

LEVER CHARLES JAMES

ROLAND CASHEL,
VOLUME II (OF II)

Charles Lever

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CHAPTER I. AN “UNLIMITED” MONARCHY

And at last they find out, to their greatest surprise,
That't is easier far to be “merry than wise.”

Bell: Images.

“Here is Mr. Cashel; here he is!” exclaimed a number of voices, as Roland, with a heart full of indignant anger, ascended the terrace upon which the great drawing-room opened, and at every window of which stood groups of his gay company. Cashel looked up, and beheld the crowd of pleased faces wreathed into smiles of gracious welcome, and then he suddenly remembered that it was *he* who had invited all that brilliant assemblage; that, for *him*, all those winning graces were assumed; and that *his* gloomy thoughts, and gloomier looks, were but a sorry reception to offer them.

With a bold effort, then, to shake off the load that oppressed him, he approached one of the windows, where Mrs. Kennyfeck and her two daughters were standing, with a considerable sprinkling of young dragoons around them.

“We are not to let you in, Mr. Cashel,” said Mrs. Kennyfeck, from within. “There has been a vote of the House against your admission.”

“Not, surely, to condemn me unheard,” said Roland; “I might even say, unaccused.”

“How so?” cried Mrs. Kennyfeck. “Is not your present position your accusation? Why are you there, while we are here?”

“I went out for a walk, and lost myself in the woods.”

“What does he say, my dear?” said Aunt Fanny, fearful of losing a word of the dialogue.

“That he lost himself, madam,” said one of the dragoons, dryly.

“So, indeed, we heard, sir,” said the maiden lady, piteously; “but I may say I foresaw it all.”

“You are an old fool, and, worse still, every one sees it,” whispered Mrs. Kennyfeck, in an accent that there was no mistaking, although only a whisper.

“We considered that you had abdicated, Mr. Cashel,” said Mrs. White, who, having in vain waited for Roland to approach the window she occupied, was fain at last to join the others, “and we were debating on what form of Government to adopt, – a Presidency, with Mr. Linton – ”

“I see you are no legitimist,” slyly remarked Miss Kenny-feck. But the other went on, —

“Or an open Democracy.”

“I ‘m for that,” said a jolly-looking cavalry captain. “Pray, Miss Olivia Kennyfeck, vote for it too. I should like nothing so much as a little fraternizing.”

“I have a better suggestion than either,” said Roland, gayly; “but you must admit me ere I make it.”

“A device of the enemy,” called out Mrs. White; “he wants to secure his own return to power.”

“Nay, on honor,” said he, solemnly; “I shall descend to the rank of the humblest citizen, if my advice be acceded to, – to the humblest subject of the realm.”

“Ye maunna open the window. Leddy Janet has the rheumatics a’ dandering aboot her back a’ the morning,” said Sir Andrew, approaching the group; and then, turning to Cashel, said, “Glad to see ye, sir; very glad indeed; though, like Prince Charlie, you’re on the wrang side o’ the wa’.”

“Dear me!” sighed Meek, lifting his eyes from the newspaper, and assuming that softly compassionate tone in which he always delivered the most commonplace sentiments, “how shocking,

to keep you out of your own house, and the air quite damp! Do pray be careful, and change your clothes before you come in here.” Then he finished in a whisper to Lady Janet, “One never gets through a country visit without a cold.”

“Upon my word, I’ll let him in,” said Aunt Fanny, with a native richness of accent that made her fair nieces blush.

“At last!” said Cashel, as he entered the room, and proceeded to salute the company, with many of whom he had but the very slightest acquaintance, – of some he did not even remember the names.

The genial warmth of his character soon compelled him to feel heartily what he had begun by feigning, and he bade them welcome with a cordiality that spread its kindly influence over all.

“I see,” said he, after some minutes, “Lady Kilgoff has not joined us; but her fatigue has been very great.”

“They say my Lord ‘s clean daft,” said Sir Andrew.

