint of turning and winding, Fagan had at length approached the Castle again, so that MacNaghten came up with him within a few minutes after his search began. “Safe, and where?” were the only words the old man could utter as he grasped the other’s arm. Dan, who attributed the agitation to but one cause, proceeded at once to reassure him on the score of his daughter’s safety, detailing, at the same time, the circumstances which compelled him to turn off in a direction the opposite of that he intended. Fagan drank in every word with eagerness, his gray eyes piercingly fixed on the speaker all the while. Great as was his agitation throughout, it became excessive when MacNaghten chanced to allude to Polly personally, and to speak of the courage she displayed.

“She told you that she was not afraid? – she said so to yourself?” cried he, eagerly.

“Ay, a dozen times,” replied Dan, freely. “It was impossible to have behaved better.”

“You said so, – you praised her for it, I have no doubt,” said the other, with a grim effort at a smile.

“To be sure I did, Tony. By Jove, you’ve reason to be proud of her. I don’t speak of her beauty, – that every one can see; but she’s a noble-minded girl. She would grace any station in the land.”

“She heard you say as much with pleasure, I ‘m certain,” said Fagan, with a smile that was more than half a sneer.

“Nay, faith, Tony, I did not go so far. I praised her courage. I told her that not every man could have behaved so bravely.”

MacNaghten paused at this.

“And then – and then, sir,” cried Fagan, impatiently.

Dan turned suddenly towards him, and, to his amazement, beheld a countenance tremulous with passionate excitement.

“What then, sir? Tell me what then? I have a right to ask, and I will know it. I ‘m her father, and I demand it.”

“Why, what in Heaven’s name is the matter?” exclaimed MacNaghten. “I have told you she is safe, – that she is yonder.”

“I speak not of that, sir; and you know it,” cried Fagan, imperiously. “The dissimulation is unworthy of you. You ought to be a man of honor.”

“Egad, good temper would be the best quality for me just now,” said the other, with a smile; “for you seem bent on testing it.”

“I see it all,” cried Fagan, in a voice of anguish. “I see it all. Now hear me, Mr. MacNaghten. You are one who has seen much of the world, and will readily comprehend me. You are a man reputed to be kind-hearted, and you will not pain me by affecting a misunderstanding. Will you leave this to-morrow, and go abroad, say for a year or two? Give me your hand on it, and draw on me for one thousand pounds.”

“Why, Tony, what has come over you? Is it the air of the place has disordered your excellent faculties? What can you mean?”

“This is no answer to my question, sir,” said Fagan, rudely.

“I cannot believe you serious in putting it,” said MacNaghten, half proudly. “Neither you nor any other man has the right to make such a proposal to me.”

“I say that I have, sir. I repeat it. I am her father, and by one dash of my pen she is penniless to-morrow. Ay, by Heaven, it is what I will do if you drive me to it.”

“At last I catch your meaning,” said MacNaghten, “and I see where your suspicions have been pointing at. No, no; keep your money. It might be a capital bargain for me, Tony, if I had the conscience to close with it; and if you knew but all, you ‘ve no right to offer so much temptation. That path will bring you to the Castle. You ‘ll find Miss Polly in the library. Good-bye, Fagan.”

And without waiting for a reply, MacNaghten turned abruptly away, and disappeared in the wood.

Fagan stood for a second or two deep in thought, and then bent his steps towards the Castle.

CHAPTER V. JOE RAPER

The little incident which forms the subject of the last chapter occurred some weeks before my father's return to Ireland, and while as yet the fact of his marriage was still a secret to all, save his most intimate friends. The morning after Fagan's visit, however, MacNaghten received a few lines from my father, desiring him to look after and "pass" through the Custom House certain packages of value which would arrive there about that time. It chanced that poor Dan's circumstances just at this moment made seclusion the safer policy, and so he forwarded the commission to Fagan.

The packages contained the wardrobe of Madame de Carew, and revealed the mystery of my father's marriage. Fagan's plans and speculations must have attained to a great maturity in his own mind, to account for the sudden shock which this intelligence gave him. He was habitually a cautious calculator, rarely or never carried away by hope beyond the bounds of stern reality, and only accepting the "probable" as the "possible." In this instance, however, he must have suffered himself a wider latitude of expectation, for the news almost stunned him. Vague as were the chances of obtaining my father for a son-in-law, they were yet fair subjects of speculation; and he felt like one who secures a great number of tickets in a lottery, to augment his likelihood to win. Despite of all this, he had now to bear the disappointment of a "blank." The great alliance on which he had built all his hopes of position and station was lost to him forever; and, unable to bear up against the unexpected stroke of fortune, he feigned illness and withdrew.

It is very difficult for some men to sever the pain of a disappointment from a sense of injury towards the innocent cause of it. Unwilling to confess that they have calculated ill, they turn their anger into some channel apart from themselves. In the present case Fagan felt as if my father had done him a foul wrong, as though he had been a party to the deceit he practised on himself, and had actually traded on the hopes which stirred his own heart. He hastened home, and, passing through the little shop, entered the dingy parlor behind it.

At a large, high desk, at each side of which stood innumerable pigeon-holes, crammed with papers, a very diminutive man was seated writing. His suit of snuff-brown was worn and threadbare, but scrupulously clean, as was also the large cravat of spotless white which enclosed his neck like a pillory. His age might have been about fifty-one or two; some might have guessed him more, for his features were cramped and contracted with wrinkles, which, with the loss of one of his eyes from small-pox, made him appear much older than he was. His father had been one of the first merchants of Dublin, in whose ruin and bankruptcy, it was said, Fagan's father had a considerable share. The story also ran that Joe Raper – such was his name – had been the accepted suitor of her who subsequently married Fagan. The marriage having been broken off when these disasters became public, young Raper was forced by poverty to relinquish his career as a student of Trinity College, and become a clerk in Fagan's office and an inmate of his house. In this station he had passed youth and manhood, and was now growing old; his whole ambition in life being to see the daughter of his former sweetheart grow up in beauty and accomplishments, and to speculate with himself on some great destiny in store for her. Polly's mother had died within two years after her marriage, and to her child had Joe transmitted all the love and affection he had borne to herself. He had taken charge of her education from infancy, and had labored hard himself to acquire such knowledge as might keep him in advance of his gifted pupil. But for this self-imposed task it is more than likely that all his little classic lore had been long forgotten, and that the graceful studies of his earlier days had been obliterated by the wear and tear of a life so little in unison with them. To be her teacher, he had toiled through the long hours of the night, hoarding up his miserable earnings to buy some coveted book of reference, some deeply prized authority in criticism. By dint of downright labor, – for his was not one of those bright intelligences that acquire as if by instinct, – he had mastered several of the modern languages of Europe, and refreshed his knowledge of the ancient ones. With such companionship

and such training, Polly Fagan's youth had been fashioned into that strange compound, where high ambitions and gentle tastes warred with each other, and the imaginative faculties were cultivated amidst views of life alone suggestive of gain and money-getting.

If Fagan took little interest in the care bestowed by Raper on his daughter's education, he was far from indifferent to the devotion of his faithful follower; while Joe, on the other hand, well knowing that without him the complicated business of the house could not be carried on for a single day, far from presuming on his indispensable services, only felt the more bound in honor to endure any indignity rather than break with one so dependent on him. It had been a kind of traditionary practice with the Fagans not to keep regular books, but to commit all their transactions to little fragments of paper, which were stuffed, as it seemed, recklessly into some one or other of that vast nest of pigeon-holes, which, like a gigantic honeycomb, formed the background of Joe Raper's desk, and of which he alone, of men, knew the secret geography. No guide existed to these mysterious receptacles, save when occasionally the name of some suitor of uncommon importance appeared over a compartment; and as an evidence of what a share our family enjoyed in such distinction, I have heard that the word "Carew" figured over as many as five of these little cells.

Joe turned round hastily on his stool as his chief entered, and saluted him with a respectful bow; and then, as if continuing some unbroken thread' of discourse, said, "Whyte is protested, – Figgis and Read stopped."

"What of Grogan?" said Fagan, harshly.

"Asks for time. If he sells his stock at present prices, he 'll be a heavy loser."

"So let him, – say that we'll proceed."

"The writ can't run there; he lives in Mayo."

"We 'll try it."

"We did so before, and the sub-sheriff was shot."

"Attorneys are plenty, – we 'll send down another."

"Hump!" muttered Joe, as he turned over a folio of papers before him. "Ay, here it is," said he. "Oliver Moore wishes to go to America, and will give up his lease; he only begs that you will vouchsafe to him some small compensation – "

"Compensation! That word is one of yours, Mr. Raper, and I've no doubt has a classical origin, – you got it in Homer, perhaps; but, let me tell you, sir, that it is a piece of vulgar cant, and, what is worse, a swindle! Ay, grow pale if you like; but I 'll repeat the word, – a swindle! When a man wants to sell a pair of old boots, does he think of charging for all the blacking he has put on them for the three years before? And yet that is precisely what you dignify with the name of compensation. Tell him if he built a house, that he lived in it; if he fenced the land, that the neighbors' cattle made fewer trespasses; if he drained, the soil was the drier. Your cry of compensation won't do, Raper. I might as well ask an insurance office to pay me for taking care of my health, and give me a bonus whenever I took castor oil!"

"The cases are not alike, sir. If his improvements be of a permanent character – "

"Is this an office, Mister Raper, or is it a debating society?" broke in Fagan. "My answer to Moore is, pay, and go – to the devil, if he likes."

"Sir Harry Wheeler," continued Joe, "writes from Cheltenham that he thinks there must be a mistake about the bill for three hundred and forty odd, – that it was included In the bond he gave in September last."

"File a bill, send for Crowther, and let him proceed against him."

"But I think he 's right, sir; the memorandum is somewhere here. I put it amongst the W's; for we have no box for Sir Harry."

"It's a nice way to keep accounts, Mister Raper; I must say it's very creditable to you," said Fagan, who, when any inaccuracy occurred, always reproached Joe with the system that he rigidly compelled him to follow. "Perhaps it's classical, however; maybe it's the way the ancients did it! But

I 'll tell you what, sir, you 'd cut an ugly figure before the courts if you came to be examined; your Latin and Greek wouldn't screen you there."

"Here it is, – here's the note," said Joe, who had all the while been prosecuting his search. "It's in your own hand, and mentions that this sum forms a portion of the debt now satisfied by his bond."

"Cancel the bill, and tell him so. What's that letter yonder?"

"It is marked 'strictly private and confidential,' sir; but comes from Walter Carew, Esq."

"Then why not give it to me at once? Why keep pottering about every trifle of no moment, sir?" said Fagan, as he broke the seal, and drew near to the window to read. It was very brief, and ran thus: —

Dear Fagan, – Shylock could n't hold a candle to you; such an infernal mess of interest, compound interest, costs, and commission as you have sent me I never beheld! However, for the present I must endure all your exactions, even to the tune of fifty per cent. Let me have cash for the enclosed three bills, for one thousand each, drawn at the old dates, and, of course, to be 'done' at the old discount.

I have just taken a wife, and am in want of ready money to buy some of the customary tomfooleries of the occasion.

Regards to Polly and her fat terrier.

Yours, in haste,

Walter Carew.

"Read that," said Fagan, handing the letter to his clerk, while the veins in his forehead swelled out with passion, and his utterance grew hoarse and thick.

Raper carefully perused the note, and then proceeded to examine the bills, when Fagan snatched them rudely from his hand.

"It was his letter I bade you read, – the gross insolence of his manner of addressing me. Where's his account, Raper? How does he stand with us?"

"That's a long affair to make out," said Joe, untying a thick roll of papers.

"I don't want details. Can you never understand that? Tell me in three words how he stands."

"Deeply indebted, – very deeply indebted, sir," said Joe, poring over the papers.

"Tell Crowther to come over this evening at six o'clock, and write to Carew by this post, thus: —

"Mr. Fagan regrets that in the precarious condition of the money market he is obliged to return you the bills, herewith enclosed, without acceptance. Mr. F., having some large and pressing claims to meet, desires to call your attention to the accompanying memorandum, and to ask at what early period it will be your convenience to make an arrangement for its settlement.'

"Make out an account and furnish it, Raper; we'll see how he relishes Shylock when he comes to read that."

Joseph sat with the pen in his hand, as if deep in thought.

"Do you hear me, Raper?" asked Fagan, in a harsh voice.

"I do," said the other, and proceeded to write.

"There's a judgment entered upon Carew's bond of February, isn't there?"

"There is! Crowther has it in his office."

"That's right. We 'll see and give him a pleasant honeymoon." And with these words, uttered with an almost savage malevolence, he passed out into the street.

Joe Raper's daily life was a path on which the sunlight seldom fell; but this day it seemed even darker than usual, and as he sat and wrote, many a heavy sigh broke from him, and more than once did he lay down his pen and draw his hand across his eyes. Still he labored on, his head bent down over his desk, in that selfsame spot where he had spent his youth, and was now dropping down into age unnoticed and unthought of. Of those who came and went from that dreary room, who saw and spoke with him, how many were there who knew him, who even suspected what lay beneath that simple

exterior! To some he was but the messenger of dark tidings, the agent of those severe measures which Fagan not unfrequently employed against his clients. To others he seemed a cold, impassive, almost misanthropic being, without a tie to bind him to his fellow-man; while not a few even ascribed to his influences all the harshness of the “Grinder.” It is more than likely that he never knew of, never suspected, the different judgments thus passed on him. So humbly did he think of himself, so little disposed was he to fancy that he could be an object of attention to any, the chances are that he was spared this source of mortification. Humility was the basis of his whole character, and by its working was every action of his simple life influenced. It might be a curious subject of inquiry how far this characteristic was fashioned by his habits of reading and of thought. Holding scarcely any intercourse with the world of society, companionless as he was, his associates were the great writers of ancient or modern times, – the mighty spirits whose vast conceptions have created a world of their own. Living amongst them, animated by their glorious sentiments, feeling their thoughts, breathing their words, how natural that he should have fallen back upon himself with a profound sense of his inferiority! How meanly must he have thought of his whole career in life, in presence of such standards!

Upon this day Joe never once opened a book; the little volumes which lay scattered through his drawers were untouched, nor did he, as was his wont, turn for an instant to refresh himself in the loved pages of Metastasio or of Uhland. Whenever he had more than usual on hand, it was his custom not to dine with the family, but to eat something as he sat at his desk. Such was his meal now: a little bread and cheese, washed down by a glass of water.

“Miss Polly hopes you’ll take a glass of wine, Mr. Joe,” said a maid-servant, as she appeared with a decanter in her hand.

“No! Thanks – thanks to Miss Polly; many thanks – and to you Margaret; not to-day. I have a good deal to do.” And he resumed his work with that air of determination the girl well knew brooked no interruption.

It was full an hour after sunset when he ceased writing; and then, laying his head down between his hands, he slept, – the sound, heavy sleep that comes of weariness. Twice or thrice had the servant to call him before he could awake, and hear that “Miss Polly was waiting tea for him.”

“Waiting for me!” cried he, in mingled shame and astonishment. “How forgetful I am; how very wrong of me! Is Mr. Crowther here, Margaret?”

“He came an hour ago, sir.”

“Dear me, how I have forgotten myself!” And he began gathering up his papers, the hard task of the day, in all haste. “Say I’m coming, Margaret; tell Miss Polly I’m so sorry.” And thus with many an excuse, and in great confusion, Raper hurried out of the office, and upstairs into the drawing-room.

Fagan’s house was, perhaps, the oldest in the street, and was remarkable for possessing one of those quaint, old-fashioned windows, which, projecting over the door beneath, – formed a species of little boudoir, with views extending on either side. Here it was Polly’s pleasure to sit, and here she now presided at her tea-table; while in a remote corner of the room her father and Mr. Crowther were deep in conversation.

“Have you finished the statement? Where ‘s the account?” cried Fagan, roughly interrupting the excuses that Raper was making for his absence.

“Here it is, – at least, so far as I was able to make it. Many of our memoranda, however, only refer to verbal arrangements, and allude to business matters transacted personally between you and Mr. Carew.”

“Listen to him, Crowther; just hear what he says,” said Fagan, angrily. “Is not that a satisfactory way to keep accounts?”

“Gently, gently; let us go quietly to work,” said Crowther, a large, fat, unwieldy man, with a bloated, red face, and an utterance rendered difficult from the combined effects of asthma and over-eating. “Raper is generally most correct, and your own memory is admirable. If Miss Polly will give me a cup of her strongest tea, without any sugar, I ‘ll answer for it I ‘ll soon see my way.”

When Raper had deposited the mass of papers on the table, and presented the cup of tea to Crowther, he stole, half timidly, over to where Polly sat.

“You must be hungry, Papa Joe,” – it was the name by which she called him in infancy, – “for you never appeared at dinner. Pray eat something now.”

“I have no appetite, Polly, – that is, I have eaten already. I ‘m quite refreshed,” said he, scarcely thinking of what he said, for his eyes were directed to the table where Crowther was seated, and where a kind of supercilious smile on the attorney’s face seemed evoked by something in the papers before him.

“Some cursed folly of his own, – some of that blundering nonsense that he fills his brains with!” cried Fagan, as he threw indignantly away a closely written sheet of paper, the lines of which unmistakably proclaimed verse.

Joe eyed the unhappy document wistfully for a second or two, and then, with a stealthy step, he crept over, and threw it into the hearth.

“I found out the passage, Polly,” said he, in a whisper, so as not to disturb the serious conference of the others; and he drew a few well-thumbed leaves from his pocket, and placed them beside her, while she bent over them till her glossy ringlets touched the page.

“This is the Medea,” said she; “but we have not read that yet.”

“No, Polly; you remember that we kept it for the winter nights; we agreed Tieck and Chamisso were better for summer evenings – ‘Quando ridono i prati,’ as Petrarch says;” and her eyes brightened, and her cheek glowed as he spoke. “How beautiful was that walk we took on Sunday evening last! That little glen beside the river, so silent, so still, who could think it within a mile or two of a great city? What a delightful thing it is to think, Polly, that they who labor hard in the week – and there are so many of them! – can yet on that one day of rest wander forth and taste of the earth’s freshness.

“L; oro e le perle – i fior vermegli ed i bianchi.”

“Confound your balderdash!” cried Fagan, passionately; “you’ve put me out in the tot – seventeen and twelve, twenty-nine – two thousand nine hundred pounds, with the accruing interest. I don’t see that he has added the interest.”

Mr. Crowther bent patiently over the document for a few minutes, and then, taking off his spectacles, and wiping them slowly, said, in his blandest voice: “It appears to me that Mr. Raper has omitted to calculate the interest. Perhaps he would kindly vouchsafe us his attention for a moment.”

Raper was, however, at that moment deaf to all such appeals; his spirit was as though wandering free beneath the shade of leafy bowers or along the sedgy banks of some clear lake.

“You remember Dante’s lines, Polly, and how he describes —

“La divina foresta —
Che agli occhi tempera va il nuovo giorno,
Senza piu aspettar lasciavi la riva,
Preudendo la campagna lento lento.’

How beautiful the repetition of the word ‘lento;’ how it conveys the slow reluctance of his step!”

“There is, to my thinking, even a more graceful instance in Metastasio,” said Polly: —

“L’ onda che mormora, Fra sponda e sponda, L’ aura che tremola, Fra fronda e fronda.”

“Raper, Raper, – do you hear me, I say?” cried Fagan, as he knocked angrily with his knuckles on the table.

“We are sorry, Miss Fagan,” interposed Crowther, “to interrupt such intellectual pleasure, but business has its imperative claims.”

“I ‘m ready – quite ready, sir,” said Joe, rising in confusion, and hastening across the room to where the others sat.

“Take a seat, sir,” said Fagan, peremptorily; “for here are some points which require full explanation. And I would beg to remind you that if the cultivation of your mind, as I have heard it called, interferes with your attention to office duties, it would be as well to seek out some more congenial sphere for its development than my humble house. I’m too poor a man for such luxurious dalliance, Mr. Raper.” These words, although spoken in a whisper, were audible to him to whom they were addressed, and he heard them in a state of half-stupefied amazement. “For the present, I must call your attention to this. What is it?”

Raper was no sooner in the midst of figures and calculations than all his instincts of office-life recalled him to himself, and he began rapidly but clearly to explain the strange and confused-looking documents which were strewn before him, and Crowther could not but feel struck by the admirable memory and systematic precision which alone could derive information from such disorderly materials. Even Fagan himself was so carried away by a momentary impulse of enthusiasm as to say, “When a man is capable of such a statement at this, what a disgrace that he should fritter away his faculties with rhymes and legends!”

“Mr. Raper is a philosopher, sir; he despises the base pursuits and grovelling ambitions of us lower mortals,” said Crowther, with a well-feigned humility.

“We must beg of him to lay aside his philosophy, then, for this evening, for there is much to be done yet,” said Fagan, untying a large bundle of letters. “This is the correspondence of the last year, – the most important of all.”

“Large sums! large sums, these!” said Crowther, glancing his eyes over the papers. “You appear to have placed a most unlimited confidence in this young gentleman, – a very well merited trust, I have no doubt.”

Fagan made no reply, but a slight contortion of his mouth and eyebrows seemed to offer some dissent to the doctrine.

“I have kept the tea waiting for you, Papa Joe,” said Polly, who took the opportunity of a slight pause to address him; and Raper, like an escaped schoolboy, burst away from his task at a word.

“I have just remembered another instance, Polly,” said he, “of what we were speaking; it occurs in Schiller, —

“Es bricht sich die Wellen mit Macht – mit Macht.”

“Take your books to your room, Polly,” said Fagan, harshly; “for I see that as long as they are here, we have little chance of Mr. Raper’s services.”

Polly rose, and pressed Joe’s hand affectionately, and then, gathering up the volumes before her, she left the room. Raper stood for a second or two gazing at the door after her departure, and then, heaving a faint sigh, muttered to himself: —

“I have just recalled to mind another, —

“‘Eine Blüth’, eine Blüth’ mir brich,
Vom den Baum im Garten.’

Quite ready, sir,” broke he in suddenly, as a sharp summons from Fagan’s knuckles once more admonished him of his duty; and now, as though the link which had bound him to realms of fancy was snapped, he addressed himself to his task with all the patient drudgery of daily habit.

CHAPTER VI. TWO FRIENDS AND THEIR CONFIDENCES

By the details of my last two chapters, I have been obliged to recede, as it were, from the due course of my story, and speak of events which occurred prior to those mentioned in a former chapter; but this irregularity was a matter of necessity, since I could not pursue the narrative of my father's life without introducing to the reader certain characters who, more or less, exerted an influence on his fortunes. Let me now, however, turn to my tale, from which it is my intention in future to digress as seldom as possible. A few lines, written in haste, had summoned MacNaghten to Castle Carew, on the morning of that Friday for which my father had invited his friends to dinner. With all his waywardness, and all the weaknesses of an impulsive nature, Dan MacNaghten stood higher in my father's esteem than any other of his friends. It was not alone that he had given my father the most signal proofs of his friendship, but that, throughout his whole career, marked as it was by folly and rashness, and the most thoughtless extravagance, he had never done a single action that reflected on his reputation as a man of honor, nor, in all the triumphs of his prosperous days, or in the trials of his adverse ones, had he forfeited the regard of any who knew him. My father had intrusted to him, during his absence, everything that could be done without correspondence; for amongst Dan's characteristics, none was more remarkable than his horror of letter-writing; and it was a popular saying of the time "that Dan MacNaghten would rather fight two duels than write one challenge." Of course, it may be imagined how much there was for two such friends to talk over when they met, for if my father's letters were few and brief, MacNaghten's were still fewer and less explicit, leaving voids on either side that nothing but a meeting could supply.

Early, therefore, that Friday morning, Dan's gig and mottled gray, the last remnant of an extensive stable establishment, rattled up the avenue of Castle Carew, and MacNaghten strolled into the garden to loiter about till such time as my father might be stirring. He was not many minutes there, however, when my father joined him, and the two friends embraced cordially, and arm-in-arm returned to the house.

It was not without astonishment Dan saw that the breakfast-table was spread in the same little garden-room which my father always used in his bachelor days, and, still more, that only two places were laid.

"You are wondering, where's my wife, Dan. She never breakfasts with me; nor indeed, do we see each other till late in the afternoon, – a custom, I will own, that I used to rebel against at first, but I'm getting more accustomed to it now. And, after all, Dan, it would be a great sacrifice of all her comfort should I insist on a change; so I put up with it as best I can."

"Perhaps she'll see herself, in time, that these are not the habits here."

"Perhaps so," said my father; "but usually French people think their own ways the rule, and all others the exception. I suppose you were surprised at my marriage, Dan."

"Faith, I was, I own to you. I thought you one of those inveterate Irishers that could n't think of anything but Celtic blood. You remember, when we were boys, how we used to rave on that theme."

"Very true. Like all the grafts, we deemed ourselves purer than the ancient stock; but no man ever knows when, where, or whom he'll marry. It's all nonsense planning and speculating about it. You might as well look out for a soft spot to fall in a steeplechase. You come smash down in the very middle of your speculations. I'm sure, as for me, I never dreamed of a wife till I found that I had one."

"I know so well how it all happened," cried Dan, laughing. "You got up one of those delightful intimacies – that pleasant, familiar kind of half-at-homishness that throws a man always off his guard, and leaves him open to every assault of female fascination, just when he fancies that he is the delight

of the whole circle. Egad, I've had at least half-a-dozen such, and must have been married at least as many times, if somebody hadn't discovered, in the mean while, that I was ruined."

"So that you never fell in love in your prosperous days, Dan?"

"Who does – who ever did? The minor that wrote sonnets has only to come of age, and feel that he can indite a check, to be cured of his love fever. Love is a passion most intimately connected with laziness and little money. Give a fellow seven or eight thousand a-year, good health and good spirits, and I 'll back him to do every other folly in Christendom before he thinks of marriage."

"From all of which I am to conclude that you set down this act of mine either as a proof of a weak mind or a failing exchequer," said my father.

"Not in your case," said he, more slowly, and with a greater air of reflection. "You had always a dash of ambition about you; and the chances are that you set your affections on one that you half despaired of obtaining, or had really no pretensions to look for. I see I 'm right, Walter," said he, as my father fidgeted, and looked confused. "I could have wagered a thousand on it, if I had as much. You entered for the royal plate, and, by Jove! I believe you were right."

"You have not made so bad a guess of it, Dan; but what say the rest? What's the town gossip?"

"Do you not know Dublin as well or better than I do? Can't you frame to a very letter every syllable that has been uttered on the subject? or need I describe to you my Lady Kilfoyle's fan-shaking horror as she tells of 'that poor dear Carew, and his unfortunate marriage with Heaven knows whom!' Nor Bob French's astonishment that you, of all men, should marry out of your sphere, – or, as he calls it, your 'spire.' Nor how graphically Mrs. Stapleton Harris narrates the manner of your entanglement: how you fought two brothers, and only gave in to the superior force of an outraged mamma and the tears of your victim! Nor fifty other similar stories, in which you figured alternately as the dupe or the deceived, – the only point of agreement being a universal reprobation of one who, with all his pretensions to patriotism, should have entirely forgotten the claims of Irish manufacture."

"And are they all so severe, – so unjust?"

"Very nearly. The only really warm defender I 've heard of you, was one from whom you probably least expected it."

"And who might that be?"

"Can't you guess, Watty?"

"Harry Blake – Redmond – George Macartney?"

"Confound it, you don't think I mean a man!"

"A woman, – who could she be? Not Sally Talbot; not Lady Jane Rivers; not –"

"Kitty Dwyer; and I think you might have guessed her before, Watty! It is rather late, to be sure, to think of it; but my belief is that you ought to have married that girl."

"She refused me, Dan. She refused me," said my father, growing red, between shame and a sense of irritation.

"There 's a way of asking that secures a refusal, Watty. Don't tell me Kitty was not fond of you. I ought to know, for she told me so herself."

"She told you so," cried my father, slowly.

"Ay, did she. It was in the summer-house, down yonder. You remember the day you gave a great picnic to the Carbiniers; they were ordered off to India, and you asked them out here to a farewell breakfast. Well, I did n't know then how badly matters were with me. I thought at least that I could scrape together some thirteen or fourteen hundreds a year; and I thought, too, that I had a knowledge of the world that was worth as much more, and that Kitty Dwyer was just the girl that suited me. She was never out of humor, could ride anything that ever was backed, did n't care what she wore, never known to be sick, sulky, nor sorry for anything; and after a country dance that lasted two hours, and almost killed everybody but ourselves, I took her a walk round the gardens, and seated her in the summer-house there. I need n't tell all I said," continued he, with a sigh. "I believe I could n't have pleaded harder for my life, if it was at stake; but she stopped me short, and, squeezing my hand

between both of hers, said: 'No, Dan, this cannot be, and you are too generous to ask me why.' But I was not! I pressed her all the more; and at last – not without seeing a tear in her eye, too – I got at her secret, and heard her say your name. I swore by every saint we could either of us remember, never to tell this to man or mortal living; and I suppose, in strict fact, I ought n't to do so now; but, of course, it 's the same thing as if you were dead, and you, I well know, will never breathe it again."

"Never!" said my father, and sat with his head on his hand, unable to utter a word more.

"Poor Kitty!" said Dan, with a heavy sigh, while he balanced his spoon on the edge of his teacup. "I half suspect she is the only one in the world that you ever seriously wronged, and yet she is the very first to uphold you."

"But you are unjust, Dan, – most unjust," cried my father, warmly. "There was a kind of flirtation between us – I don't deny it, – but nothing more than is always going forward in this free-and-easy land of ours, where people play with their feelings as they do with their fortunes, and are quite astonished to discover, some fine morning, that they have fairly run through both one and the other. I liked her, and she perhaps liked me, somewhat better than any one else that she met as often. We got to become very intimate; to feel that in the disposal of our leisure hours – which meant the livelong day – we were excessively necessary to each other; in fact, that if our minds were not quite alike, our tastes were. Of course, before one gets that far, one's friends, as they call themselves, have gone far beyond it. There's no need of wearying you with detail. Somebody, I 'm sure I forget who it was, now took occasion to tell me that I was behaving ill to Kitty; that unless I really intended seriously, – that's the paraphrase for marriage, – my attentions were calculated to do her injury. Ay, by Jove! your match-making moralists talk of a woman as they would of a horse, and treat a broken flirtation as if it were a breach of warranty. I was, I own it, not a little annoyed at the unnecessary degree of interest my friends insisted on taking in my welfare; but I was not fool enough to go to war with the world single-handed, so I seemed to accept the counsel, and went my way. That same day, I rode out with Kitty. There was a large party of us, but by some chance we found ourselves side by side and in an avenue of the wood. Quite full as my mind was of the communication of the morning, I could not resist my usual impulse, which was to talk to her of any or every thing that was uppermost in my thoughts. I don't mean to say, Dan, that I did so delicately, or even becomingly, for I confess to you I had grown into that kind of intimacy whose gravest fault is that it has no reserve. I 'm quite certain that nothing could be worse in point of taste or feeling than what I said. You can judge of it from her reply: 'And are you such a fool, Walter, as to cut an old friend for such silly gossip?' I blundered out something in defence of myself, – floundered away into all kinds of stupid, unmeaning apologies, and ended by asking her to marry me. Up to that moment we were conversing in all the freedom of our old friendship, not the slightest reserve on either side; but no sooner had I uttered these words than she turned towards me with a look so sad and so reproachful, I did not believe that her features could have conveyed the expression, while, in a voice of deepest emotion, she said: 'Oh, Walter, this from you!' I was brute enough – there 's only one word for it – to misunderstand her; and, full of myself and the splendid offer I had made her, and my confounded *amour propre*, I muttered something about the opinion of the world, the voice of friends, and so on. 'Tell your friends, then,' said she, and with such an emphasis on the word, – 'tell your friends that I refused you!' and giving her mare a tremendous cut of the whip, she dashed off at speed, and was up with the others before I had even presence of mind to follow her."

"You behaved devilish badly, – infamously. If I 'd been her brother, I'd have shot you like a dog!" cried Dan, rising, and walking the room.

"I see it," said my father, covering his face with his handkerchief.

"I am sorry I said that, Watty, – I don't mean that," said Dan, laying his hand on my father's shoulder. "It all comes of that infernal system of interference! If they had left you alone, and to the guidance of your own feelings, you 'd never have gone wrong. But the world will poke in its d – d finger everywhere. It's rather hard, when good-breeding protests against the bystander meddling with

your game at chess, that he should have the privilege of obtruding on the most eventful incident of your existence.”

“Let us never speak of this again, Dan,” said my father, looking up with eyes that were far from clear.

MacNaghten squeezed his band, and said nothing.

“What have you been doing with Tony Fagan, Dan?” said my father, suddenly. “Have you drawn too freely on the Grinder, and exhausted the liberal resources of his free-giving nature?”

“Nothing of the kind; he has closed his books against me this many a day. But why do you ask this?”

“Look here.” And he opened a drawer and showed a whole mass of papers, as he spoke. “Fagan, whom I regarded as an undrainable well of the precious metals, threatens to run dry; he sends me back bills unaccepted, and actually menaces me with a reckoning.”

“What a rascal, not to be satisfied with forty or fifty per cent!”

“He might have charged sixty, Dan, if he would only ‘order the bill to lie on the table.’ But see, he talks of a settlement, and even hints at a lawyer.”

“You ought to have married Polly.”

“Pray, is there any one else that I should have married, Dan?” cried my father, half angrily; “for it seems to me that you have quite a passion for finding out alliances for me.”

“Polly, they say, will have three hundred thousand pounds,” said Dan, slowly, “and is a fine girl to boot. I assure you, Watty, I saw her the other day, seated in the library here; and with all the splendor of your stained-glass windows, your gold-fretted ceiling, and your gorgeous tapestries, she looked just in her place. Hang me, if there was a particle of the picture in better style or taste than herself.”

“How came she here?” cried my father, in amazement. And MacNaghten now related all the circumstances of Fagan’s visit, the breakfast, and the drive.

“And you actually sat with three hundred thousand pounds at your side,” said my father, “and did not decamp with it?”

“I never said she had the money in her pocket, Watty. Egad! that would have been a very tempting situation.”

“How time must have changed you, Dan, when you could discuss the question thus calmly! I remember the day when you ‘d have won the race, without even wasting a thought on the solvency of the stakeholder.”

“Faith, I believe it were the wisest way, after all, Watty,” said he, carelessly; “but the fact is, in the times you speak of, my conscience, like a generous banker, never refused my drafts; now, however, she has taken a circumspect turn, and I ‘m never quite certain that I have not overdrawn my account with her. In plain words, I could not bring myself to do with premeditation what once I might have done from recklessness.”

“And so the scruple saved Polly?” cried my father.

“Just so; not that I had much time to reflect on it, for the blacks were pulling fearfully, and Dan had smashed his splinter-bar with a kick. Still, in coming up by the new shrubbery there, I did say to myself: ‘Which road shall I take?’ The ponies were going to decide the matter for me; but I turned them short round with a jerk, and laid the whip over their flanks with a cut, – the dearest, assuredly, I ever gave to horseflesh, for it cost me, in all likelihood, three hundred thousand.”

“Who ‘d have ever thought Dan MacNaghten’s conscience would have been so expensive!”

“By Jove, Watty, it’s the only thing of value remaining to me. Perhaps my creditors left it on the same polite principle that they allow a respectable bankrupt to keep his snuff-box or his wife’s miniature, – a cheap complaisance that reads well in the newspapers.”

“The Grinder, of course, thought that he had seen the last of you,” said my father, laughing.

“He as much as said so to me when I came back. He even went further,” said Dan, reddening with anger as he spoke: “he proposed to me to go abroad and travel, and that he would pay the cost. But he ‘ll scarcely repeat the insolence.”

“Why, what has come over you all here? I scarcely know you for what I left you some short time back. Dan Mac-Naghten taking to scruples, and Tony Fagan to generosity, seem, indeed, too much for common credulity! And now as to politics, Dan! What are our friends doing? for I own to you I have not opened one of Bagwell’s letters since I left Paris.”

“You ‘re just as wise as if you had. Tom has got into all that Rotundo cant about the ‘Convention,’ and the ‘Town Council,’ and the ‘Sub-Committee of Nine,’ so that you’d not make anything out of the correspondence. I believe the truth is, that the Bishop is mad, and they who follow him are fools. The Government at first thought of buying them over; but they now perceive it’s a cheaper and safer expedient to leave them to themselves and their own-indiscretions. But I detest the subject; and as we ‘ll have nothing else talked of to-day at dinner, I’ll cry truce till then. Let us have a look at the stable, Watty. I want to talk to you about the ‘nags.’” And so saying, MacNaghten arose from table, and, taking my father’s arm, led him away into the garden.

CHAPTER VII. SHOWING HOW CHANCE IS BETTER THAN DESIGN

It was not the custom of the day for the lady of the house to present herself at dinner when the party consisted solely of men, so that my mother's absence from table appeared nothing remarkable. To her, however, it did seem somewhat singular that, although she descended to the drawing-room in all the charming elegance of a most becoming costume, not one of the guests presented himself to pay his respects, or, as she would have said, his dutiful homage. It is possible that my father had forgotten to apprise her that the company of a dinner-party were not usually in that temperate and discreet frame of mind which would make their appearance in a drawing-room desirable. In his various lessons, it is more than likely that this escaped him; and I believe I am not far wrong in wishing that many other of his instructions had shared the same fate. The fact was, that in preparing my mother for the duties and requirements of a novel state of society, he had given her such false and exaggerated notions of the country and the people, she had imbibed a hundred absurd prejudices about them which, had she been left to her own unguided good sense and tact, she would have totally escaped; and while, as he thought, he was storing her mind with a thorough knowledge of Ireland, he was simply presenting her with a terrifying picture of such inconsistency, incongruity, and wrongheadedness that no cleverness on her part could ever succeed in combating.

It is perfectly true that the courtly deference and polished reserve of old French manners, its thousand observances, and its unfailing devotion to ladies, were not the striking features of Irish country-house life; but there was a great deal in common between them, and perhaps no country of Europe in that day could so easily, and with such little sacrifice, have conformed to the French standard of good-breeding as Ireland; and I have little doubt that if left to herself, my mother would have soon discovered the points of contact, without even troubling her head or puzzling her ingenuity over their discrepancies. However that may be, there she sat, in all the attractive beauty of full dress, alone and in silence, save when the door of the distant dinner-room opening bore to her ears the wild and vociferous merriment of a party excited by wine and conviviality.

I know not, I can but fancy, what thoughts of her own dear land were hers at that moment, what memory of delicious evenings spent amidst alleys of orange and lime trees, the rippling fountain mingling its sounds with the more entrancing music of flattery; what visions rose before her of scenes endeared from infancy, of objects that recalled that soft, luxurious dalliance which makes of life a dream. I can but imagine that of this kind were her reveries, as she sat in solitude, or slowly paced up and down the immense room which, but partially lighted up, looked even larger than it was. To cut off every clew to her family, my father had sent back from England the maid who accompanied her, and taken in her place one who knew nothing of my mother's birth or connections, so that she had not even the solace of so much confidential intercourse, and was utterly, completely alone. While in Wales she had been my father's companion for the entire day, accompanying him when he walked or rode, and beside him on the river's bank as he fished; scarcely had they arrived in Ireland, however, when the whole course of life was changed. The various duties of his station took up much of his time, he was frequently occupied all the day, and they met but rarely; hence had she adopted those old habits of her native country, – that self-indulgent system which surrounds itself with few cares, fewer duties, and, alas! no resources.

So fearful was my father that she might take a dislike to the country from the first impressions produced upon her by new acquaintances that he actually avoided every one of his neighbors, hesitating where or with whom to seek companionship for his wife: some were too old, some too vulgar, some were linked with an objectionable "set," some were of the opposite side in politics. His fastidiousness increased with every day; and while he was assuring her that there was a delightful

circle into which she would be received, he was gradually offending every one of his old neighbors and associates. Of the great heap of cards which covered her table, she had not yet seen one of the owners, and already a hundred versions were circulated to account for the seclusion in which she lived.