“Oh, no, Sir Andrew,” rejoined Roland; “our misfortune has shaken his nerves a good deal, but a few days’ rest and quiet will restore him.”

“He was na ower wise at the best, puir man,” sighed the veteran, as he moved away.

“Her Ladyship was quite a heroine, – is n’t that so?” said Lady Janet, tartly.

“She held the rudder, or did something with the compass, I heard,” simpered a young lady in long flaxen ringlets.

Cashel smiled, but made no answer.

“Oh, dear,” sighed Meek, “and there was a dog that swam – or was it you that swam ashore with a rope in your mouth?”

“I grieve to say, neither man nor dog performed the achievement.”

“And it would appear that the horrid wretch – what’s his name?” asked Mrs. White of her friend Howie.

“Whose name, madam?”

“The man – the dreadful man, who planned it all. Sick – Sickamore – no, not Sickamore – ”

“Sickleton, perhaps,” said Cashel, strangely puzzled to make out what was coming.

“Yes, Sickleton had actually done the very same thing twice before, just to get possession of the rich plate and all the things on board.”

“This is too bad,” cried Cashel, indignantly; “really, madam, you must pardon my warmth, if it even verges on rudeness; but the gentleman whose name you have associated with such iniquitous suspicions saved all our lives.”

“That’s what I like in him better than all,” whispered Aunt Fanny to Olivia; “he stands by his friends like a trump.”

“You have compelled me,” resumed Cashel, “to speak of what really I had much rather forget; but I shall insist upon your patience now for a few minutes, simply to rectify any error which may prevail upon this affair.”

With this brief prelude, Cashel commenced a narrative of the voyage from the evening of the departure from Kingstown to the moment of the vessel’s sinking off the south coast.

If most of his auditors only listened as to an interesting anecdote, to others the story had a deeper meaning. The Kennyfecks were longing to learn how the excursion originated, and whether Lady Kilgoff’s presence had been a pre-arranged plan, or a mere accidental occurrence.

“All’s not lost yet, Livy,” whispered Miss Kennyfeck in her sister’s ear. “I give you joy.” While a significant nod from Aunt Fanny seemed to divine the sentiment and agree with it.

“And I suppose ye had na the vessel insured?” said Sir Andrew, at the close of the narrative; “what a sair thing to think o’!”

“Oh, dear, yes, to be sure!” ejaculated Meek, piteously; “and the cold, and the wetting, and the rest of it! for of course you must have met few comforts in that miserable fishing-hut.”

“How picturesque it must have been,” interposed Mrs. White; “and what a pity you had no means of having a drawing made of it. The scene at the moment of the yacht striking; the despair-struck seamen –”

“Pardon me, madam, for destroying even a particle of so ingenious a fancy; but the men evinced nothing of the kind, – they behaved well, and with the calmest steadiness.”

“It is scarcely too late yet,” resumed the lady, unabashed; “if you would just describe it all carefully to Mr. Howie, he could make a sketch in oils one would swear was taken on the spot.”

“Quite impossible, – out of the question,” said Howie, who was always ashamed at the absurdities which compromised himself, although keenly alive to those which involved his neighbors.

“We have heard much of Lady Kilgoff’s courage and presence of mind,” said Mrs. Kennyfeck, returning to a theme by which she calculated on exploring into Cashel’s sentiments towards that lady. “Were they indeed so conspicuous?”

“Can you doubt it, madam?” said Lady Janet, tartly; “she gave the most unequivocal proof of both, – she remembered her husband!”

The tartness of this impertinent speech was infinitely increased by the voice and manner of the speaker, and a half-suppressed titter ran through the room, Cashel alone, of all, feeling annoyed and angry. Aunt Fanny, always less occupied with herself than her neighbors, quickly saw his irritation, and resolved to change a topic which more than once had verged on danger.

“And now, Mr. Cashel,” said she, “let us not forget the pledge on which we admitted you.”