I have been obliged to burden my reader with these explanations, for whose especial enlightenment they are intended, for I desire that he should have as clear an idea of the circumstances which attended my mother's position as I am able to convey, and without which he would be probably unjust in his estimate of her character. In all likelihood there is not any one less adapted to solitude than a young, very handsome, and much-flattered Frenchwoman. Neither her education nor her tastes fit her for it; and the very qualities which secure her success in society are precisely those which most contribute to melancholy when alone; wit and brilliancy when isolated from the world being like the gold and silver money which the shipwrecked sailor would willingly have bartered for the commonest and vilest articles of simple utility.

Let the reader, then, bearing all this in his mind, picture to himself my mother, who, as the night wore on, became more and more impatient, starting at every noise, and watching the door, which she momentarily expected to see open.

During all this time, the company of the dinner-room were in the fullest enjoyment of their conviviality, – and let me add, too, of that species of conviviality for which the Ireland of that day was celebrated. It is unhappily too true: those habits of dissipation prevailed to such an extent that a dinner-party meant an orgie; but it is only fair to remember that it was not a mere festival of debauch, but that native cleverness and wit, the able conversationalist, the brilliant talker, and the lively narrator had no small share in the intoxication of the hour. There was a kind of barbaric grandeur in the Irish country gentleman of the time – with his splendid retinue, his observance of the point of honor, his contempt of law, and his generous hospitality – that made him a very picturesque, if not a very profitable, feature of his native country. The exact period to which I refer was remarkable in this respect: the divisions of politics had risen to all the dignity of a great national question, and the rights of Ireland were then on trial.

It is not my object, perhaps as little would it be the reader's wish, to enter on any description of the table-talk, where debates in the House, duels, curious assize cases, hard runs with fox-hounds, adventures with bailiffs, and affairs of gallantry all followed pell-mell, in wild succession. None were above telling of their own defeats and discomfitures. There was little of that overweening self-esteem which in our time stifles many a good story, for fear of the racy ridicule that is sure to follow it. Good fellowship and good temper were supreme, and none felt that to be offence which was uttered in all the frank gayety of the bottle. Even then the western Irishman had his distinctive traits; and while the taste for courtly breeding and polished manners was gradually extending, he took a kind of pride in maintaining his primitive habits of dress and demeanor, and laughed at the newfangled notions as a fashionable folly that would last its hour and disappear again. Of this school was a certain Mr., or rather, as he was always called, "Old Bob Ffrench," the familiar epithet of Bitter Bob being his cognomen among friends and intimates. I am unwilling to let my readers suppose, even for a moment, that he really deserved the disparaging prefix. He was, indeed, the very emblem of an easy-tempered, generous-hearted old man, the utmost extent of whose bitterness was the coarseness of a manner that, however common in his own country, formed a strong contrast to the tone of the capital. Although a man of a large fortune and ancient family, in his dress and appearance he looked nothing above the class of a comfortable farmer. His large loose brown coat was decorated with immense silver buttons, and his small clothes, disdaining all aid from braces, displayed a liberal margin of linen over his hips; but his stockings were most remarkable of all, being of lamb's wool and of two colors, a light-brown and blue, – an invention of his own to make them easy of detection if stolen, but which assuredly secured their safety on better grounds. He was a member of Parliament for a western borough; and despite many peculiarities of diction, and an occasional lapse of grammar, was always listened to with attention in the House, and respected for the undeviating honor and manly frankness of his character.

Bob had been, as usual, an able contributor to the pleasures of the evening; he had sung, told stories, joked, and quizzed every one around him, and even, in a burst of confidence, communicated the heads of a speech he was about to make in the House on the question of reform, when he suddenly discovered that his snuffbox was empty. Now, amongst his many peculiarities, one was the belief that no man in Ireland knew how to apportion the various kinds of tobacco like himself, and Bob's mixture was a celebrated snuff of the time.

To replenish his box he always carried a little canister in his great-coat pocket, but never would intrust the care of this important casket to a servant; so that when he saw that he was "empty," he quietly stole from the room and went in search of his great-coat. It was not without some difficulty that he found his way through the maze of rooms and corridors to the antechamber where he had deposited his hat and coat. Having found it at last, however, he set out to retrace his steps; but whether it was that the fresh air of the cool galleries, or the walking, or that the wine was only then producing its effects, certain is it Mr. Ffrench's faculties became wonderfully confused. He thought he remembered a certain door; but, to his misery, there were at least half-a-dozen exactly like it; he knew that he turned off into a passage, but passages and corridors opened on all sides of him. How heartily did he curse the architect that could not build a house like all the world, with a big hall, having the drawing-room to the left and the dinner-room to the right, – an easy geography that any one could recollect after dinner as well as before. With many a malediction on all newfangled notions, he plodded on, occasionally coming to the end of an impassable gallery, or now straying into rooms in total darkness. "A blessed way to be spending the evening," muttered he to himself; "and maybe these rascals are quizzing me all this time." Though he frequently stopped to listen, he never could catch the sounds of a conviviality that he well knew was little measured, and hence he opined that he must have wandered far away from the right track. In the semi-desperation of the moment, he would gladly have made his escape by a window, and trusted to his chance of discovering the hall door; but unfortunately the artifices of a modern window-bolt so completely defied his skill that even this resource was denied him. "I'll take one 'cast' more," muttered he, "and if that fails, I 'll lie down on the first snug place I can find till morning." It became soon evident to him that he had, at least, entered new precincts; for he now found himself in a large corridor, splendidly lighted, and with a rich carpeting on the floor. There were several doors on either side, but although he tried them each in turn, they were all locked. At last he came to a door at the extreme end of the gallery, which opened to his hand, and admitted him into a spacious and magnificently furnished apartment, partially lit up, and by this deceptive light admitting glimpses of the most rare and costly objects of china, glass, and marble. It needed not the poetizing effects of claret to make Bob fancy that this was a fairy palace; but perhaps the last bottle contributed to this effect, for he certainly stood amazed and confounded at a degree of magnificence and splendor with which he had never seen anything to compare. Vainly endeavoring to peer through the dubious half light, and see into the remote distance of the chamber, Ffrench reached the middle of the room, when he heard, or thought he heard, the rustling sounds of silk. It was in the days of hoops and ample petticoats. He turned abruptly, and there stood directly in front of what, in his own description, he characterized as "the elegantest crayture ye ever set eyes upon." Young, beautiful, and most becomingly dressed, it is no wonder if my mother did produce a most entrancing effect on his astounded senses. Never for a moment suspecting that his presence was the result of an accident, my mother courtesied very low, and, with a voice and a smile of ineffable sweetness, addressed him. Alas! poor Bob's mystifications were not to end here, for she spoke in French, and however distinguished the City of the Tribes might be in many respects, that language was but little cultivated there. He could, therefore, only bow, and lay his hand on his heart, and look as much devotion, respect, and admiration as it was in his power to express at that late hour of the evening.

"Perhaps you'll accept of a cup of tea?" said she at length, leading the way towards the table; and as Ffrench said, afterwards, that he never declined drink, no matter what the liquor, he readily consented, and took his place beside her on the sofa. Full of all my father's lessons and precepts about

the civilities she was to bestow on the Irish gentlemen and their wives, the importance of creating the most favorable impression on them, and ingratiating herself into their esteem, my mother addressed herself to the task in right earnest. Her first care was to become intelligible, and she accordingly spoke in the slowest and most measured manner, so as to give the foreigner every possible facility to follow her. Her second was to impose as little necessity on her companion for reply as it was possible. She accordingly talked on of Ireland, of the capital, the country, the scenery about them, the peasantry, – everything, in short, that she could think of, and always in a tone of praise and admiration. The single monosyllable “oui” was the whole stock of old Bob’s French, but, as he often remarked, “we hear of a man walking from Ballinasloe to Dublin with only tu’pence in his pocket; and I don’t see why he should not be able to economize his parts of speech like his pence, and travel through the French dictionary with only one word of it!” Bob’s “oui” was uttered, it is true, with every possible variety of tone and expression. It was assent, conviction, surprise, astonishment, doubt, and satisfaction, just as he uttered it. So long debarred from all intercourse with strangers, it is not improbable that my mother was perfectly satisfied with one who gave her the lion’s share of the conversation. She certainly seemed to ask for no higher efforts at agreeability than the attention he bestowed, and he often confessed that he could have sat for a twelvemonth listening to her, and fancying to himself all the sweet things that he hoped she was saying to him. Doubtless not ignorant of her success, she was determined to achieve a complete victory, for after upwards of an hour speaking in this manner, she asked him if he liked music. Should she sing for him? The “oui” was of course ready, and without further preface she arose and walked over to the pianoforte. The fascination which was but begun before was now completed, for, however weak his appreciation of her conversational ability, he could, like nearly all his countrymen, feel the most intense delight in music. It was fortunate, too, that the tastes of that day did not rise beyond those light “chansonnettes,” those simple melodies which are so easy to execute that they are within the appreciation of the least-educated ears.

Had the incident occurred in our own day, the chances are that some passionate scene from Verdi, or some energetic outburst of despised love or betrayed affection from Donizetti or Meyerbeer, had been the choice, and poor Bob had gone away with a lamentable opinion of musical science, and regret for the days when “singing was preferred to screeching.” Happily the ballad was more in vogue then than the bravura, and instead of holding his ears with his hands, Bob felt them tremble with ecstasy as he listened. Enjoying thoroughly a praise so heartily accorded, my mother sung on, song after song: now some bold “romance” of chivalry, now some graceful little air of pastoral simplicity. No matter what the theme, the charm of the singer was over him, and he listened in perfect rapture! There is no saying to what pitch of enthusiasm he might have soared, had he felt the fascination of the words as he appreciated the flood of melody. As it was, so completely was he carried away by his emotions that in a rapture of admiration and delight he threw himself on his knees, and, seizing her hand, covered it with kisses.

“You’re an angel; you’re the loveliest, sweetest, and most enchanting creature – ” He had got thus far in his rhapsody when my father entered the room, and, throwing himself into a chair, laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks.

“Bob! Bob!” cried he, “is this quite fair, I say?” And the old man, at once alive to the bantering and ridicule to which his adventure would expose him, got slowly up and resumed his seat, with a most ludicrous expression of shame on his features.

“There is no necessity of introducing one of my oldest friends to you, Josephine,” said my father. “He has already done so without my intervention, and, I must say, he seems to have lost no time in pushing the acquaintance.”

“He is quite charming,” said my mother. “We had an old Marquis de Villebois so like him, and he was the delight of our neighborhood in Provence.”

“I see what it is now,” muttered Ffrench, “you are cutting me up, between you; but I deserve it well. I was an old fool, – I am ashamed of myself.”

“Are you going away?” cried my mother.

“What is she saying?” asked he.

“She asks if you have really the heart to leave her,” rejoined my father, laughing.

“Begad, you may laugh now, Watty,” replied he, in a half-angry tone; “but I tell you what it is, you’d neither be so ready with your fun, nor so willing to play interpreter, if old Bob was the same man he was five-and-thirty years ago! – No, ma’am, he would not,” added he, addressing my mother. “But maybe, after all, it’s a greater triumph for you to turn an old head than a young one.”

He hurried away after this; and although my father followed him, and did all in his power to make him join his companions at table, it was in vain; he insisted on going to his room, probably too full of the pleasant vision he had witnessed to destroy the illusion by the noisy merriment of a drinking-party.

Trivial as the event was in itself, it was not without its consequences. Bob Ffrench had spread the fame of my mother’s beauty and accomplishments over Dublin before the following week closed, and nothing else was talked of in the society of the capital. My father, seeing that all further reserve on his part was out of the question, and being satisfied besides that my mother had acquitted herself most successfully in a case of more than ordinary difficulty, resolved on leaving the rest to fortune.

From all that I have ever heard of the society of the time, and from what has reached me by description of my mother’s manner and deportment, I am fully convinced that she was exactly the person to attain an immense popularity with all classes. The natural freshness and gayety of her character, aided by beauty and the graceful duties of a hostess, – which she seemed to fill as by an instinct, – made her the object of universal admiration, – a homage which, I believe, it was not difficult to see was even more pleasing to my father than to herself.

Castle Carew was from this time crowded with visitors, who, strangely enough, represented the most opposite sections of politics and party. My father’s absence during some of the most exciting sessions of parliamentary life had invested him with a species of neutrality that made his house an open territory for men of all shades of opinion; and he was but too glad to avail himself of the privilege to form acquaintance with the most distinguished leaders of opposite sections of the House; and here were now met the Castle officials, the chiefs of Opposition, the violent antagonists of debate, not sorry, perhaps, for even this momentary truce in the strife and conflict of a great political campaign.

CHAPTER VIII. A STATE TRUMPETER

The 27th of May, 1782, was the day on which Parliament was to assemble in Dublin, and under circumstances of more than ordinary interest. The great question of the independence of the Irish Legislature was then to be discussed and determined; and never was the national mind so profoundly excited as when that time drew near. They who have only known Ireland in a later period, when her political convulsions have degenerated into low sectarian disputes, – irregular irruptions, headed by men of inferior ability, and stimulated solely by personal considerations, – can scarcely form any idea of Dublin in the days of the Volunteers. It was not alone that the Court of the Viceroy was unusually splendid, or that the presence of the Parliament crowded the capital with all the country could boast of wealth, station, and influence, but that the pomp and parade of a powerful army added brilliancy and grandeur to a spectacle which, for the magnitude of the interests at stake, and the genius and capacity of those that controlled them, had not its superior in Europe.

The position of England at the moment was pregnant with anxiety; at war with two powerful nations, she had more than ever reason to conciliate the feelings and consult the wishes of Ireland. The modern theory of English necessity being Irish opportunity had not the same prevalence then as in our own day, but still it had some followers, not one of whom more profoundly believed the adage, or was more prepared to stake fortune on the issue, than our acquaintance, Anthony Fagan.

If the Grinder was not possessed of very sage and statesmanlike opinions on politics generally, he was, on Irish questions, fully as far advanced as the patriots of our own time; his creed of “Ireland for the Irish” comprising every article of his political belief, with this advantage over modern patriotism that he was immensely rich, and quite ready to employ his wealth in the furtherance of his conviction. He was no needy adventurer, seeking, as the price of a parliamentary display, the position to which mere professional attainments would never have raised him, but a hard-working, slow-thinking, determined man, stimulated by the ambition that is associated with great riches, and stung by the degradation of low birth and proscribed religion.

Such men are dangerous in proportion as they are single-minded. Fagan, with all his sincerity of purpose, failed in this respect, for he was passionate and resentful to an extent which made him often forget everything else but his desire of a personal reparation. This was his great fault, and, strange enough, too, he knew it. The working of that failing, and his iron efforts to control it, made up the whole character of the man.

The gross corruption which characterized a late period of Irish history was then comparatively unknown. It is very possible that had it been attempted, its success had been very inferior to that it was destined to obtain subsequently, for the whole tone of public feeling was higher and purer. Public men were both more independent in property, as well as principle, and no distinction of talent or capacity could have dispensed with the greater gifts of honesty and good faith. If there were not venality and low ambition, however, to work upon, there were other national traits no less open to the seductive arts of a crafty administration. There was a warm-hearted and generous confidence, and a gratitude that actually accepted a pledge, and acknowledged it for performance. These were weaknesses not likely to escape the shrewd perception of party, and to the utmost were they profited by. The great game of the government was to sow, if not dissension, at least distrust, in the ranks of the national party, – to chill the ardor of patriotism, and, wherever possible, to excite different views, and different roads to success, amongst the popular leaders of the time. There came a day when corruption only asked to see a man’s rent-roll and the list of his mortgages, when his price could be estimated as easily as an actuary can calculate an annuity when given the age and the circumstances of the individual. Then, however, the investigation demanded nicer and more delicate treatment, for the question was the more subtle one of the mixed and often discordant motives of the human heart.

The Duke of Portland was well calculated to carry out a policy of this kind; but I am far from suspecting that he was himself fully aware of the drama in which he acted. He was a plain, straightforward man, of average good sense, but more than average firmness and determination. He came over to Ireland thoroughly impressed with the favorite English maxim that whatever Irishmen wish is assuredly bad for them, and thought, like the old physicians of the sixteenth century, that a patient's benefit was in the exact proportion to his repugnance for the remedy. I am not quite sure that this pleasant theory is not even yet the favorite one as regards Ireland, which, perhaps, after all, might be permitted the privilege so generally accorded to the incurable, to take a little medicine of her own prescribing. Be this as it may, I am convinced that the Duke of Portland was no hypocrite, but firmly believed in the efficacy of the system he advocated, and only made use of the blandishments and hospitalities of his station to facilitate connections which he trusted would at last be concurred in on the unerring grounds of reason and judgment. Whatever people may say or think to the contrary, hypocrisy – that is, a really well-sustained and long-maintained hypocrisy – is one of the rarest things to be met with, and might even be suspected never to exist at all, since the qualities and gifts necessary, or indeed indispensable, to its attainment are exactly of an order which bespeaks some of the first and greatest traits of human nature, and for that reason would make the game of dissimulation impossible; and I would be as slow to believe that a man could search the heart, study the passions, weigh the motives, and balance the impulses of his fellow-men, for mere purposes of trick or deception, as that a doctor would devote years of toil and labor in his art for the sole aim of poisoning and destroying his patients.

Few men out of the lists of party took so great an interest in the great struggle as Tony Fagan. With the success of the patriotic side his own ambitions were intimately involved. It was not the section of great wealth, and there was no saying to what eminence a man of his affluence might attain amongst them. He not only kept a registry of all the members, with their peculiar leanings and party connections annexed to it, but he carefully noted down any circumstance likely to influence the vote or sway the motives of the principal leaders of the people. His sources of information were considerable, and penetrated every class of society, from the high world of Dublin down to the lowest resorts of the rabble. The needy gentleman, hard pressed for resources, found his dealings with the Grinder wonderfully facilitated by any little communication of backstairs doings at the Castle, or the secrets of the chief secretary's office; while the humble ballad-singer of the streets, or the ragged newsman, were equally certain of a "tester," could they only supply some passing incident that bore upon the relations of party.

If not one of the most brilliant, certainly one of the most assiduous of Fagan's emissaries was a certain Samuel Cotterell, – a man who held the high and responsible dignity of state trumpeter in the Irish Court. He was a large, fine-looking, though somewhat over-corpulent, personage, with a most imposing dignity of air, and a calm self-possession of manner that well became his functions. Perhaps this was natural to him; but some of it may well be attributed to his sense of the dignity of one who only appeared in public on the very greatest occasions, and was himself the herald of a splendid ceremonial.

From long association with the Viceregal Court, he had grown to believe himself a part, and by no means an insignificant part, of the Government, and spoke of himself as of one mysteriously but intimately mixed up in all the acts of the State. The pretentious absurdity, the overweening vanity of the man, which afforded so much amusement to others, gave no pleasure to Fagan, – they rather vexed and irritated him; but these were feelings that he cautiously concealed, for he well knew the touchy and irritable nature of the man, and that whatever little information could be derived from him was only come-at-able by indulging his vein of self-esteem.

It had been for years his custom to pay a visit to Fagan on the eve of any great solemnity, and he was snugly installed in the little bow-window on the evening of the 26th May, with a goodly array of glasses and a very formidable square decanter of whiskey on a table in front of him. Fagan, who

never could trust to the indiscreet propensity of Polly to “quizz” his distinguished friend, had sent her to spend the day in the country with some acquaintances; Raper was deep in a difficult passage of Richter, in his own chamber; so that the Grinder was free to communicate with the great official unmolested and undisturbed.

Most men carry into private life some little trait or habit of their professional career. The lawyer is apt to be pert, interrogative, and dictatorial; the doctor generally distils the tiresomeness of the patient in his own conversation; the soldier is proverbially pipeclay; and so perhaps we may forgive our friend Cotterell if his voice, in speaking, seemed to emulate the proud notes of his favorite instrument, while his utterance came in short, broken, abrupt bursts, – faint, but faithful, imitations of his brazen performances in public. He was naturally not given to talking, so that it is more than probable the habit of *staccato* was in itself a great relief to him.

I will not pretend to say that Fagan’s patience was not sorely tried as well by the matter as the manner of his friend. His pursuit of politics was, indeed, under the greatest of difficulties; but he labored on, and, like some patient gold-seeker, was satisfied to wash the sand for hours, rewarded with even a few grains of the precious metal at the end of his toil.

“Help yourself, Sam. That’s the poteen, – this, here, is Kinahan,” said the Grinder, who well knew that until the finish of the third tumbler, Mr. Cotterell’s oracle gave no sound. “Help yourself, and remember you ‘ll have a fatiguing day to-morrow!”

“A great day, – say rather a great day for Ireland,” tolled out the trumpeter.

“That’s to be seen,” replied Fagan, caustically. “I have witnessed a good many of those great days for Ireland, but I ‘d be sorely puzzled to say what has come of them.”

“There are three great days for Ireland every year. There’s the opening, one; the King’s, two; St. Patrick’s, three – ”

“I know all that,” muttered Tony, discontentedly.

“St. Patrick’s, three; and a collar day!” repeated Sam, solemnly.

“Collars, and curs to wear them,” growled out Tony, under his breath.

“Ay, a collar day!” and he raised his eyes with a half devotional expression at these imposing words.

“The Duke will open Parliament in person?” asked Fagan, as a kind of suggestive hint, which chanced to turn the talk.

“So we mean, sir, – we have always done so. Procession to form in the Upper Castle Yard at twelve; battle-axes in full dress; Ulster in his tabard!”

“Yes, yes; I have seen it over and over again,” sighed Fagan, wearily.

“Sounds of trumpet in the court – flourish!”

“Flourish, indeed!” sighed Tony; “it’s the only thing does flourish in poor Ireland. Tell me, Sam, has the Court been brilliant lately?”

“We gave two dinners last week – plain dress – bags and swords!”

“And who were the company?”

“Loftus, Lodge, and Morris, Skeffington, Langrishe, and others – Boyle Roche, the Usher-in-waiting. On Friday, we had Rowley, Charlemont – ”

“Lord Charlemont, – did he dine with the Viceroy on Friday last?”

“Yes, sir; and it was the first time we have asked him since the Mutiny Bill!”

“This is indeed strange, Sam; I scarcely thought he was on such terms with the Court!”

“We forgive and forget, sir, – we forgive and forget,” said Sam, waving his hand with dignity.

“There was young Carew also.”

“Walter Carew, the member for Wicklow?”

“The same – took in Lady Charlotte Carteret – sat next to her Grace, and spoken to frequently – French wife – much noticed!”

“Is he one of the new converts, then?” asked Fagan, slowly; “is he about to change the color of his coat?”

“A deep claret, with diamond buttons, jabot, and ruffles, Mechlin lace – ”

“And the Duke, you say, spoke much with him?”

“Repeatedly.”

“They talked of politics?”

“We talked of everything.”

“And in terms of agreement too?”

“Not about artichokes. Carew likes them in oil, – we always prefer butter.”

“That is a most important difference of opinion,” said Tony, with a sneer.

“We thought nothing of it,” said the other, with an air of dignity; “for shortly after, we accepted an invitation to go down to Castle Carew for a week.”

“To spend a week at Castle Carew?”

“A half state visit.”

“With all the tagrag and bobtail of a Court, – the lazy drones of pageantry, the men of painted coats and patched characters, the women painted too, but beyond the art of patching for a reputation.”

“No, in half state,” replied Cotterell, calmly, and not either heeding or attending to this passionate outburst, – “two aides-de-camp; Mr. Barrold, private secretary; Sir George Gore; and about thirty servants.”

“Thirty thieves in state livery, – thirty bandits in silk stockings and powder!”

“We have made mutual concessions, and shall, I doubt not, be good friends,” continued Sam, only thinking of what he said himself. “Carew is to give our state policy a fair trial, and we are to taste the artichokes with oil. His Grace proposed the contract, and then proposed the visit.”

A deep groan of angry indignation was all that Tony could utter in reply. “And this same visit,” said he, at last, “when is it to take place?”

“Next week; for the present we have much on our hands. We open Parliament to-morrow; Wednesday, grand dinner to peers and peeresses; Thursday, the judges and law officers; Friday, debate on the address – small party of friends; Saturday we go to the play in state, – we like the play.”

“You do, do you?” said the Grinder, with a grin of malice, as some vindictive feeling worked within him.

“We have commanded ‘The Road to Ruin,’” continued Cotterell.

“Out of compliment to your politics, I suppose!”

“Holman’s Young Rapid always amused us!”

“Carew’s performance of the character is better still, – it is real; it is palpable.” Then, suddenly carried beyond himself by a burst of passion, he cried: “Now, is it possible that your heavy browed Duke fancies a country can be ruled in this wise? Does he believe that a little flattery here, a little bribery there, some calumny to separate friends, some gossip to sow dissension amongst intimates, a promise of place, a title or a pension thrown to the hungry hounds that yelp, and bark, and fawn about a Court, – that this means government, or that these men are the nation?”

“You have overturned the sugar-bowl,” observed Cotterell.

“Better than to upset the country,” said the other, with a contemptuous look at his stolid companion. “I tell you what it is, Cotterell,” added he, gravely, “these English had might and power on their side, and had they rested their strength on them, they might defy us, for we are the weaker party; but they have condescended to try other weapons, and would encounter us with subtlety, intrigue, and cabal. Now, mark my words: we may not live to see it, but the time will come when their scheme will recoil upon themselves; for we are their equals, – ay, more than their equals, – with such arms as these! Fools that they are, not to see that if they destroy the influence of the higher classes, the people will elect leaders from their own ranks; and, instead of having to fight Popery alone, the day is not distant when they ‘ll have to combat democracy too. Will not the tune be changed then?”

“It must always be ‘God save the King,’ sir, on birthdays,” said Cotterell, who was satisfied if he either caught or comprehended the last words of any discourse.

It is difficult to say whether the Grinder’s temper could have much longer endured these assaults of stupidity, but for the sudden appearance of Raper, who, coming stealthily forward, whispered a few words in Fagan’s ear.

“Did you say here? – here?” asked Fagan, eagerly.

“Yes, sir,” replied Raper; “below in the office.”

“But why there? Why not show him upstairs? No, no, you ‘re right,” added he, with a most explanatory glance towards his guest. “I must leave you for a few minutes, Cotterell. Take care of yourself till I come back;” and with this apology he arose, and followed Raper downstairs.

The visitor, who sat on one of the high office-stools, dressed in the first fashion of the day, slapped his boot impatiently with his cane, and did not even remove his hat as Fagan entered, contenting himself with a slight touch of the finger to its leaf for salutation.

“Sorry to disturb you, Fagan,” said he, half cavalierly; “but being in town late this evening, and knowing the value of even five minutes’ personal intercourse, I have dropped in to say, – what I have so often said in the same place, – I want money.”

“Grieved to hear it, Mr. Carew,” was the grave, sententious reply.

“I don’t believe you, Tony. When a man can lend, as you can, on his own terms, he ‘s never very sorry to hear of the occasion for his services.”

“Cash is scarce, sir.”

“So I have always found it, Tony; but, like everything else, one gets it by paying for. I ‘m willing to do so, and now, what’s the rate, – ten, fifteen, or are you Patriarch enough to need twenty per cent?”

“I’m not sure that I could oblige you, even on such terms, Mr. Carew. There is a long outstanding, unsettled account between us. There is a very considerable balance due to me. There are, in fact, dealings between us which call for a speedy arrangement.”

“And which are very unlikely to be favored with it, Tony. Now, I have n’t a great deal of time to throw away, for I’m off to the country to-night, so that pray let us understand each other at once. I shall need, before Monday next, a sum of not less than eight thousand pounds. Hacket, my man of law, will show you such securities as I possess. Call on him, and take your choice of them. I desire that our negotiation should be strictly a matter between ourselves, because we live in gossiping times, and I don’t care to amuse the town with my private affairs. Are you satisfied with this?”

“Eight thousand, in bills, of course, sir?”

“If you wish it!”

“At what dates?”

“The longer the better.”

“Shall we say in two sums of four thousand each, – six months and nine?”

“With all my heart. When can I touch the coin?”

“Now, sir; this moment if you desire it.”

“Write the check, then, Tony,” said he, hurriedly.

“There, sir, there are the bills for your signature,” said Fagan. “Will you have the goodness to give me a line to Hacket about the securities?”

“Of course,” said he; and he at once wrote the note required. “Now for another point, Tony: I am going to ask a favor of you. Are you in a gracious mood this evening?”

The appeal was sudden enough to be disconcerting, and so Fagan felt it, for he looked embarrassed and confused in no ordinary degree.

“Come, I see I shall not be refused,” said my father, who at once saw that the only course was the bold one. “It is this: we are expecting some friends to spend a few days with us at Castle Carew, a kind of house-warming to that new wing; we have done our best to gather around us whatever our good city boasts of agreeability and beauty, and with tolerable success. There is, I may say, but one

wanting to make our triumph complete. With her presence I 'd wager a thousand guineas that no country mansion in Great Britain could contest the palm with us."

Fagan grew deadly pale as he listened, then flushed deeply, and a second time a sickly hue crept over his features as, in a voice barely above a whisper, he said, —

"You mean my daughter, sir?"

"Of course I do, Tony. A man need n't read riddles to know who is the handsomest girl in Dublin. I hope you 'll not deny us the favor of her company. My wife will meet her at Bray; she'll come into town, if you prefer it, and take her up here."

"Oh, no, sir; not here," said Fagan, hurriedly, who, whatever plans he might be forming in his mind, quickly saw the inconvenience of such a step.

"It shall be as you please in every respect, Fagan. Now, on Tuesday morning —"

"Not so fast, sir, — not so fast," said Fagan, calmly. "You have n't given me time for much reflection now; and the very little thought I have bestowed on the matter suggests grave doubts to me. Nobody knows better than Mr. Carew that a wide gulf separates our walk in life from his; that however contented with our lot in this world, it is a very humble one —"

"Egad! I like such humility. The man who can draw a check for ten thousand at sight, and yet never detect any remarkable alteration in his banker's book, ought to be proud of the philosophy that teaches him contentment. Tony, my worthy friend, don't try to mystify me. You know, and you 'd be a fool if you did n't know, that with your wealth and your daughter's beauty you have only to choose the station she will occupy. There is but one way you can possibly defeat her success, and that is by estranging her from the world, and withdrawing her from all intercourse with society. I can't believe that this is your intention; I can scarcely credit that it could be her wish. Let us, then, have the honor of introducing her to that rank, the very highest position in which she would grace and dignify. I ask it as a favor, — the very greatest you can bestow on us."

"No, sir; it cannot be. It's impossible, utterly impossible."

"I am really curious to know upon what grounds, for I confess they are a secret to me!"

"So they must remain, then, sir, if you cannot persuade me to open more of my heart than I am in the habit of doing with comparative strangers. I can be very grateful for the honor you intend me, Mr. Carew; but the best way to be so is, probably, not to accompany that feeling with any sense of personal humiliation!"

"You are certainly not bent on giving me any clew to your motives, Fagan."

"I'm sorry for it, sir; but frankness to you might be great unfairness to myself."

"More riddles, Tony, and I 'm far too dull to read them."

"Well, then, sir, perhaps you'd understand me when I say that Anthony Fagan, low and humble as he is, has no mind to expose his daughter to the sneers and scoffs of a rank she has no pretension to mix with; that, miser as he is, he would n't bring a blush of shame to her cheek for all the wealth of India! and that, rather than sit at home here and brood over every insult that would be offered to the usurer's daughter by those beggarly spendthrifts that are at liberty by his bounty, he 'd earn his name of the Grinder by crushing them to the dust!"

The vehemence of his utterance had gone on increasing as he spoke, till at the end the last words were given with almost a scream of passion.

"I must say, Fagan," replied my father, calmly, "that you form a very humble, I trust a very unfair, estimate of the habits of my house, not to say of my own feelings. However, we'll not dispute the matter. Good evening to you."

"Good evening, sir; I 'm sorry I was so warm; I hope I have said nothing that could offend you."

"Not when you did n't mean offence, believe me, Fagan. I repeat my hope that the friends and acquaintances with whom I live are not the underbred and ill-mannered class you think them; beyond that I have nothing to say. Good evening."

Probably no amount of discussion and argument on the subject could so palpably have convinced Fagan of the vast superiority of a man of good manners over one of inferior breeding as did the calm and gentleman-like quietude of my father's bearing, in contradistinction to his own passionate outbreak.

"One moment, sir, – one moment," cried he, laying his hand on my father's arm; "you really believe that one humbly born as Polly, the daughter of a man in my condition, would be received amongst the high and titled of Dublin without a scornful allusion to whence she came, – without a sneer at her rank in life?"

"If I thought anything else, Fagan, I should be dishonored in making this request of you."

"She shall go, sir, – she shall go," cried Fagan.

"Thanks for the confidence, Fagan; I know you 'd rather trust me with half your fortune without a scratch of my pen in return."

Fagan turned away his head; but a motion of his hand across his eyes showed how he felt the speech.

To obviate the awkwardness of the moment, my father entered upon the details of the journey, for which it was arranged that Fagan was to send his daughter to Bray, where a carriage from Castle Carew would be in waiting to convey her the remainder of the way. These points being settled, my father once again thanked him for his compliance, and departed.

I should be only mystifying my reader most unjustifiably should I affect any secrecy as to my father's reasons for this singular invitation; for although the gossipry of the day could adduce innumerable plots and plans which were to spring out of it, I sincerely believe his sole motive was the pleasure that he and my mother were sure to feel in doing a piece of graceful and generous politeness. MacNaghten's account of Polly had strongly excited their curiosity, not to speak of a more worthy feeling, in her behalf; and knowing that Fagan's immense wealth would one day or other be hers, they felt it was but fair that she should see, and be seen, by that world of which she was yet to be a distinguished ornament. Beyond this, I implicitly believe they had no motive nor plan. Of course, I do not pretend to say that even amongst his own very guests, the men who travelled down to enjoy his hospitality, his conduct did not come in for its share of criticism. Many an artful device was attributed to this seeming stroke of policy, not one of which, however, did not more redound to my father's craft than to his character for honorable dealing. But what would become of "bad tongues" in this world if there were not generous natures to calumniate and vilify? Of a verity, scandal prefers a high mark and an unblemished reputation for its assaults, far better than a damaged fame and a tattered character; it seems more heroic to shy a pebble through a pane of plate-glass than to pitch a stone through a cracked casement!

CHAPTER IX. A GENTLEMAN USHER

Among the members of the Viceregal suite who were to accompany his Grace on a visit was a certain Barry Rutledge, a gentleman usher, whose character and doings were well known in the times I speak of. When a very young man, Rutledge had been stripped of his entire patrimony on the turf, and was thrown for support upon the kindness of those who had known him in better days. Whether it was that time had developed or adversity had sharpened his wits, it is certain that he showed himself to be a far shrewder and more intelligent being than the world had heretofore deemed him. If he was not gifted with any very great insight into politics, for which he was free to own he had no taste, he was well versed in human nature, at least in all its least favorable aspects, and thoroughly understood how to detect and profit by the weaknesses of those with whom he came in contact.

His racing experiences had given him all the training and teaching which he possessed, and to his own fancied analogy between the turf and the great race of life did he owe all the shrewd inspirations that guided him.

His favorite theory was, that however well a horse may gallop, there is always, if one but knew it, some kind of ground that would throw him "out of stride;" and so of men: he calculated that every one is accompanied by some circumstance or other which forms his stumbling-block through life; and however it may escape notice, that to its existence will be referable innumerable turnings and windings, whose seeming contradictions excite surprise and astonishment.

To learn all these secret defects, to store his mind with every incident of family and fortune of the chief actors of the time, was the mechanism by which he worked, and certainly in such inquisitorial pursuits it would have been hard to find his equal. By keenly watching the lines of action men pursued, he had taught himself to trace back to their motives, and by the exercise of these faculties he had at last attained to a skill in reading character that seemed little short of marvellous.

Nature had been most favorable in fitting him for his career, for his features were of that cast which bespeaks a soft, easy temperament, careless and unsuspecting. His large blue eyes and curly golden hair gave him, even at thirty, a boyish look, and both in voice and manner was he singularly youthful, while his laugh was like the joyous outburst of a happy schoolboy.

None could have ever suspected that such a figure as this, arrayed in the trappings of a courtly usher, could have inclosed within it a whole network of secret intrigue and plot. My mother had the misfortune to make a still more fatal blunder; for, seeing him in what she pardonably enough believed to be a livery, she took him to be a menial, and actually despatched him to her carriage to fetch her fan! The incident got abroad, and Rutledge, of course, was well laughed at; but he seemed to enjoy the mirth so thoroughly, and told the story so well himself, that it could never be imagined he felt the slightest annoyance on the subject. By all accounts, however, the great weakness of his character was the belief that he was decidedly noble-looking and highbred; that place him where you would, costume him how you might, surround him with all that might disparage pretension, yet that such was the innate gentlemanhood of his nature, the least critical of observers would not fail to acknowledge him. To say that he concealed this weakness most completely, that he shrouded it in the very depth of his heart, is only to repeat what I have already mentioned as to his character; for he was watchful over every trifle that should betray a knowledge of his nature, and sensitively alive to the terrors of ridicule. From that hour forward he became my mother's enemy, – not, as many others might, by decrying her pretensions to beauty, or by any depreciatory remarks on her dress or manner, but in a far deeper sense, and with more malignant determination.

To learn who she was, of what family, what were her connections, their rank, name, and station, were his first objects; and although the difficulties of the inquiry were considerable, his sources of knowledge were sufficient to overcome them. He got to hear something at least of her history, and to trace back her mysterious journey to an ancient château belonging to the Crown of France. Beyond

this, in all livelihood, he could not go; but even here were materials enough for his subtlety to make use of.

The Viceregal visit to Castle Carew had been all planned by him. He had persuaded the Duke that the time was come when, by a little timely flattering, the whole landed gentry of Ireland were in his hands. The conciliating tone of the speech which opened Parliament, the affectedly generous confidence of England in all the acts of the Irish Legislature, had already succeeded to a miracle. Grattan himself moved the address in terms of unbounded reliance on the good faith of Government. Flood followed in the same strain, and others, of lesser note, were ashamed to utter a sentiment of distrust, in the presence of such splendid instances of confiding generosity. My father, although not a leading orator of the House, was, from connection and fortune, possessed of much influence, and well worth the trouble of gaining over, and, as Rutledge said, "It was pleasant to have to deal with a man who wanted neither place, money, nor the peerage, but whose alliance could be ratified at his own table, and pledged in his own Burgundy."

Every one knows what happens in the East when a great sovereign makes a present of an elephant to some inferior chief. The morale of a Viceregal visit is pretty much in the same category. It is an honor that cannot be declined, and it is generally sure to ruin the entertainer. Of course I do not talk of the present times nor of late years. Lord-Lieutenants have grown to be less stately; the hosts have become less splendid. But in the days I speak of here, there were great names and great fortunes in the land. The influence of the country neither flowed from Roman rescripts nor priestly denunciations. The Lions of Judah and the Doves of Elphin were as yet unknown to our political zoology; and, with all their faults and shortcomings, we had at least a national gentry party, high-spirited, hospitable, and generous, and whose misfortunes were probably owing to the fact that they gave a too implicit faith to the adaptiveness of English laws to a people who have not, in their habits, natures, or feelings, the slightest analogy to Englishmen! and that, when at length they began to perceive the error, it was already too late to repair it.

The Viceroy's arrival at Castle Carew was fixed for a Tuesday, and on Monday evening Mr. Barry Rutledge drove up to the door just as my father and mother, with Dan Mac-Naghten, were issuing forth for a walk. He had brought with him a list of those for whom accommodation should be provided, and the number considerably exceeded all expectation. Nor was this the only disconcerting event, for my father now learned, for the first time, that he should have taken his Grace's pleasure with regard to each of the other guests he had invited to meet him, – a piece of etiquette he had never so much as thought of. "Of course it's not much matter," said Rutledge, laughing easily; "your acquaintances are all known to his Grace."

"I'm not so sure of that," interposed my father, quickly; for he suddenly remembered that Polly Fagan was not likely to have been presented at Court, nor was she one to expect to escape notice.

"He never thinks of politics in private life; he has not the smallest objection to meet every shade of politician."

"I 'm quite sure of that," said my father, musing, but by no means satisfied with the prospect before him.

"Tell Rutledge whom you expect," broke in Dan, "and he'll be able to guide you, should there be any difficulty about them."

"Ma foi!" broke in my mother, half impatiently, in her imperfect language. "If dey are of la bonne société, what will you have more?"