“Quite right,” exclaimed Roland; “I promised a suggestion: here it is –”

“Pardon me for interrupting,” said Miss Kennyfeck; “but in what capacity do you make this suggestion? Are you still king, or have you abdicated?”

“Abdicated in all form,” replied Roland, bowing with well-assumed humility; “as simple citizen, I propose that we elect a ‘Queen,’ to rule despotically in all things, – uncontrolled and irresponsible.”

“Oh, delightful! admirable!” exclaimed a number of voices, among which all the men and the younger ladies might be heard; Lady Janet and Mrs. Kennyfeck, and a few others “of the senior service,” as Mr. Linton would have called them, seeming to canvass the motion with more cautious reserve.

“As it is to be an elective monarchy, sir,” said Lady Janet, with a shrewd glance over all the possible candidates, “how do you propose the choice is to be made?”

“That is to be for after consideration,” replied Roland; “we may have universal suffrage and the ballot.”

“No, no, by Jove!” exclaimed Sir Harvey Upton; “we must not enter upon our new reign by a rebellion. Let only the men vote.”

“How gallant!” said Miss Kennyfeck, sneeringly; while a chorus of “How unfair!” “How ungenerous!” went through the room.

“What say ye to the plan they hae wi’ the Pope?” said Sir Andrew, grinning maliciously: “tak’ the auldest o’ the company.”

This suggestion caused a laugh, in which certain parties did not join over-heartily. Just at this moment the door opened, and Lord Kilgoff, leaning on the arm of two servants, entered. He was deathly pale, and seemed several years older; but his face had acquired something of its wonted expression, and it was with a sad but courteous smile he returned the salutations of the company.

“Glad to see you amongst us, my Lord,” said Cashel, as he placed an arm-chair, and assisted the old man to his seat. “I have just been telling my friends that our country air and quiet will speedily restore you.”

“Thank you very much, sir,” said he, taking Cashel’s hand. “We are both greatly indebted to your kindness, nor can we indeed ever hope to repay it.”

“Make him a receiver on the estate, then,” whispered Lady Janet in Miss Kennyfeck’s ear, “and he’ll soon pay himself.”

“Tell my Lord about our newly intended government, Mr. Cashel,” said Mrs. Kennyfeck; “I’m sure it will amuse him.” And Cashel, more in obedience to the request than from any conviction of its prudence, proceeded to obey. One word only, however, seemed to fix itself on the old man’s memory.

“Queen! queen!” repeated he several times to himself. “Oh, indeed! You expect her Majesty will honor you with a visit, sir?”

Cashel endeavored to correct the misconception, but to no purpose; the feeble intelligence could not relinquish its grasp so easily, and he went on in a low muttering tone, —

“Lady Kilgoff is the only peeress here, sir, remember that; you should speak to her about it, Mr. Cashel.”

“I hope we are soon to have the pleasure of seeing Lady Kilgoff, my Lord,” whispered Cashel, half to concur with, half to turn the course of conversation.

“She will be here presently,” said he, somewhat stiffly, as if some unpleasant recollection was passing through his mind; and Cashel turned away to speak with the others, who eagerly awaited to resume the interrupted conversation.

“Your plan, Mr. Cashel; we are dying to hear it,” cried one.

“Oh, by all means; how are we to elect the queen?” said another.

“What say you to a lottery,” said he, “or something equally the upshot of chance? For instance, let the first lady who enters the room be queen.”

“Very good indeed,” said Lady Janet, aloud; then added, in a whisper, “I see that old Mrs. Malone with her husband toddling up the avenue this instant.”

“Olivia, my love,” whispered Mrs. Kennyfeck to her daughter, “fetch me my work here, and don’t be a moment away, child. He’s so amusing!” And the young lady glided unseen from the room at her mamma’s bidding. After a short but animated conversation, it was decided that this mode of choice should be adopted; and now all stood in anxious expectancy to see who first should enter. At last footsteps were heard approaching, and the interest rose higher.