"Of course," assented Rutledge. "The names we are all familiar with, – the good houses of the country." Carelessly as he spoke, he contrived to dart a quick glance towards my mother; but, to his astonishment, she showed no sign of discomfort or uneasiness.

"Egad! I think it somewhat hard that a man's company should not be of his own choosing!" said MacNaghten, half angrily. "Do you think his Grace would order the dinner away if there happened to be a dish at table he didn't like?"

“Not exactly, if he were not compelled to eat of it,” said Rutledge, good-humoredly; “but I ‘m sure, all this time, that we ‘re only amusing ourselves fighting shadows. Just tell me who are coming, and I ‘ll be able to give you a hint if any of them should be personally displeasing to his Grace.”

“You remember them all, Dan,” said my father; “try and repeat the names.”

“Shall we keep the lump of sugar for the last,” said Dan, “as they do with children when they give them medicine? or shall we begin with your own friends, Rut-ledge? for we’ve got Archdall, and Billy Burton, and Freke, and Barty Hoare, and some others of the same stamp, – fellows that I call very bad company, but that I’m well aware you Castle folk expect to see everywhere you go!”

“But you’ve done things admirably,” cried Rutledge. “These are exactly the men for us. Have you Townsend?”

“Ay, and his flapper, Tisdall; for without Joe he never remembers what story to tell next. And then there’s Jack Preston! Egad! you ‘ll fancy yourselves on the Treasury benches.”

“Well, now for the Opposition,” said Rutledge, gayly.

“To begin: Grattan can’t come, – a sick child, the measles, or something or other wrong in the nursery, which he thinks of more consequence than ‘all your houses;’ Ponsonby won’t come, – he votes you all very dull company; Hugh O’Donnell is of the same mind, and adds that he ‘d rather see Tom Thumb, in Fishamble Street, than all your court tomfooleries twice over. But then we’ve old Bob Ffrench, – Bitter Bob; Joe Curtis – ”

“Not the same Curtis that refused his Grace leave to shoot over his bog at Bally vane?”

“The very man, and just as likely to send another refusal if the request be repeated.”

“I didn’t know of this, Dan,” interposed my father. “This is really awkward.”

“Perhaps it was a little untoward,” replied MacNaghten, “but there was no help for it. Joe asked himself; and when I wrote to say that the Duke was coming, he replied that he ‘d certainly not fail to be here, for he did n’t think there was another house in the kingdom likely to harbor them both at the same time.”

“He was right there,” said Rutledge, gravely.

“He generally is right,” replied MacNaghten, with a dry nod. “Stephen Blake, too, isn’t unlikely to come over, particularly if he finds out that we ‘ve little room to spare, and that he ‘ll put us all to inconvenience.”

“Oh, we’ll have room enough for every one,” cried my father.

“I do hope, at least, none will go away for want of – how you say, place?” said my mother.

“That’s exactly the right word for it,” cried MacNaghten, slyly. “‘Tis looking for places the half of them are. I’ve said nothing of the ladies, Rutledge; for of course your courtly habits see no party distinctions amongst the fair sex. We’ll astonish your English notions, I fancy, with such a display of Irish beauty as you ‘ve no idea of.”

“That we can appreciate without the slightest disparagement on the score of politics.”

“Need you tell him of Polly?” whispered my father in Dan’s ear.

“No; it’s just as well not.” “I’d tell him, Dan; the thing is done, and cannot be undone,” continued he, in the same undertone.

“As you please.”

“We mean to show you such a girl, Rutledge, as probably not St. James’s itself could match. When I tell you she ‘ll have not very far from half a million sterling, I think it’s not too much to say that your English Court has n’t such a prize in the wheel.”

“It ‘s Westrop’s daughter you mean?”

“Not a bit of it, man. Dorothy won’t have fifty thousand. I doubt greatly if she ‘ll have thirty; and as to look, style, and figure, she’s not to compare with the girl I mean.”

“The Lady Lucy Lighton? and she is very beautiful, I confess.”

“Lucy Lighton! Why, what are you thinking of? Where would she get the fortune I am speaking of? But you’d never guess the name; you never saw her, – perhaps never so much as heard of her. She is a Miss Fagan.”

“Polly – Polly Fagan, the Grinder’s daughter?”

“So, then, you have heard of her?” said Dan, not a little disconcerted by this burst of intelligence.

“Heard of her! Nay, more, I’ve seen and spoken with her. I once made a descent on the old father, in the hope of doing something with him; and being accidentally, I believe it was, shown upstairs, I made Miss Polly’s acquaintance, but with just as little profit.”

“You’ll have more time to improve the intimacy here, Rutledge,” said my father, laughingly, “if MacNaghten be not a rival ‘near the throne.’”

“I’ll not interfere with you, Barry,” cried MacNaghten, carelessly.

Rutledge gave one of his usual unmeaning laughs, and said, “After all, if we except Ffrench and Curtis, there’s nothing to be afraid of; and I suppose there will be no difficulty in keeping them at a safe distance.”

“Bob Ffrench cares much more for Carew’s Burgundy than for his grand acquaintances,” interposed MacNaghten; “and as for Curtis, he only comes out of curiosity. Once satisfied that all will go on in the routine fashion of every other country visit, he’ll jog home again, sorely discontented with himself for the trouble he has taken to come here.”

“I need scarcely tell you,” said Rutledge, taking my father’s arm, and leading him to one side, – “I need scarcely tell you that we ‘d better avoid all discussion about politics and party. You yourself are very unlikely to commit any error in tact, but of course you cannot answer for others. Would it not, then, be as well to give some kind of hint?”

“Faith,” broke in my father, hastily, “I will never attempt to curb the liberty of speech of any one who does me the honor to be my guest; and I am sure I have not a friend in the world who would tamely submit to such dictation.”

“Perhaps you are right. Indeed, I’m sure you are,” broke in Rutledge, and hastened his step till he joined the others.

CHAPTER X. THE COMPANY AT CASTLE CAREW

From an early hour on the following morning, the company began to pour in to Castle Carew, then style and retinue being as varied as may well be imagined, – some arriving in all the pomp and splendor of handsomely appointed equipage; some dashing up with splashed and panting posters; and others jogging lazily along the avenue in some old “conveniency” of a past age, drawn by animals far more habituated to the plough than the phaeton. Amongst those first was conspicuous the singular old noddie, as it was called, in which Ffrench and Curtis travelled; the driver being perilously elevated some dozen feet above the earth, and perched on a bar which it required almost a rope-dancer’s dexterity to occupy. This primitive conveyance, as it trundled along before the windows, drew many to gaze and jest upon its curious appearance, – a degree of notice which seemed to have very opposite effects on the two individuals exposed to it; for while Ffrench nodded, kissed hands, and smiled good-humoredly to his friends, Curtis sat back with his arms folded, and his hat slouched over his eyes, as if endeavoring to escape recognition.

“Confound the rascal!” muttered he between his teeth. “Could n’t he have managed to creep round by some back way? His blasted jingling old rat-trap has called the whole household to look at us! – and, may I never, if he has n’t broken something! What’s the matter, – what are you getting down for?”

“T is the mare’s got the reins under her tail, yer honer!” said the driver, as he descended some half-dozen feet to enable him to get near enough to rectify the entanglement. The process was made more difficult by the complicated machinery of springs, straps, bars, and bolts which supported the box, and in the midst of which the poor fellow sat as in a cage. He was, however, proceeding in a very business-like way to tug at the tail with one hand, and pull out the reins with the other, when, suddenly, far behind, there came the tearing tramp of horses advancing at speed, the cracking of the postilions’ whips adding to the clamor. The horses of the noddie, feeling no restraint from the reins, and terrified by the uproar, kicked up their heels at once, and bolted away, shooting the driver out of his den into a flowerpot. Away dashed the affrighted beasts, the crazy old conveyance rattling and shaking behind them with a deafening uproar. Immediately beyond the hall-door, the avenue took a sweep round a copse, and by a gentle descent wound its course towards the stables, a considerable expanse of ornamental water bordering the-road on the other side. Down the slope they now rushed madly; and, unable from their speed to accomplish the turn in safety, they made a sudden “jib” at the water’s edge, which upset the noddie, pitching its two occupants over head and heels into the lake. By good fortune it was not more than four or five feet deep in this part, so that they came off with no other injury than a thorough drenching, and the ridicule which met them in the laughter of some fifty spectators. As for Ffrench, he had to sit down on the bank and laugh till the very tears came; the efforts of Curtis to rid himself of tangled dead weed and straggling aquatic plants having driven that choleric subject almost out of his wits.

“This may be an excellent joke, – I’ve no doubt it is, since you seem to think so; but, by Heaven, sir, I’ll try if I cannot make some one responsible for it! Yes, gentlemen,” added he, shaking his fist at the crowded windows, “it’s not all over yet; we’ll see who laughs last!”

“Faith, we’re well off, to escape with a little fright, and some frog-spawn,” said Bob; “it might have been worse!”

“It shall be worse, sir, far worse, depend upon it!” said the other.

By this time my father had come up to the spot, and endeavored, as well as the absurdity of the scene would permit him, to condole with the angry sufferer. It was not, however, without the greatest difficulty that Curtis could be prevailed upon to enter the house. The very idea of being a laughing-stock was madness to him; and it was only on the strict assurance that no allusion to the event would be tolerated by my father that he at last gave in and accompanied him.

Insignificant as was this incident in itself, it was the origin of very grave consequences. Curtis was one of those men who are unforgiving to anything like ridicule; and the sense of injury, added to the poignant suffering of a ruined estate and a fallen condition, by no means improved a temper irascible beyond everything. He entered the house swearing every species of vengeance on the innocent cause of his misadventure.

“Time was, sir, when a lord-lieutenant drove to a gentleman’s door in a style becoming his dignity, and not heralded by half-a-dozen rascals, whip-cracking and caracolling like the clowns in a circus!”

Such was his angry commentary as he pushed past my father and hastened to his room. Long after, he sat brooding and mourning over his calamity. It was forgotten in the drawing-room, where Polly had now arrived, dividing attention and interest with the Viceroy himself. Indeed, while his Grace was surrounded with courtly and grave figures, discussing the news of the day and the passing topics, Polly was the centre of a far more animated group, whose laughter and raillery rung through the apartment.

My mother was charmed with her, not only because she possessed considerable personal charms, but, being of her own age, and speaking French with ease and fluency, it was a great happiness to her to unbend once again in all the freedom of her own delightful language. It was to no purpose that my father whispered to her the names and titles of various guests to whom peculiar honor was due; it was in vain that he led her to the seat beside some tiresome old lady, all dulness and diamonds; by some magical attraction she would find herself leaning over Polly’s chair, and listening to her, as she talked, in admiring ecstasy. It was unquestionably true that although most of the company were selected less for personal qualities than their political influence, there were many most agreeable persons in the number. My mother, however, was already fascinated, and she required more self-restraint than she usually imposed upon herself to forego a pleasure which she saw no reason for relinquishing.

My father exerted himself to the uttermost. Few men, I believe, performed the host more gracefully; but nothing more fatally mars the ease and destroys the charm of that character than anything like over-effort at success. His attentions were too marked and too hurried; he had exaggerated to himself the difficulties of his situation, and he increased them tenfold by his own terrors.

The Duke was one of those plain, quiet, well-bred persons so frequently met with in the upper classes of England, and whose strongest characteristic is, probably, the excessive simplicity of their manners, and the total absence of everything bordering on pretension. This very quietude, however, is frequently misinterpreted, and, in Ireland especially, often taken for the very excess of pride and haughtiness. Such did it seem on the present occasion; for now that the restraint of a great position was removed, and that he suffered himself to unbend from the cumbrous requirements of a state existence, the ease of his deportment was suspected to be indifference, and the absence of all effort was deemed a contemptuous disregard for the company.

The moment, too, was not happily chosen to bring men of extreme and opposite opinions into contact. They met with coldness and distrust; they were even suspectful of the motives which had led to their meeting, – in fact, a party whose elements were less suited to each other rarely assembled in an Irish country-house; and by ill luck the weather took one of those wintry turns which are not unfrequent in our so-called summers, and set in to rain with that determined perseverance so common to a July in Ireland.

Nearly all the resources by which the company were to have been amused were of an outdoor kind, and depended greatly on weather. The shooting, the driving, the picnicing, the visits to remarkable scenes in the neighborhood, which Dan MacNaghten had “programmed” with such care and zeal, must now be abandoned, and supplied by occupation beneath the roof.

Oh, good reader, has it ever been your lot to have your house filled with a large and incongruous party, weatherbound and “bored”? To see them stealing stealthily about corridors, and peeping into rooms, as if fearful of chancing on something more tiresome than themselves? To watch their silent contemplation of the weather-glass, or their mournful gaze at the lowering and leaden sky? To hear the lazy, drowsy tone of the talk, broken by many a half-suppressed yawn? To know and to feel that they regard themselves as your prisoners, and you as their jailer? – that your very butler is in their eyes but an upper turnkey? Have you witnessed the utter failure of all efforts to amuse them? – have you overheard the criticism that pronounced your piano out of tune, your billiard-table out of level, your claret out of condition? Have you caught mysterious whisperings of conspiracies to get away? and heard the word “post-horses” uttered with an accent of joyful enthusiasm? Have you watched the growing antipathies of those that, in your secret plannings, you had destined to become sworn friends? Have you grieved over the disappointment which your peculiar favorites have been doomed to experience? Have you silently contemplated all the wrong combinations and unhappy conjunctures that have grown up, when you expected but unanimity and good feeling? Have you known all these things? and have you passed through the terrible ordeal of endeavoring to amuse the dissatisfied, to reconcile the incompatible, and to occupy the indolent? Without some such melancholy experience, you can scarcely imagine all that my poor father had to suffer.

Never was there such discontent as that household exhibited. The Viceregal party saw few of the non-adherents, and perceived that they made no converts amongst the enemy. The Liberals were annoyed at the restraint imposed on them by the presence of the Government people; the ladies were outraged at the distinguished notice conferred by their hostess on one who was not their equal in social position, and whom they saw for the first time admitted into the “set.” In fact, instead of a large party met together to please and be pleased, the society was broken up into small coteries and knots, all busily criticising and condemning their neighbors, and only interrupting their censures by grievous complaints of the ill-fortune that had induced them to come there.

It was now the third morning of the Duke’s visit, and the weather showed no symptoms of improvement. The dark sky was relieved towards the horizon by that line of treacherous light which to all accustomed to an Irish climate is the signal for continued rain. The most intrepid votary of outdoor amusements had given up the cause in despair, and, as though dreading to augment the common burden of dullness by meeting most of the guests, preferred keeping their rooms, and confining to themselves the gloom that oppressed them.

The small drawing-room that adjoined my mother’s dressing-room was the only exception to this almost prison discipline; and there she now sat with Polly, MacNaghten, Rutledge, and one or two more, the privileged visitors of that favored spot, – my mother at her embroidery-frame, that pleasant, mock occupation which serves so admirably as an aid to talking or to listening, which every Frenchwoman knows so well how to employ as a conversational fly-wheel. They assuredly gave no evidence in their tone of that depression which the gloomy weather had thrown over the other guests. Laughter and merriment abounded; and a group more amusing and amused it would have been difficult to imagine. Rutledge, perhaps, turned his eyes towards the door occasionally, with the air of one in expectation of something or somebody; but none noticed this anxiety, nor, indeed, was he one to permit his thoughts to sway his outward actions.

“The poor Duke,” cried MacNaghten, “he can bear it no longer. See, there he goes, in defiance of rain and wind, to take his walk in the shrubbery!”

“And mon pauvre mari – go with him,” said my mother, in a tone of lamentation that made all the hearers burst out a-laughing. “Ah, I know why you Irish are all so domestic,” added she, – “c’est le climat!”

“Will you allow us nothing to the credit of our fidelity, – to our attachments, madame?” said Rutledge, who, while he continued to talk, never took his eyes off the two figures, who now walked side by side in the shrubbery.

“It is a capricious kind of thing, after all, is your Irish fidelity,” said Polly. “Your love is generally but another form of self-esteem; you marry a woman because you can be proud of her beauty, her wit, her manners, and her accomplishments, and you are faithful because you never get tired in the indulgence of your own vanity.”

“How kind of you is it, then, to let us never want for the occasion of indulging it,” said Rutledge, half slyly.

“I don’t quite agree with you, Miss Polly,” said Mac-Naghten, after a pause, in which he seemed to be reflecting over her words; “I think most men – Irishmen, I mean – marry to please themselves. They may make mistakes, of course, – I don’t pretend to say that they always choose well; but it is right to bear in mind that they are not free agents, and cannot have whom they please to wife.”

“It is better with us,” broke in my mother. “You marry one you have never seen before; you have nothing of how you call ‘exultation,’ point des idées romantiques; you are delighted with all the little ‘soins’ and attentions of your husband, who has, at least, one inestimable merit, – he is never familiar.”

“How charming!” said Rutledge, with mock seriousness.

“Is it not?” continued she, not detecting the covert irony of his tone; “it is your intimité, – how you call it?”

“Intimacy.”

“Oui,” said she, smiling, but not trusting herself to repeat the word. “C’est cela, – that destroys your happiness.”

“Egad! I’d as soon be a bachelor,” broke in MacNaghten, “if I only were to look at my wife with an opera-glass across the theatre, or be permitted to kiss her kid glove on her birthday.”

“What he say, – why you laugh?” cried my mother, who could not follow the rapidity of his utterance.

“Mr. MacNaghten prefers homeliness to refinement,” said Polly.

“Oui, you are right, my dear,” added my mother; “it is more refined. And then, instead of all that ‘tracasserie’ you have about your house, and your servants, and the thousand little ‘inconvenances de ménage,’ you have one whom you consult on your toilette, your equipage, your ‘coiffure,’ – in fact, in all affairs of good taste. Voilà Walter, par exemple: he never dérange me for a moment, – I hope I never ennuyé him.”

“Quite right, – perfectly right,” said Polly, with a well-assumed gravity.

“By Jove, that’s only single harness work, after all,” said MacNaghten; “I’d rather risk a kick, now and then, and have another beside me to tug at this same burden of daily life.”

“I no understand you, you speak so fast. How droll you are, you Irish! See there, the Lord Duke and my husband, how they shake hands as if they did not meet before, and they walk together for the last half-hour.”

“A most cordial embrace, indeed,” said Polly, fixing her eyes on Rutledge, who seemed far from being at ease under the inspection, while MacNaghten, giving one hasty glance through the window, snatched up his hat and left the room. He passed rapidly down the stairs, crossed the hall, and was just leaving the house when my father met him.

“The very man I wanted, Dan,” cried he; “come to my room with me for a few minutes.”

As they entered the room, my father turned the key in the door, and said, —

“We must not be interrupted, for I want to have a little talk with you. I have just parted with the Duke – ”

“I know it,” broke in Dan, “I saw you shake hands; and it was that made me hurry downstairs to meet you.”

My father flushed up suddenly, and it was not till after a few seconds he was collected enough to continue.

“The fact is, Dan,” said he, “this gathering of the clans has been a most unlucky business, after all. There’s no telling how it might have turned out, with favorable weather and good sport; but caged

up together, the menagerie has done nothing but growl and show their teeth; and, egad! very little was wanting to have set them all by the ears in open conflict.”

MacNaghten shrugged his shoulders, without speaking.

“It’s an experiment I’ll assuredly never try again,” continued my father; “for whether it is that I have forgotten Irishmen, or that they are not what they used to be, but all has gone wrong.”

“Your own fault, Watty. You were far too anxious about it going right; and whenever a man wants to usurp destiny, he invariably books himself for a ‘break down.’ You tried, besides, what no tact nor skill could manage. You wanted grand people to be grand, and witty people to be witty, and handsome people to look beautiful. Now, the very essence of a party like this is, to let everybody try and fancy themselves something that they are not, or at least that they are not usually. Your great folk ought to have been suffered to put off the greatness, and only be esteemed for their excessive agreeability. Your smart men ought not to have been called on for pleasantries, but only thought very high-bred and well-mannered, or, what is better still, well-born. And your beauties should have been permitted to astonish us all by a simplicity that despised paint, patches, and powder, and captivate us all, as a kind of domestic shepherdesses.”

“It’s too serious for jesting about, Dan; for I doubt if I have not offended some of the oldest friends I had in the world.”

“I hope not,” said MacNaghten, more seriously.