“Leddy Janet was right,” said Sir Andrew, with a grin; “ye ‘il hae Mrs. Malone for your sovereign, – I ken her step weel.”

“By Jove!” cried Upton, “I ‘il dispute the succession; that would never do.”

“That’s-a lighter tread and a faster,” said Cashel, listening.

“There are two coming,” cried Mrs. White; “I hear voices: how are we then to decide?”

There was no time to canvass this knotty point, when a hand was heard upon the door-handle; it turned, and just as the door moved, a sound of feet upon the terrace without, – running at full speed, – turned every eye in that direction, and the same instant Miss Meek sprang into the room through the window, while Lord Charles and Linton hurried after her, at the same moment that Lady Kilgoff, followed by Olivia Kennyfeck, entered by the door.

Miss Meek’s appearance might have astonished the company, had even her *entrée* been more ceremonious; for she was without hat, her hair falling in long, dishevelled masses about her shoulders, and her riding-habit, torn and ragged, was carried over one arm, with a freedom much more in accordance with speed than grace.

“Beat by two lengths, Charley,” cried she, in a joyous, merry laugh; “beat in a canter, – Mr. Linton, nowhere.”

“Oh, dear me, what is all this, Jemima love?” softly sighed her bland papa; “you’ve not been riding, I hope?”

“Schooling a bit with Charley, pa, and as we left the nags at the stable, they challenged me to a race home; I don’t think they’ll do it again. Do look how they’re blown.”

Some of the company laughed good-humoredly at the girlish gayety of the scene. Others, among whom, it is sad to say, were many of the younger ladies, made significant signs of being shocked by the indecorum, and gathered in groups to canvass the papa’s indifference and the daughter’s indelicacy.

Meanwhile Cashel had been completely occupied with Lady Kilgoff, making the usual inquiries regarding fatigue and rest, but in a manner that bespoke all his interest in a favored guest.

“Are you aware to what high destiny the Fates have called you?” said he, laughing. “Some attain fortune by being first to seek her, —*you*, on the contrary, win by dallying. We had decided, a few moments before you came in, that the first lady who entered should be the Queen of our party, — this lot is yours.”

“I beg to correct you, Mr. Cashel,” cried Lady Janet, smartly; “Miss Meek entered before her Ladyship.”

“Oh, yes!” “Certainly!” “Without a doubt!” resounded from the whole company, who were not sorry to confer their suffrages on the madcap girl rather than the fashionable beauty.

“How distressing!” sighed Mr. Meek. “Oh, dear! I hope this is not so, — nay, I ‘m sure, Jemima, it cannot be the case.”

“You’re thinking of George Colman, Meek, — I see you are,” cried Linton.

“No, indeed; no, upon my honor. What was it about Colman?”

“The story is everybody’s story. The Prince insisted once that George was his senior, and George only corrected himself of his mistake by saying that ‘he could not possibly have had the rudeness to enter the world before his Royal Highness.’”

“Ah! yes — very true — so it was,” sighed Meek, who-affected not to perceive the covert sneer at his assumed courtesy.

While, therefore, the party gathered around Cashel, with eager assurance of Miss Meek’s precedence, Lady Kilgoff, rising, crossed the room to where that young lady was standing, and gracefully arranging her loose-flowing ringlets into a knot at the back of the head, fastened them by a splendid comb which she took from her own, and whose top was fashioned into a handsome coronet of gold, saying, “The question of legitimacy is solved forever: the Pretender yields her crown to the true Sovereign.”

The gracefulness and tact of this sudden movement called forth the warmest acknowledgments of all save Lady Janet, who whispered to Miss Kenny feck, “It is pretty clear, I fancy, who is to pay for the crown jewels!”

“Am I really the Queen?” cried the young girl, half wild with delight.

“Most assuredly, madam,” said Linton, kissing her hand in deep reverence. “I beg to be first to tender my homage.”