“I am sadly afraid it is so, though,” said my father. “You know the Fosbrokes are gone?”

“Gone? When? I never heard of it!”

“They’re gone. They left this about an hour ago. I must say it was very absurd of them. They ought to have made allowances for difference of country, habits, education; her very ignorance of the language should have been taken as an excuse. The Tisdalls I am less surprised at.”

“Are they gone too?”

“Yes! and without a leave-taking, – except so far as a very dry note, dated five o’clock in the morning, may be taken for such, telling of sudden intelligence just received, immediate necessity, and so forth. But after Harvey Hepton, I ought to be astonished at nothing.”

“What of Harvey?” cried Dan, impatiently.

“Why, he came into my room while I was dressing, and before I had time to ask the reason, he said, —

“‘Watty, you and I have been friends since our schooldays, and it would tell very badly for either, or both of us, if we quarrelled; and that no such ill-luck may befall us, I have come to say good-bye.’

“‘Good-bye! but on what account?’ exclaimed I.

“‘Faith, I’d rather you’d guess my reason than ask me for it, Watty. You well know how, in our bachelor days, I used to think this house half my own. I came and went as often without an invitation as with one; and as to supposing that I was not welcome, it would as soon have occurred to me to doubt of my identity. Now, however, we are both married. Matters are totally changed; nor does it follow, however we might wish it so, that our wives will like each other as well as you and I do.’

“‘I see, Harvey,’ said I, interrupting him, ‘Mrs. Hepton is offended at my wife’s want of attention to her guests; but will not so amiable and clever a person as Mrs. Hepton make allowances for inexperience, a new country, a strange language, her very youth, – she is not eighteen?’

“‘I’m sure my wife took no ill-natured view of the case. I’m certain that if she alone were concerned, – that is, I mean, if she herself were the only sufferer – ’

“‘So, then, it seems there is a copartnership in this misfortune,’ broke I in, half angrily, for I was vexed to hear an old friend talk like some frumpy, antiquated dowager.

“‘That’s exactly the case, Watty,’ said he, calmly. ‘Your friends will go their way, sadly enough, perhaps, but not censoriously; but others will not be so delicately minded, and there will be plenty rude enough to say, Who and what is she that treats us all in this fashion?’

“Yes, Dan,” cried my father, with a flushed brow and an eye flashing with passion, “he said those words to me, standing where you stand this instant! I know nothing more afterwards. I believe he said something about old friendship and school-days, but I heard it imperfectly, and I was relieved when he was gone, and that I could throw myself down into that chair, and thank God that I had not insulted an old friend under my own roof. It would actually seem as if some evil influence were over the place. The best-tempered have become cross; the good-natured have grown uncharitable; and even the shrewd fellows that at least know life and manners have actually exhibited themselves as totally deficient in the commonest elements of judgment. Just think of Rutledge, – who, if not a very clever fellow, should, at all events, have picked up some share of luck by his position, – just fancy what he has done: he has actually had the folly – I might well give it a worse name – to go to Curtis and ask him to make some kind of apology to the Duke for his rude refusal of leave to shoot over his estate, – a piece of impertinence that Curtis has never ceased to glory in and boast of; a refusal that the old fellow has, so to say, lived on ever since, – to ask him to retract and excuse it! I have no exact knowledge of what passed between them, – indeed, I only know what his Grace himself told me, – but Curtis’s manner must have been little short of outrage; and the only answer Rutledge could obtain from him was: ‘Did your master send you with this message to me?’ – a question, I fancy, the other was not disposed to answer. The upshot, however, was, that as the Duke was taking his walk this morning, after breakfast, he suddenly came upon Curtis, who was evidently waiting for him. If the Duke did not give me very exact details of the interview, I am left to conjecture from his manner that it must have been one of no common kind. ‘Your friend,’ said his Grace, ‘was pleased to tell me what he called some home truths; he took a rapid survey of the acts of the Government, accompanying it with a commentary as little flattering as may be; he called us all by very hard names, and did not spare our private characters. In fact, as he himself assured me, fearing so good an opportunity might not readily present itself of telling me a piece of his mind, he left very little unsaid on any topic that he could think of, concluding with a most meaning intimation that although he had refused me the shooting of his woodcocks, he would be charmed to afford me the opportunity of another kind of sport, – I suppose he meant a better mark for me to aim at; and so he left me.’ Though nothing could possibly be in better taste or temper than the Duke’s recital of the scene, it was easy to see that he was sorely pained and offended by it. Indeed, he wound up by regretting that a very urgent necessity would recall him at once to town, and a civil assurance that he ‘d not fail to complete his visit at some more fortunate opportunity. I turned at once to seek out Curtis, and learn his version of the affair; but he and Ffrench had already taken their departure, this brief note being all their leave-taking: —

“Dear Watty, – In your father’s, and indeed in your grandfather’s, day one was pretty sure what company might be met with under your roof. I ‘m sorry to see times are changed, and deeply deplore that your circumstances make it necessary for you to fill your house with Government hacks, spies, and informers. Take my word for it, honest men and their wives won’t like such associates; and though they sneer now at the Grinder’s daughter, she ‘ll be the best of your company ere long.

“My compliments to his Grace, and say I hope he ‘ll not forget that I have promised him some shooting.

“Yours truly,

“M. Curtis.

“A line from Ffrench followed: —

“D. W., – As I came with Curtis, I must go with him; but I hope soon to see you, and explain some things which I grieve to defer even for a short time.

“Now, Dan, I ask you, is this courteous, – is it even fair and manly? They see me endeavoring to bring men together socially who, whatever their political differences, might yet learn to know and

esteem each other in private. They comprehend all the difficulty imposed by my wife's extreme youth and inexperience; and this is the aid they give me! But I know well what it means! The whole thing is part and parcel of that tyranny that a certain set of fellows have exercised over this country for the last century. A blind, misguided, indiscriminate hatred of England and of Englishmen is their only notion of a policy, and they'd stop short at nothing in their stupid animosity. They've mistaken their man, however, this time. Egad! they ought to have tried some other game before they ventured to bully me. In their blind ignorance, they fancied that because I entertained a Viceroy, I must necessarily be a Castle hack. Faith, if I become so yet, they 've only themselves to thank for it. As it is, I had no sooner read that note than I hastened downstairs to seek the Duke, and just overtook him in the shrubbery. I told him frankly the indignation I felt at a dictation which I suffered no man to assume towards me. I said more, – I assured him that no sneers of party, nor any intimidation of a set, should ever prevent me giving the Government a support whenever the measures were such as in my conscience I approved of. I am the more free to say so, because I want nothing, – I would accept of nothing from them; and I went so far as to say as much. 'I 'll never insult you with an offer, Carew,' was the Duke's reply to me, and we shook hands on our bargain!"

"It was that very shake-hands alarmed me!" said Dan, gravely; "I saw it from the window, and guessed there was something in the wind!"

"Come, come, Dan, it's not in your nature to be suspectful; you could n't possibly suppose – "

"I never lose time in suspecting anybody," broke in MacNaghten; "but indeed it's not worth any one's while to plot against me! I only say, Watty, don't be hurried away by any momentary anger with Curtis and the like of him. You have a fine position, don't wreck it out of a mere pique!"

"I 'll go abroad again! I 've lived too long out of this wasps' nest to endure the eternal buzzing and stinging that goes on around me."

"I think you 're right there," said MacNaghten.

My father made no reply, and looked anything but pleased at the ready concurrence in his plan.

"We shall never understand them, nor they us," said he, peevishly, after a pause.

MacNaghten nodded an affirmative.

"The Duke, of course, then, remains here?" said Dan, after a pause.

"Of course he does not," replied my father, pettishly; "he has announced to me the urgent necessity of his return to Dublin, nor do I see that anything has since occurred to alter that contingency."

The tone in which he had spoken these words showed not only how he felt the taunt implied in Dan's remark, but how sincerely to his own conscience he acknowledged its justice. There was no doubt of it! My father's patriotism, that withstood all the blandishments of "Castle" flattery, all the seductions of power, and all the bright visions of ambition, had given way under the impulse of a wounded self-love. That men so inferior to him should dictate and control his actions, presume to influence his whole conduct, and even exercise rule in his household, gave him deep offence, coming as it did at a moment when his spirit was chafed by disappointment; and thus, he that could neither have been bribed nor bought was entrapped by a trick and an accident.

Every one knows that there are little social panics as there are national ones, – terrors for which none can account, leading to actions for which none can give the reason; so here, all of a sudden, all the guests discovered that they had reached the limit of their stay: some had to hasten home to receive visitors, others were engaged elsewhere; there were innumerable calls of duty, and affection, and business, all uttered with the accustomed sincerity, and listened to by my father with a cold acquiescence which assuredly gave no fresh obstacles to the departures.

As for my mother, her graciousness at the leave-takings only served to increase the displeasure her former indifference had created. It seemed as if her courtesy sprung out of the pleasure of being free from her guests; and as she uttered some little polite phrase in her broken language to each, the recipients looked anything but flattered at the alteration of her manner. The Viceroy alone seemed

to accept these civilities literally; he vowed that he had never enjoyed three days more in his life; that Castle Carew and its hospitalities would hold the very first place in his future recollections of Ireland: these and such like, uttered with the very best of manners, and with all the influence which rank could bestow, actually delighted my mother, who was not slow to contrast the high-bred tone of the great personage with the less flattering deportment of her other guests.

It would not be a very pleasing task were we to play the eavesdropper, and, following the various carriages of the departing company, hear the comments now so freely bestowed on the host of Castle Carew. It is true some were kind-hearted enough to see all the difficulties of my father's position in the true light, and to hope that by time and a little management these might be overcome.

There were others less generous; but what they said it would be scarcely more graceful of me to repeat; enough that my mother was the especial mark of the strictures, – the censure of my father went no further than compassion! And oh, dear! when the world condescends to compassion, what execration is equal to it! How beautifully it draws up the full indictment of your failings, that it may extend its clemency to each! How carefully does it discriminate between your depravity and your weakness, that it may not wrong you! But how cutting is the hopefulness it expresses for your future, by suggesting some utterly impossible road for your reformation!

And now they were all gone, – all except Polly Fagan and MacNaghten; but Dan, indeed, was part of the household, and came and went as he liked. Fagan had sent his carriage to Bray to meet his daughter, as had been agreed upon; but a letter from Polly came to say that Madame Carew had pressed her with so much kindness to remain, and that she herself was so happy, that she sincerely hoped the permission might be accorded her. The note concluded by stating that Mr. Carew would visit Dublin by the end of the week, and take that opportunity of leaving her at home.

“Oh, que nous sommes bien, ainsi!” exclaimed my mother, as the little party of four sat down to dinner; and all seemed to applaud the sentiment but my father, who seemed far more thoughtful and grave than his wont. Even this, however, threw no gloom over the rest, who were in the very happiest and best of humors. My mother was in all the ecstasy of her now joyous nature, suddenly emancipated from the toilsome drudgery of a duty she disliked. Polly, flattered by the tone of perfect equality extended to her, and by the unequivocal preference of my mother for her, hourly developed more and more of those graces which only needed opportunity for their growth, and displayed charms of manner and resources of mind that actually delighted her companions; while in MacNaghten's happy nature and gay-heartedness there was the only other element wanting to make the party a most pleasant one.

The arrival of the letter-bag – that little moment which in every country household forms the privileged interruption to every care and every amusement – broke suddenly in upon their carouse; and as my father unlocked the precious sack, each looked eagerly for his share of the contents.

“All for myself, I see,” muttered he; “nothing but ‘Walter Carew’ here. Your creditors are forgetting you, Dan, – not even a note of reminder or remonstrance. Silence, of course, means consent, Miss Polly: your father says nothing against your stay. But what is this, Josephine? This looks as if meant for you; but it has been sent over half the post-offices of the kingdom, with ‘Try Compton Basset, Caresfort, and Chirck Castle,’ I believe this is; there's no making out the address.”

“Plain enough, I think,” cried MacNaghten; “it is, ‘Madame la Comtesse de Carew, à son Château, ou en Ville, Irlande.’”

“At all events, it is for me,” said my mother, breaking the seal with impatience. Scarcely had she opened the letter when she exclaimed, “Oh, la bonne chance, – only think, Walter, here is Emile de Gabriac coming to Ireland!”

“You forget, dearest, that I have never seen him,” said my father, dryly.

“Does that signify?” said she, with enthusiastic rapidity. “Is he not known over all Europe by reputation? That dear Emile, so good, so generous, so handsome, so full of accomplishments, – rides

so perfectly, sings so beautifully. Ah, ma chère, c'est fait de vous," said she to Polly, "when you see him."

Polly only smiled and bowed, with an arch look of submission, while my father broke in, —

"But how comes it that so much brilliancy should waste itself on the unprofitable atmosphere of Ireland? What is bringing him here?"

My mother continued to read on, heedless of the question, not, however, without showing by her countenance the various emotions which the letter excited; for while, at times, her color came and went, and her eyes filled with tears, a smile would pass suddenly across her features, and at last a merry burst of laughter stopped her. "Shall I read it for you?" cried she, "for it will save me a world of explanations. This is dated from our dear old country-house on the Loire, Château de Lesieux: —

"April 20th.

"Ma chère et ma belle Fifine," — he always called me Fifine when we were children. ["Humph!" muttered my father, "read on!" and she resumed:] 'Ma belle Fifine, —

"How the dear name recalls happy hours, gay, buoyant, and brilliant with all that could make life a paradise! when we were both so much in love with all the world, and, consequently, with each other!' Ah, oui," exclaimed she, in a tone so perfectly simple as to make MacNaghten burst out into a laugh, which Polly with difficulty refrained from joining. — "You," continued she, reading, "you, ma belle, have doubtless grown wiser; but I remain the same dreamy, devoted thing you once knew me. Well, perhaps we may soon have an opportunity to talk over all this; and so now no more of it. You may perhaps have heard — I cannot guess what news may or may not reach you in your far-away solitudes — that the Cour de Cassation has decided against me, and that, consequently, they have not only rejected my claim, but have actually questioned my right to the domain of Chasse Loups and the famous jewels which my grandfather received from Isabella of Spain.

"They say — I 'm not going to worry you with details, but they say something to this effect — that as we were engaged with Law in that great scheme of his, — the Mississippi affair they called it, — we stand responsible, in all that we possess, to the creditors or the heirs, as if we ourselves were not the greatest losers by that charlatan of the Rue Quincampoix! Perhaps you never heard of that notorious business, nor knew of a time when all Paris went mad together, and bartered everything of price and value for the worthless scrip of a mountebank's invention. How sorry I am, dearest Fifine, to tease you with all this, but I cannot help it. They have found — that is, the lawyers — that there are two parties in existence whose claims extend to our poor old château by some private arrangement contracted between my grandfather and the then Duc d'Orléans. One of these is Louis's own son, now living at Venice; the other — you'll scarcely believe me — yourself! Yes, my dear cousin, you possess a part right over Chasse Loups. There was a day when you might have had the whole I — not my fault that it was not so!"

"Is this a lover's letter, or a lawyer's, Josephine?" said my father, dryly.

"Ah, you cannot understand Emile," said she, artlessly; "he is so unlike the rest of the world, poor fellow! But I 'll read on.

"It all comes to this, Fifine: you must give me a release, so they call it, and Louis, if I can find him out, must do something of the same kind; for I am going to be married' — [she paused for a few seconds, and then read on] 'to be married to Mademoiselle de Nipernois, sister of Charles de Nipernois. When you went, remember, as a page to the Queen, you never saw ma belle Hortense, for she was educated at Bruges. Alas, oui! so is my episode to end also! Meanwhile I 'm coming to see you, to obtain your signature to these tiresome papers, and to be, for a while at least, out of the way, since I have been unlucky enough to wound Auguste Vallaume seriously, I 'm afraid, — all his own fault, however, as I will tell you at another time. Now, can you receive me, — I mean is it convenient? Will it be in any way unpleasant? Does le bon mari like or dislike us French? Will he be jealous of our cousinage?"

“On the score of frankness, Josephine, you may tell him I have nothing to complain of,” broke in my father, dryly.

“Is it not so?” rejoined my mother. “Emile is candor itself.” She read: “‘At all hazards, I shall try, Fifine. If he does not like me, he must banish me. The difficulty will be to know where; for I have debts on all sides, and nothing but marriage will set me right. Droll enough, that one kind of slavery is to be the refuge for another. Some of your husband’s old associates here tell me he is charming, – that he was the delight of all the society at one time. Tell me all about him. I can so readily like anything that belongs to you, I ‘m prepared already to esteem him.’”

“Most flattering,” murmured my father.

“It will be too late, dear cousin, to refuse me; for when this reaches you, I shall be already on the way to your mountains. – Are they mountains, by the way? – So then make up your mind to my visit, with the best grace you can. I should fill this letter with news of all our friends and acquaintances here, but that I rely upon these very narratives to amuse you when we meet, – not that there is anything very strange or interesting to recount. People marry, and quarrel, and make love, fight, go in debt, and die, in our enlightened age, without the slightest advancement on the wisdom of our ancestors; and except that we think very highly of ourselves, and very meanly of all others, I do not see that we have made any considerable progress in our knowledge.

“I am all eagerness to see you once again. Are you altered? – I hope and trust not. Neither fatter nor thinner, nor paler, nor more carnation, than I knew you; not graver, I could swear. No, *ma chère cousine*, yours was ever a nature to extract brightness from what had been gloom to others. What a happy inspiration was it of that good Monsieur Carew to relieve the darkness of his native climate by such brilliancy!

“Still, how many sacrifices must this banishment have cost you! Do not deny it, Fifine. If you be not very much in love, this desolation must be a heavy infliction. I have just been looking at the map, and the whole island has an air of indescribable solitude and remoteness, and much further distant from realms of civilization than I fancied. You must be my guide, Fifine; I will accept of no other to all those wonderful sea-caves and coral grottoes which I hear so much of! What excursions am I already planning! what delicious hours, floating over the blue sea, beneath those gigantic cliffs that even in a woodcut look stupendous! And so you live almost entirely upon fish! I must teach your chef some Breton devices in cookery. My old tutor, who was a *curé* at Scamosse, taught me to dress soles “*en gratin*,” with two simple herbs to be found everywhere; so that, like Vincent de Paul, I shall be extending the blessings of cultivation in the realms of barbarism. I picture you strolling along the yellow beach, or standing storm-lashed on some lone rock, with your favorite pet seal at your feet.”

“Is the gentleman an idiot, or is he only ignorant?” broke in my father.

My mother gave a glance of half-angry astonishment, and resumed: “A thousand pardons, *ma chère et bonne*; but, with my habitual carelessness, I have been looking at Iceland, and not Ireland, on the map. You will laugh, I’m certain; but confess how natural was the mistake, how similar the names, how like are they, perhaps, in other respects. At all events, I cannot alter what I have written; it shall go, if only to let you have one more laugh at that silly Emile, whose blunders have so often amused you. Pray do not tell your “*dear husband*” of my mistake, lest his offended nationality should take umbrage; and I am resolved – yes, Fifine, I am determined on his liking me.”

My father’s face assumed an expression here that was far too much for MacNaghten’s gravity; but my mother read on, unconcerned: “And now I have but to say when I shall be with you. It may be about the 12th – not later than the 20th – of next month. I shall take no one but François with me; I shall not even bring the dogs, only Jocassee, my monkey, – for whom, by the way, I beg to bespeak a quiet room, with a south aspect. I hope the climate will not injure him; but Dr. Reynault has given me numerous directions about his clothing, and a receipt for a white wine posset that he assures me will be very bracing to his nervous system. You have no idea how susceptible he has grown latterly about noise and tumult. The *canaille* have taken to parade the streets, singing and shouting their odious

songs, and Jocasse has suffered much from the disturbance. I mentioned the fact to M. Mirabeau, whom I met at your aunt's the other night, and he remarked gravely, "It's a bad time for monkeys just now, – 'singerie' has had its day." The expression struck me as a very hollow, if not a very heartless, one; but I may say, en passant, that this same M. Mirabeau, whom it is the fashion to think clever and agreeable, is only abrupt and rude, with courage to say the coarse things that good-breeding retreats from! I am glad to find how thoroughly the Court dislikes him. They say that he has had the effrontery to tell the King the most disagreeable stories about popular discontent, distress, and so forth. I need scarcely say that he met the dignified rebuke such underbred observations merited.