“That ‘s so like him!” cried she, laughing; “but you shall be no officer of mine. Where ‘s Charley? I want to make him Master of the Buckhounds, if there be buckhounds.”

“Will you not appoint your ladies first, madam?” said Lady Janet; “or, are your preferences for the other sex to leave us quite forgotten?”

“Be all of you everything you please,” rejoined the childish, merry voice, “with Charley Frobisher for Master of the Horse.”

“Linton for Master of the Revels,” said some one.

“Agreed,” said she.

“Mr. Cashel had better be First Lord of the Treasury, I suspect,” said Lady Janet, snappishly, “if the Administration is to last.”

“And if ye a’ways wear drapery o’ this fashion,” said Sir Andrew, taking up the torn fragment of her riding-habit as he spoke, “I maun say that the Mistress of the Robes will na be a sinecure.”

“Will any one tell me what are my powers?” said she, sitting down with an air of mock dignity.

“Will any one dare to say what they are not?” responded Cashel.

“Have I unlimited command in everything?”

“In everything, madam; I and all mine are at your orders.”

“That’s what the farce will end in,” whispered Lady Janet to Mrs. Kennyfeck.

“Well, then, to begin. The court will dine with us today – to-morrow we will hunt in our royal forest; our private band – Have we a private band, Mr. Linton?”

“Certainly, your Majesty, – so private as to be almost undiscoverable.”

“Then our private band will perform in the evening; perhaps, too, we shall dance. Remember, my Lords and Ladies, we are a young sovereign who loves pleasure, and that a sad face or a mournful one is treason to our person. Come forward now, and let us name our household.”

While the group gathered around the wild and high-spirited girl, in whose merry mood even the least-disposed were drawn to participate, Linton approached Lady Kilgoff, who had seated herself near a window, and was affecting to arrange a frame of embroidery, on which she rarely bestowed a moment’s labor.

CHAPTER II. LADY KILGOFF AT BAY

I'll make her brew the beverage herself,
With her own fingers stir the cap,
And know't is poison as she drinks it.

Harold.

Had Linton been about to renew an acquaintance with one he had scarcely known before, and who might possibly have ceased to remember him, his manner could not have been more studiously diffident and respectful.

"I rejoice to see your Ladyship here," said he, in a low, deliberate voice, "where, on the last time we spoke together, you seemed uncertain of coming."

"Very true, Mr. Linton," said she, not looking up from her work; "my Lord had not fully made up his mind."

"Say, rather, your Ladyship had changed yours," said he, with a cold smile, – "a privilege you are not wont to deny yourself."

"I might have exercised it oftener in life with advantage," replied she, still holding her head bent over the embroidery frame.

"Don't you think that your Ladyship and I are old friends enough to speak without innuendo?"

"If we speak at all," said she, with a low but calm accent.

"True, that is to be thought of," rejoined he, with an unmoved quietude of voice. "Being in a manner prepared for a change in your Ladyship's sentiments towards me –"

"Sir!" said she, interrupting, and as suddenly raising her face, which was now covered with a deep blush.

"I trust I have said nothing to provoke reproof," said Linton, coldly. "Your Ladyship is well aware if my words be not true. I repeat it, then, – your sentiments *are* changed towards me, or – the alteration is not of *my* choosing – I was deceived in the expression of them when last we met."

"It may suit your purpose, sir, but it can scarcely conform to the generosity of a gentleman, to taunt me with acceding to your request for a meeting. If any other weakness can be alleged against me, pray let me hear it."

"When we last met," said Linton, in a voice of lower and deeper meaning than before, "we did so that I might speak, and *you* hear, the avowal of a passion which for years has filled my heart – against which I have struggled and fought in vain – to stifle which I have plunged into dissipations that I detested, and followed ambitions I despised – to obliterate all memory of which I would stoop to crime itself, rather than suffer on in the hopeless misery I must do."

"I will hear no more of this," said she, pushing back the work-table, and preparing to rise.