"And now, Fifine, to say adieu until it be my happiness once again to embrace you and that dear Carew, who must have more good qualities than I have known centred in one individual, to deserve you. Think of me, dearest cousin, and do not forget Jocasse."

"The association will aid you much," said my father, dryly.

"Let him have a cheerful room, and put me anywhere, so that I have a place in your heart. Your dearly attached cousin,

"Emile de Gabriac."

"Is that all?" asked my father, as she concluded.

"A few words on the turn-down: 'Hortense has just sent me her picture. She is blond, but her eyes want color; the hair, too, is sandy, and not silky; the mouth – But why do I go on? – it is not Fifine's.'"

"Our cousin is the most candid of mortals," said my father, quietly; "whatever opinion we may entertain of his other gifts, on the score of frankness he is unimpeachable. Don't you think so, Miss Polly?"

"His letter is a most unreserved one, indeed," said she, cautiously.

And now a silence fell on all, for each was following out in his own way some train of thought suggested by the Count's letter. As if to change the current of his reflections, my father once more turned to the letter-bag, and busied himself running hastily over some of the many epistles addressed to him. Apparently there was little to interest or amuse amongst them, for he threw them from him half read, – some, indeed, when he had but deciphered the writers' names; one short note from Hackett, his man of business, alone seemed to excite his attention, and this he read over twice.

"Look at that, Dan," said he, handing the paper to MacNaghten, who, walking to the window slowly, perused the following lines: —

"Dear Sir, – In accordance with the directions contained in your note of Friday last, and handed to me by Mr. Fagan, I

placed at his disposal all the deeds and securities at present in my possession, for him to select such as would appear sufficient guarantee for the sum advanced to you on that day. I now beg to state that he has made choice of the title to Lucksleven silver mine, and a bond of joint mortgage over a French estate which I apprehend to form part of the dowry of Madame Carew. I endeavored to induce him to make choice of some other equally valuable document, not knowing whether this selection might be to your satisfaction;

he, however, persisted, and referred to the tenor of your note to substantiate his right. Of course, I could offer no further opposition, and have now only to mention the circumstance for your information. I have the honor to be, dear sir, respectfully yours,

"E. Hackett."

"Curious enough, that, Dan!" muttered my father. MacNaghten assented with a nod, and handed back the letter.

CHAPTER XI. POLITICS AND NEWSPAPERS

The venality and corruption which accomplished the Legislative Union between England and Ireland admit of as little doubt as of palliation. There was an epidemic of baseness over the land, and but few escaped the contagion. To whatever section of party an Irishman may belong, he never can cease to mourn over the degenerate temper of a time which exhibited the sad spectacle of a Legislature declaring its own downfall. Nor does the secret history of the measure offer much ground for consolation.

And yet what a position did the Irish Parliament hold, but eighteen short years before that event! Never, perhaps, in the whole history of constitutional government was the stand of a representative body more boldly maintained, alike against the power and the secret influence of the Crown; and England, in all the plenitude of her glory and influence, was forced to declare the necessity of finally adjusting the differences between the two countries.

The very admission of separate interests seemed a fatal confession, and might – had a more cautious temper swayed the counsels of the Irish party – have led to very momentous consequences; but in the enthusiasm of victory all thought of the spoils was forgotten. It was a moment of national triumph from which even the coldest could not withhold his sympathies. The “Dungannon Declaration” became at once the adopted sentiment of the national party, and it was agreed that Ireland was bound by no laws save such as her own Lords and Commons enacted.

In the very crisis of this national enthusiasm was it that the Duke of Portland arrived as Viceroy in Ireland. His secret instructions counselled him to endeavor to prorogue the Parliament, and thus obtain a short breathing-time for future action. This policy, in the then temper of the people, was soon declared impossible. Mr. Grattan had already announced his intention of proposing a final settlement of the national differences by a “Bill of Rights,” and the country would not brook any delay as to their expectations.

But one other safe course remained, which was, by a seeming concurrence in the views of the Irish party, to affect that a change had come over the spirit of English legislation towards Ireland, and a sincere desire grown up to confirm her in the possession of “every privilege not inconsistent with the stability of the empire.” Mr. Grattan was induced to see the Viceroy in private, and submit to his Grace his intended declaration of rights. Without conceding the slightest alteration in his plan, the great leader was evidently impressed by the conciliating tone of the Duke, and, with a generous credulity, led to believe in the most favorable dispositions of the Government towards Ireland. The measure in itself was so strong and so decisive that the Duke could not say how it would be received by his party. He had no time to ask for instructions, for Parliament was to assemble on the day but one after; and thus was he driven to a policy of secret influence, – the origin of that school of corruption which ultimately was to effect the doom of Irish nationality.

I am sorry to be obliged to impose upon my reader even so much of a digression; but the requirements of my story demand it. I wish, as briefly, of course, as may be, to place before him a state of society wherein as yet the arts of corruption had made no great progress, and in which the open bribery of a subsequent time would have been perfectly impossible.

This was in reality a great moment in Irish history. The patriotism of the nation had declared itself not less manfully than practically. The same avowal which pronounced independence also proclaimed the principles of free trade, and that the ports of Ireland were open to all foreign countries not at war with England. It is humiliating enough to contrast the patriotic spirit of those times with the miserable policy of popular leaders in our own day; but in the names of the men who then swayed her counsels we read some of the greatest orators and statesmen of our country, – a race worthy of nobler successors than those who now trade upon the wrongs of Ireland, and whose highest aspirations for their country are in the despotism of an ignorant and intolerant priesthood.

The Duke of Portland was not ill suited to the task before him. A man of more shining abilities, one who possessed in a higher degree the tact of winning over his opponents, might have awakened suspicion and distrust; but his was precisely the stamp and temperament which suggest confidence; and in his moderate capacity and easy nature there seemed nothing to excite alarm. “Bonhomie” – shame that we must steal a French word for an English quality! – was his great characteristic; and all who came within the circle of his acquaintance felt themselves fascinated by his free and unpretending demeanor.

To him was now intrusted the task of sowing schism among the members of the Irish party, – the last and only resource of the English Government to thwart the progress of national independence. The Opposition had almost every element of strength. Amongst them were the first and most brilliant orators of the day, – men trained to all the habits of debate, and thoroughly masters of all Irish questions. They possessed the entire confidence of the great body of the people, asserting, as they did, the views and sentiments of the country; and they were, what at that time had its own peculiar value, men of great boldness and intrepidity. There was but one feature of weakness in the whole party, and this was the almost inevitable jealousy which is sure to prevail where many men of great abilities are mixed up together, and where the success of a party must alternately depend upon qualities the most discrepant and opposite. The very purest patriotism is sure to assume something of the character of the individual; and in these varying tints of individuality the Irish Government had now to seek for the chance of instilling those doubts and hesitations which ultimately must lead to separation.

Nor was this the only artifice to which they descended. They also invented a policy which in later days has been essayed with very indifferent success, which was, to outbid the national party in generosity, and to become actual benefactors where mere justice was asked at their hands, – a very dangerous game, which, however well adapted for a critical emergency, is one of the greatest peril as a line of policy and a system of government. In the spirit of this new tactic was it that Mr. Bagenal’s motion to confer some great mark of national gratitude on Mr. Grattan was quickly followed by an offer of the Viceroy to bestow upon him the Viceregal palace in the Phoenix Park, as “a suitable residence for one who had conferred the greatest services on his country, and as the highest proof the Government could give of their value of such services.” A proposal of such unbounded generosity was sure to dim the lustre of the popular enthusiasm, and at the same time cast a shadow of ministerial protection over the patriot himself, who, in the event of acceptance, would have been the recipient of royal, and not of national, bounty. And when, in fact, the grant of a sum of money was voted by Parliament, the splendor of the gift was sadly tarnished by the discussion that accompanied it!

Enough has here been said to show the general policy of that short but eventful administration; and now to our story.

My father’s reception of the Viceroy had blazed in all the ministerial papers with a kind of triumphant announcement of the progress the Government were making in the esteem and confidence of the Irish gentry. Walter Carew was quoted as the representative of a class eminently national, and one most unlikely to be the mark for Castle intrigue or seduction. His large fortune was expatiated on, and an “authentic assurance” put forth that he had already refused the offer of being made a Privy Councillor. These statements were sure to provoke rejoinder. The national papers denied that the hospitalities of Castle Carew had any peculiar or political significance. It was very natural that one of the first of the gentry should receive the representative of his Sovereign with honor, and pay him every possible mark of respect and attention. But that Walter Carew had done any more than this, or had sacrificed anything of his old connection with his party, the best contradiction lay in the fact that his guests contained many of the very foremost and least compromising men of the Liberal party; and “Curtis” was quoted in a very conspicuous type as the shortest refutation of such a charge.

It was, unfortunately, a moment of political inaction – a lull in the storm of Parliamentary conflict – when this discussion originated; and the newspapers were but too happy to have any theme to occupy the attention of their readers. The Castle press became more confident and insulting every

day, and at last tauntingly asked why and how did this great champion of nationality, – Curtis, – take leave of Castle Carew? The question was unreplied to, and consequently appeared again, and in larger capitals, followed by an article full of innuendo and insinuation, and conveying the most impertinent allusions to the antiquated section of party to which Curtis belonged.

It is notorious that a subject totally devoid of any interest in itself will, by the bare force of repetition, assume a degree of importance far above its due, and ultimately engage the sympathies of many for or against it. Such was the case here; certain personalities, that occasionally were thrown out, giving a piquancy to the controversy, and investing it with the attraction of town gossip. “Falkner’s Journal,” “The Press,” “The Post,” and “The Freeman” appeared each morning with some new contribution on the same theme; and letters from, and contradictions to, “A Visitor at Castle Carew,” continued to amuse the world of Dublin.

The fashionable circles enjoyed recitals which contained the names of so many of their own set; the less distinguished were pleased with even such passing peeps at a world from which they were excluded; and thus the discussion very soon usurped the place of all other subjects in public interest.

It was remarked throughout the controversy that the weight of authority lay all with the Castle press. Whatever bore the stamp of real information was on that side; and the national journals were left merely to guess and surmise, while their opponents made distinct assertions. At last, to the astonishment of the town, appeared a letter in “Falkner’s Journal” from Curtis. He had been ill of the gout; and, as it seemed, had only become aware of the polemic the preceding day. Indeed, the tone of the epistle showed that the irritability consequent on his malady was still over him. After a brief explanation of his silence, he went on thus:

“The Castle hacks have asked, Why and how did Curtis take his leave of Castle Carew? Now, without inquiring by what right these low scullions presume to put such a question, I ‘ll tell them: Curtis left when he discovered the company by whom he was surrounded; when he found that he should sit down at the same table with a knavish pack of English adventurers, bankrupt in character, and beggars in pocket.

“When he saw the house where his oldest friend in the world was wont to gather round him all that was eminently Irish, and where a generous hospitality developed a hearty and noble conviviality, converted into a den of scheming and intriguing politicians, seeking to snare support by low flattery, or to entrap a vote, in the confidence of the bottle; when he saw this, and more than this, – that the best names and the best blood in the land were slighted, in order to show some special and peculiar attention to vulgar wealth or still more vulgar pretension, Curtis thought it high time to take his leave. This is the why; and as to the how, he went away in the same old conveniency that he arrived by; and, though drawn by a sorry hack, and driven by a ragged Irishman, he felt prouder as he sat in it than if his place had been beside a duke in the king’s livery, with a coach paid for out of the pockets of the people.

“This is the answer, therefore, to your correspondent. And if he wants any further information, will you tell him that it will be more in accordance with the habits of Irish gentlemen if he’ll address himself personally to Mr. Curtis, 12, Ely Place, than by any appeal in the columns of a newspaper.

“And now, Mr. Editor, a word for yourself and the others. I know nothing about the habits of your order, nor the etiquette of the press; but this I do know: I am a private gentleman, living, so far, at least, as you and the like of you are concerned, out of the world; I am very unlikely to fill a paragraph either among the marriages or the births; and if – mark me well, for I am not joking – you, or any of you, print my name again in your pages, except to announce my decease, I will break every bone in your body; and this ‘without prejudice,’ as the attorneys say, to any future proceedings I may reserve for your correspondent.”

None who knew Curtis doubted for an instant the authenticity of this letter, though many at the time fancied it must be a queer quiz upon his style. The effect of it was, however, marvellous; for, in the most implicit confidence that he meant to keep his word, his name entirely dropped out of the

discussion, which, however, raged as violently, if not more violently, than ever. Personalities of the most offensive kind were interchanged; and the various guests were held up, with little histories of their private life, by the journals of one side or the other.

Up to this moment my father's name had never been regularly introduced into the discussion. Regrets, it is true, were insinuated that he who could afford the shortest and most satisfactory explanations of everything should not condescend to give the public such information. It was deplored that one who so long enjoyed the confidence of the national party should feel himself bound to maintain a silence on questions which a few words would suffice to make intelligible. Gradually these regrets grew into remonstrances, and even threatened to become reproach. Anonymous letters, in the same spirit, were addressed to him in great numbers; but they all failed in their object, – for the best reason, that my father saw none of them. A feverish cold, attended with some return of an old gout attack, had confined him to bed for some weeks, so that he had never heard of the controversy; all the newspapers, filled as they were with it, having been cautiously withheld from him by the careful watchfulness of MacNaghten.

Such was the state of matters as my father, still weak from his attack, descended, for the first time, to the drawing-room. MacNaghten had persuaded my mother to accompany him on a short drive through the grounds, when my father, whom they had left in his room, thought he would make an effort to get downstairs, and surprise them on their return. He was seated at an open window that looked out upon a flower-garden, enjoying, with all an invalid's relish, the balmy air of a summer's day, and feeling as if he drank in health at every stir of the leaves by the light wind. His illness had not only greatly debilitated him, but had even induced a degree of indolent inaction very foreign to the active habit of his mind in health; and instead of experiencing his wonted curiosity to know what the world had been doing during his illness, he was actually happy in the thought of the perfect repose he was enjoying, undisturbed by a single care. The rattling of wheels on the ground at last gave token of some one coming, and a few moments after, my father heard the sound of voices in the hall. Resolved to deny himself to all strangers, he had risen to reach the bell, when the door opened, and Rutledge entered.

"Why, they told me you were in bed, Carew," cried he, endeavoring by a half-jocular manner to conceal the shock my father's wasted appearance imparted. "They said I could not possibly see you, so that I had to send up a few lines on my card to say how urgently I wished it, and meanwhile came in to await your answer."

"They only said truly," muttered my father. "I have crept down to-day for the first time, and I 'm not quite sure that I have done prudently."

"What has it been? – gout – rheumatic fever?"

"Neither; a bad cold neglected, and then an old ague on the back of it."

"And of course the fellows have bled and blistered you, without mercy. My medical skill is borrowed from the stable: hot mashies and double body-clothes are generally enough for a common attack. But rich fellows like you cannot get off so cheaply. And madam – how is she?"

"Perfectly well, thank you. And how are all your friends?"

"As well as men can be who are worried and badgered every hour of the twenty-four. It 's no use in sending Englishmen here, they are never trusted! I don't believe it's possible to find an honest man, nor a truer friend to Ireland, than Portland; but his Saxon blood is quite enough to mar his utility and poison every effort he makes to be of service."

"The children are paying off the scores of their fathers, Rutledge. The sentiment that has taken some centuries to mature, can scarcely be treated like a mere prejudice."

"Very true; but what bad policy it is – as policy – to obstruct the flow of concessions, even coming from a suspected channel. It 's rather too hard to criticise them for doing the very things we ask them."

"I have not looked into a newspaper these few weeks," said my father, half wearied of the theme.

“So that you know nothing, then, of – ” He stopped short, for he just caught himself in time.

“I know nothing whatever of the events that have occurred in that interval; and – however inglorious the confession, Rutledge, I must make it – I ‘d almost as soon live over my attack again as hear them. Take it as a sick man’s peevishness or sound philosophy, as you may; but, in the jarring, squabbling world we live in, there ‘s nothing so good as to let bygones be bygones.”

“That’s taking for granted that anything is ever a ‘bygone,’ Walter; but, faith, my experience says that we are feeling, to the end of centuries, the results of the petty mischances that befell us in the beginning of them.”

My father sighed, but it was more in weariness than sorrow; and Rutledge said, —

“I came out to have a long chat with you, Walter, about various things; but I fear talking fatigues you.”

“It does fatigue me, – I’m not equal to it,” said my father, faintly.

“It’s unlucky too,” said the other, half peevishly, “one so seldom can catch you alone; and though MacNaghten is the best fellow in the world – ”

“You must still say nothing against him, at least in my hearing,” added my father, as if to finish the sentence for him.

“I was only going to observe that in all that regards politics – ”

“Pardon my interrupting you again,” broke in my father, “but Dan never pretended to know anything about them; nor is it likely that a fellow that felt the turf a contamination will try to cultivate his morals by the intrigues of party.”

Rutledge affected to laugh at the sneering remark, and after a moment resumed, —

“Do you know, then, it was precisely about that very subject of politics I came out to talk with you to-day. The Duke told me of the generous way you expressed yourself to him during his visit here, and that although not abating anything of your attachment to what you feel a national cause, you never would tie yourself hand and foot to party, but stand free to use your influence at the dictates of your own honest conviction. Now, although there is no very important question at issue, there are a number of petty, irritating topics kept continually before Parliament by the Irish party, which, without the slightest pretension to utility, are used as means of harassing and annoying the Government.”

“I never heard of this before, Rutledge; but I know well, if the measures you speak of have Grattan and Flood and Ponsonby, and others of the same stamp, to support them, they are neither frivolous nor contemptible; and if they be not advocated by the leaders of the Irish party, you can afford to treat them with better temper.”

“Be that as it may, Walter, the good men of the party do not side with these fellows. But I see all this worries you, so let ‘s forget it!” And so, taking a turn through the room, he stopped opposite a racing print, and said: “Poor old Gadfly, how she reminds me of old times! going along with her head low, and looking dead-beat when she was just coming to her work. That was the best mare ever you had, Carew!”

“And yet I lost heavily on her,” said my father, with a half sigh.

“Lost! Why the report goes that you gained above twenty thousand by her the last year she ran.”

“‘Common report,’ as Figaro says, ‘is a common liar;’ my losses were very nearly one-half more! It was a black year in my life. I began it badly in Ireland, and ended it worse abroad!”

The eager curiosity with which Rutledge listened, suddenly caught my father’s attention, and he stopped short, saying: “These are old stories now, and scarcely worth remembering. But here comes my wife; she ‘ll be glad to see you, and hear all the news of the capital, for she has been leading a stupid life of it these some weeks back.”

However uneasy my mother and MacNaghten might have been lest Rutledge should have alluded to the newspaper attacks, they were soon satisfied on that point, and the evening passed over pleasantly in discussing the sayings and doings of the Dublin world.

It was late when Rutledge rose to take his leave, and my father had so far rallied by the excitement of conversation that he already felt himself restored to health; and his last words to his guest at parting were, —

“I’ll call and see you, Rutledge, before the week is over.”

CHAPTER XII. SHOWING THAT “WHAT IS CRADLED IN SHAME IS HEARSED IN

SORROW.”

Accustomed all his life to the flattery which surrounds a position of some eminence, my father was not a little piqued at the coldness of his friends during his illness. The inquiries after him were neither numerous nor hearty. Some had called once or twice to ask how he was; others had written brief excuses for their absence; and many contented themselves with hearing that it was a slight attack, which a few days would see the end of. Perhaps there were not many men in the kingdom less given to take umbrage at trifles than my father. Naturally disposed to take the bold and open line of action in every affair of life, he never suspected the possibility of a covert insult; and that any one could cherish ill-feeling to another, without a palpable avowal of hostility, was a thing above his conception. At any other time, therefore, this negligence, or indifference, or whatever it was, would not have occasioned him a moment's unpleasantness. He would have explained it to himself in a dozen ways, if it ever occurred to him to require explanation. Now, however, he was irritable from the effects of a malady peculiarly disposed to ruffle nervous susceptibility; while the chagrin of the late Viceregal visit, and its abrupt termination, was still over him. There are little eras in the lives of the best-tempered men, when everything is viewed in wrong and discordant colors, and when, by a perverse ingenuity, they seek out reasons for their own unhappiness in events and incidents that have no possible bearing on the question. Having once persuaded himself that his friends were faithless to him, he set about accounting for it by every casuistry he could think of. I have lived too long abroad; I have mixed too much in the great world, thought he, to be able to conform to this small and narrow circle. I am not local enough for them. I cannot trade on the petty prejudices they love to cherish, and which they foolishly think means being national. My wider views of life are a rebuke to their pettiness; and it 's clear we do not suit each other. To preserve my popularity I should have lived at home, and married at home; never soared beyond a topic of Irish growth, and voted at the tail of those two or three great men who comprise within themselves all that we know of Irish independence. “Even idolatry would be dear at that price,” cried he, aloud, at the end of his reflections, – bitter and unpleasant reveries in which he had been sunk as he travelled up to town some few days after the events related in the last chapter.

Matters of business with his law agent had called him to the capital, where he expected to be detained for a day or two. My mother had not accompanied him, her state of health at the time requiring rest and quietude. Alone, an invalid, and in a frame of, to him, unusual depression, he arrived at his hotel at nightfall. It was not the “Drogheda Arms,” where he stopped habitually, but the “Clare,” a smaller and less frequented house in the same street, and where he hoped to avoid meeting with his ordinary acquaintances.

Vexed with everything, even to the climate, to which he wrongfully ascribed the return of his malady, he was bent on making immediate arrangements to leave Ireland, and forever. His pecuniary affairs were, it is true, in a condition of great difficulty and embarrassment; still, with every deduction, a very large income, or at least what for the Continent would be thought so, would remain; and with this he determined to go abroad and seek out some spot more congenial to his tastes and likings, and, as he also fancied, more favorable to his health.

The hotel was almost full, and my father with difficulty obtained a couple of rooms; and even for these he was obliged to await the departure of the occupant, which he was assured would take place immediately. In the mean while, he had ordered his supper in the coffee-room, where now he was seated, in one of those gloomy looking stalls which in those times were supposed to comprise all that could be desired of comfort and isolation.

It was, indeed, a new thing for him to find himself thus, – he, the rich, the flattered, the high-spirited, the centre of so much worship and adulation, whose word was law upon the turf, and whose caprices gave the tone to fashion, the solitary occupant of a dimly lighted division in a public coffee-room, undistinguished and unknown. There was something in the abrupt indifference of the waiter that actually pleased him, ministering, as it did, to the self-tormentings of his reflections. All seemed to say, “This is what you become when stripped of the accidents of wealth and fortune, – these are your real claims.” There was no deference to him there. He had asked for the newspaper, and been curtly informed “that ‘Falkner’ was engaged by the gentleman in the next box;” so was he left to his own lucubrations, broken in upon only by the drowsy, monotonous tone of his neighbor in the adjoining stall, who was reading out the paper to a friend. Either the reader had warmed into a more distinct elocution, or my father’s ears had become more susceptible by habit, but at length he found himself enabled to overhear the contents of the journal, which seemed to be a rather flippant criticism on a late debate in the Irish House of Commons.

A motion had been made by the Member for Cavan for leave to bring in a bill to build ships of war for Ireland, – a proposition so palpably declaring a separate and independent nationality that it not only incurred the direct opposition of Government, but actually met with the disapprobation of the chief men of the Liberal party, who saw all the injury that must accrue to just and reasonable demands, by a course of policy thus exaggerated. “Falkner” went even further; for he alleged that the motion was a trick of the Castle party, who were delighted to see the patriots hastening their own destruction, by a line of action little short of treason. The arguments of the journalist in support of this view were numerous and acute. He alleged the utter impossibility of the measure ever being accepted by the House, or sanctioned by the Crown. He showed its insufficiency for the objects proposed, were it even to become law; and, lastly, he proceeded to display all the advantages the Government might derive from every passing source of disunion amongst the Irish party, – schisms which, however insignificant at first, were daily widening into fatal breaches of all confidence. His last argument was based on the fact that had the Ministry anticipated any serious trouble by the discussion, they would never have displayed such utter indifference about mustering their forces. “We saw not,” said the writer, “the accustomed names of Townley, Tisdale, Loftus, Skeffington, and fifty more such, on the division. Old Roach did n’t whistle up one of his pack, but hunted down the game with the fat poodles that waddle after the Viceroy through the Castle-yard.”

“M’Cleary had a caricature of the Portland hunt this morning in his window,” cried the listener; “and capital likenesses there are of Bob Uniack and Vandeleur. Morris, too, is represented by a lame dog that stands on a little eminence and barks vigorously, but makes no effort to follow the chase.”

“Much they care for all the ridicule and all the obloquy you can throw on them,” replied the reader. “They well know that the pensions and peerages that await them will survive newspaper abuse, though every word of it was true as Gospel. Now, here’s a list of them alphabetically arranged; and will you tell me how many will read or remember one line of them a dozen years hence? Besides, there is a kind of exaggeration in these attacks that deprives them of credit; when you read such stories as that of Carew, for instance, throwing a main with the dice to decide whether or not he’d vote with the Government.”

“I would not say that it was impossible, however,” broke in the other. “Carew’s a confirmed gambler, and we know what that means; and as to his having a particle of principle, if Rutledge’s story be true, he has done far worse than this.”

My father tried to arise from his seat; he even attempted to call out, and impose silence on those whose next words might possibly contain an insult irreparable forever: but he could not do either; a cold sweat broke over him, and he sat powerless and almost fainting, while they continued: —

“I’d be slow to take Master Bob’s word, either in praise or dispraise of any man,” said the first speaker.

“So should I, if he could make it the subject of a wager,” said the other; “but here is a case quite removed from all chance of the betting-ring.”

“And what does it amount to, if true?” said the other. “He married somebody’s illegitimate daughter. Look at the peerage; look at one half the small sovereignties of Europe.”

“That’s not the worst of it at all,” broke in the former. “It was the way he got his wife.”

“Then I suppose I have not heard the story aright. How was it?”

“Rutledge’s version is something in this wise: Carew had won such enormous sums at play from one of the French princes that at last he actually held in his hands some of the rarest of the crown jewels as pledges. One of the ministers, having heard of the transaction, went to the prince and insisted, under threat of a public exposure, on an immediate settlement of the debt. In this terrible dilemma, the prince had nothing for it but to offer Carew the valuable paintings and furniture of his château, – reputed to be the most costly in the whole kingdom. The report goes that the pictures alone were estimated at several millions of francs. Carew at once accepts the proposition; but, as if not to be outdone in generosity, even by a royal prince, he lets it be known that he will only accept of one solitary article from the whole collection, – rather, in fact, a souvenir than a ransom. I suppose the prince, like everybody else, felt that this was very handsome conduct, for he frankly said: ‘The château and all within it are at his disposal; I reserve nothing.’ Armed with this authority, Carew never waits for morning, but starts that night, by post, for Auvergne, where the château lies. I believe it is not ascertained whether he was previously acquainted with the circumstances of the prince’s domestic affairs. The probability, however, is that he must have been; for within a week he returned to Paris, bringing with him the object selected as his choice, in the person of a beautiful girl, the natural daughter of his Royal Highness. Whether he married her then under compulsion, or subsequently of his own free will, is to this day a secret. One thing, however, is certain: he was banished from the French territory by a summary order, which gave him barely time to reach the coast and embark. Of course, once in England, he had only to select some secluded, out-of-the-way spot for a while, and there could be no likelihood of leaving any trace to his adventure. Indeed, the chances are that Rutledge is about the only man who could have unravelled so tangled a skein. How he ever contrived to do so, is more than I can tell you!”

My father sat listening to this story more like one whose faculties are under the dominion of some powerful spell, than of a man in the free exercise of reason. There was something in the mingled truth and falsehood of the tale that terrified and confused him. Up to that moment he had no notion in what a light his conduct could be exhibited, nor could he see by what means the calumny could be resented. There was, however, one name he could fix upon. Rutledge at least should be accountable! There was enough of falsehood in the story to brand him as a foul slanderer, and he should not escape him.

By an effort that demanded all his strength my father rose, the cold sweat dropping from his forehead, and every limb trembling, from weakness and passion. His object was to present himself to the strangers in the adjoining box, and, by declaring his name, to compel them to bring home to Rutledge the accusation he had overheard. He had no time, had he even had, to weigh all the difficulties of such a line of procedure. It was not at such a moment that he could consider the question calmly and deliberately. Next to the poignant sense of injury, the thought of vengeance was uppermost in his mind; and the chances were that he was ready to wreak his fury on the first object that should present itself. Fortunately, – might I not rather say unfortunately, since nothing could be more disastrous than the turn affairs were fated to take; it seemed, however, at the moment, as though it were good fortune that when my father by an immense effort succeeded in reaching the adjoining box, the former occupants had departed. Several persons were leaving the coffee-room at the same instant; and though my father tried to hasten after them, and endeavor to recognize the voices he had overheard, his strength was unequal to the effort, and he sank back powerless on a bench. He beckoned to a waiter who was passing, and questioned him eagerly as to their names, and, giving him

a guinea, promised as much more if he should follow them to their residences and bring back their addresses. But the man soon returned to say that as the strangers were not remarked by him, he had no clew whatever to Their detection in the crowded streets of the capital.

It struck my father as though destiny itself pointed out Rutledge as the only one of whom he could seek reparation; and now he retired to his room to weigh the whole question in his mind, and see by what means, while gratifying his thirst for vengeance, he should best avoid that degree of exposure which would be fatal to the future happiness of my mother.

In this lay all the difficulty. To demand satisfaction from Rutledge required that he should specify the nature of the injury, open the whole history of the slander, and, while giving contradiction to all that was false, publish to the world a true version of an incident that, up to that moment, he had never confided to his dearest friend. Terrible as seemed the task of such a revelation, it was nothing in comparison with what he judged would be the effect upon my mother when she came to learn the course of events which preceded her marriage.

And now this must be given to the world, with all that accompaniment of gossip and scandal such a story would be sure to evoke. Was this possible? – could he venture to embark upon such a sea of peril as this? – could he dare to confront difficulties that would rise up against him at every step and in every relation of life, to assail his political reputation to-day – to slur his personal honor to-morrow – to cast shame upon her whose fair fame was dearer to him than life itself twice told – to be an inheritance of disgrace to his children, if he were to have children? No, no! For such an exposure as this nothing short of downright desperation could give courage.

Far from serving to allay his passion for vengeance, these difficulties but deepened the channel of his wrath, and made the injury itself appear more irreparable. Nor did he know whom to consult at such a crisis. To unbosom himself to MacNaghten was like confessing that he could do, from personal motives, what he had shrunk from in the full confidence of his friendship; and such an avowal would, he was well aware, give heartfelt pain to his best friend in the world. Many other names occurred to him, but each was accompanied by some especial difficulty. It was a case which demanded great discretion, and at the same time promptitude and decision. To have allowed any interval for discussion would have been to incur that publicity which my father dreaded beyond all.

The indignant energy of his mind had given a kind of power to his emaciated and wasted frame; and as he paced his room in passionate emotion, he felt as though all his wonted strength and vigor were returning to “stand by him” in his hour of peril. He had opened his window to admit the cool air of the night; and scarcely had he thrown wide the sash when the cry of a newsvendor met his ear.

“Here’s the ‘List of the Castle hacks,’ to be sold to the highest bidder, the Government having no further use for them; with the pedigree and performances set forth in full, and a correct account of the sums paid for each of them.”

To this succeeded a long catalogue of gentlemen’s names, which were received by the mob that followed the hawker, with shouts and cries of derision. Groan followed groan as they were announced, and my father listened with an agonizing suspense lest he should hear his own amidst the number; but, to his inexpressible relief, the fellow concluded his muster-roll without alluding to him. Just, however, as he was about to close the window, the man again broke out with: “On Saturday next will be published the account of the five bought in by the Crown; and Mark Brown, Sam Vesey, William Burton, Ross Mahon, and Walter Carew will be given in full, on a separate sheet, for one halfpenny!”

A wild outburst of derisive laughter from the crowd followed, and my father heard no more.

CHAPTER XIII. A MIDNIGHT RENCONTRE

My father had walked several streets of the capital before he could collect his thoughts, or even remember where he was. He went along, lost to everything save memory of his vengeance. He tried to call to mind the names of those on whose zeal and devotedness he could reckon; but so imbued with suspicion had his mind become, so distrustful of every thing and every one, that he actually felt as if deserted by all the world, without one to succor or stand by him.

Thus rambling by chance, he found himself in Stephen's Green, where he sat down to rest under one of those great trees which in those times shaded the favorite promenade of Dublin. Directly in front of him was a large mansion, brilliantly lighted up, and crowded by a numerous company, many of whom were enjoying the balmy air of a summer's night on the balcony in front of the windows. As they moved to and fro, passing back and forwards, my father could recognize several that he was acquainted with, and some that he knew most intimately.

Filled with one consuming thought, he fancied that he heard his name at every moment; that every allusion was to him, and each burst of laughter was uttered in derision at his cost. His rage had worked him up almost to madness, and he could hardly restrain himself from calling out, and replying aloud to these fancied insults and aspersions on his character.

At such moments of doubt as these, certainty flashes on the mind with a power of concentration and resolution that seems to confer strength for anything, however difficult. So was it to my father as suddenly the tones of a well-known voice struck on his ear, and he heard the easy laugh of him that he hated most of all the world. It was Barry Rutledge himself, who now was leaning over the balcony, in the centre of a group whom, he was evidently entertaining by his remarks.

The bursts of laughter which at each moment interrupted him, showed how successfully his powers of entertaining were being exercised, while at intervals a dead silence around proved the deep attention with which they listened.

It was at the moment when, by the death of the Marquis of Rockingham, a new Ministry was formed in England, and the Duke of Portland recalled from his viceroyalty, to be succeeded by Lord Temple. The changes that were like to ensue upon this new appointment were actively discussed in society, and now formed the subject of conversation on the balcony.

"You will be at large again, Barry," said one of the group; "these new people won't know your value."

"Pardon me!" cried he, laughing, "I'm handed over with Cotterell and the state coach, as functionaries that cannot be easily replaced. Let them try and manage Dublin without me! I defy them! Who knows every flaw and crack of reputation, every damaged character, and every tarnished fame, as I do? Who can tell each man's price, from knowing his weak points? Who can play off the petty jealousies of rivals against each other; disgust them with their party; and buy them cheap for the Castle? Who but Barry Rutledge? I'll offer a wager of five hundred that there is not a family secret I can't have the key to within one week."

"What the devil ever induced you to take up such a career?" asked a deep-voiced, burly-looking country gentleman.

"The turf gave me the hint," said Rutledge, coolly. "I lost every sixpence I once possessed, when I backed this horse, or betted on that one. I regained a considerable share of my loss when I limited myself to looking out for what they style 'disqualifications,' – to discover that Wasp was n't a two-year-old, or that Muffin was clean bred; that Terry had won before, and that Ginger was substituted for another. I saw that political life was pretty much the same kind of game, and that there would be a grand opening for the first fellow that brought his racing craft to bear on the great world of state affairs. I 'm sure others will follow out the line, and doubtless eclipse all the cleverness of Barry Rutledge; but, at all events, they can't deny him the merit of the invention. They talk to you

about skilful secretaries and able debaters: I tell you flatly I 've got more votes for the Government than any one of them all, and just in the way I 've mentioned. Was it Dick Talbot's convictions, or his wife's losses at lqo that made him join us last session? How did Rowley come over? Ask Harvey Bruce who horsewhipped him in the mess-room at Kells. Why did Billy Hamilton desert his party? Lady Mary may tell you; and if she won't, George Gordon, of the Highlanders, can. What's the use of going through the list, from old Hemphill, that was caught cheating at piquet, down to Watty Carew, with his wife won at a game of Barocco?"

"Slanderer – scoundrel!" cried out my father, in a voice hoarse with passion; and as the words were uttered, the balcony was suddenly deserted, and the rushing sounds of many people descending the stairs together were as quickly heard. For a few seconds my father stood uncertain and undecided; but then, with a bold precipitancy, he seemed to calculate every issue in an instant, and made up his mind how to proceed. He dashed across the street towards the dark alley which flanked the "Green," and along which ran a deep and stagnant ditch, of some ten or twelve feet in width. Scarcely had he gained the shelter of the trees, when a number of persons rushed from the house into the street, and hurried hither and thither in pursuit. As they passed out, my father was enabled to recognize several whom he knew; but for one only had he any care; on him he fastened his eyes with the eager steadfastness of hate, and tracked him as he went, regardless of all others.

Without concert among themselves, or any clew to direct their search, they separated in various directions. Still, my father held his place unchanged, doubtless revolving in that brief interval the terrible consequences of his act. Some fifteen or twenty minutes might have thus elapsed, and now he saw one return to the house, speedily followed by another, and then a third. At last Rutledge came alone; he walked along slowly, and as if deep in meditation. As though revolving the late incident in his mind, he stood for a moment looking up at the windows, and probably speculating in his mind on the precise spot occupied by him who had uttered the insult.

"Here, beneath the trees," said my father, in a low, but clear accent; and Rutledge turned, and hastened across the street. It will, of course, never be known whether he understood these words as coming from a stranger, or from some one of his own friends, suggesting pursuit in a particular direction.

My father only waited to see that the other was following, when he turned and fled. The entrances to the park, or green, as it was called, were by small pathways across the moat, closed by low wooden wickets. Across one of these my father took his way, tearing down the gate with noise sufficient to show the course he followed.

Rutledge was close at his heels, and already summoning all his efforts to come up with him, when my father turned round and stood.

"We are alone!" cried he; "there is none to interrupt us. Now, Barry Rutledge, you or I, or both of us, mayhap, shall pass the night here!" and, as he spoke, he drew forth his sword-cane from the walking-stick that he carried.

"What! is that Carew? Are you Walter Carew?" said Rutledge, advancing towards him.

"No nearer, – not a step nearer! – or, by Heaven! I 'll not answer for my passion. Draw your sword, and defend yourself!"

"Why, this is sheer madness, Watty. What is your quarrel with me?"

"Do you ask me? – do you want to hear why I called you a scoundrel and a slanderer? – or is it that I can brand you as both, at noon-day, and in a crowd, adding coward to the epithets?"

"Come, come," said the other, with a sarcastic coolness that only increased my father's rage. "You know, as well as any man, that these things are not done in this fashion. I am easily found when wanted."

"Do you think that I will give you another day to propagate your slander? No, by Heaven! not an hour!" And so saying, he rushed on, probably to consummate the outrage by a blow. Rutledge, who was in full dress, now drew his rapier, and the two steels crossed.

My father was a consummate swordsman; he had fought several times with that weapon when abroad; and had he only been guided by his habitual temper, nothing would have been easier for him than to overcome his antagonist. So ungovernable, however, was his passion now, that he lost almost every advantage his superior skill might have conferred.

As if determined to kill his enemy at any cost, he never stood on his guard, nor parried a single thrust, but rushed wildly at him. Rutledge, whose courage was equal to his coolness, saw all the advantage this gave him; and, after a few passes, succeeded in running his sword through my father's chest so that the point actually projected on the opposite side. With a sudden jerk of his body, my father snapped the weapon in two, and then, shortening his own to within about a foot of the point, he ran Rutledge through the heart. One heavy groan followed, and he fell dead upon his face.

My father drew forth the fragment from his own side, and then, stooping down, examined the body of his adversary. His recollection of what passed in that terrible moment was horribly distinct ever after. He mentioned to him from whom I myself learned these details that so diabolical was the hatred that held possession of him that he sat down in the grass beside the body, and contemplated it with a kind of fiend-like exultation. A light, thin rain began to fall soon after, and my father, moved by some instinctive feeling, threw Rutledge's cloak over the lifeless body, and then withdrew. Although the pain of his own wound was considerable, he soon perceived that no vital part had been injured, – indeed, the weapon had passed through the muscles without ever having penetrated the cavity of the chest. He succeeded, by binding his handkerchief around his waist, in stanching the blood; and, although weakened, the terrible excitement of the event seemed to lend him a momentary strength for further exertion.

His first impulse, as he found himself outside the Green, was to deliver himself up to the authorities, making a full avowal of all that had occurred. To do this, however, would involve other consequences which he had not the courage to confront. Any narrative of the duel would necessarily require a history of the provocation, and thus a wider publicity to that shame which was now embittering his existence.

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