"You must and you shall hear me, madam," said he, replacing the table and affecting to arrange it for her. "I conclude you do not wish this amiable company to arbitrate between us."

"Oh, sir! is it thus you threaten me?"

"You should say compromise, madam. There can be no threat where a common ruin impends on all concerned."

"To what end all this, Mr. Linton?" said she. "You surely cannot expect from me any return to a feeling which, if it once existed, you yourself were the means of uprooting forever. Even *you* could scarcely be ungenerous enough to persecute one for whose misery you have done already too much."

"Will you accept my arm for half an hour?" cried he, interrupting. "I pledge myself it shall be the last time I either make such a request, or even allude to this topic between us. On the pretence

of showing you the house, I may be able – if not to justify myself – nay, I see how little you care for that – well, at least to assure you that I have no other wish, no other hope, than to see you happy.”

“I cannot trust you,” said she, in a tone of agitation; “already we are remarked.”

“So I perceive,” said he, in an undertone; then added, in a voice audible enough to be heard by the rest, “I am too vain of my architectural merits to leave their discovery to chance; and as you are good enough to say you would like to see the house, pray will your Ladyship accept my arm while I perform the cicerone on myself?”

The *coup* succeeded, and, to avoid the difficulty and embarrassment a refusal would have created, Lady Kilgoff arose, and prepared to accompany him.

“Eh, what – what is’t, my Lady?” said Lord Kilgoff, suddenly awaking from a kind of lethargic slumber, as she whispered some words in his ear.

“Her Ladyship is telling you not to be jealous, my Lord, while she is making the tour of the house with Mr. Linton,” said Lady Janet, with a malicious sparkle of her green eyes.

“Why not make it a royal progress?” said Sir Harvey. “Her Majesty the Queen might like it well.”

“Her Majesty likes everything that promises amusement,” said the wild romp; “come, Charley, give us your arm.

“No, I’ve got a letter or two to write,” said he, rudely; “there’s Upton or Jennings quite ready for any foolery.”

“This is too bad!” cried she; and through all the pantomime of mock royalty, a real tear rose to her eyes, and rolled heavily down her cheek; then, with a sudden change of humor, she said, “Mr. Cashel, will *you* take me?”

The request was too late, for already he had given his arm to Lady Janet, – an act of devotion he was performing with the expression of a saint under martyrdom.

“Sir Harvey, – there’s no help for it, – we are reduced to *you*.”

But Sir Harvey was leaving the room with Olivia Kenny-feck. In fact, couples paired off in every direction; the only disengaged cavalier being Sir Andrew MacFarline, who, with a sardonic grin on his features, came hobbling forward, as he said, —

“Te maunna tak sich long strides, Missy, if ye ga wf me, for I’ve got a couple o’ ounces of Langredge shot in my left knee – forbye the gout in both ankles.”

“I say, Jim,” called out Lord Charles, as she moved away, “if you like to ride Princepino this afternoon, he’s-ready for you.”

“Are *you* going?” said she, turning her head.

“Yes.”

“Then *I’ll* not go.” And so saying, she left the room.

When Linton, accompanied by Lady Kilgoff, issued from the drawing-room, instead of proceeding through the billiard-room towards the suite which formed the “show” part of the mansion, he turned abruptly to his left, and, passing through a narrow corridor, came out upon a terrace, at the end of which stood a large conservatory, opening into the garden.

“I ask pardon,” said he, “if I reverse the order of our geography, and show you the frontiers of the realm before we visit the capital; but otherwise we shall only be the advance-guard of that interesting company who have nothing more at heart than to overhear us.”

Lady Kilgoff walked along without speaking, at his side, having relinquished the support of his arm with a stiff, frigid courtesy. Had any one been there to mark the two-figures, as side by side they went, each deep in thought, and not even venturing a glance at the other, he might well have wondered what strange link could connect them. It was thus they entered the conservatory, where two rows of orange-trees formed a lane of foliage almost impenetrable to the eye.

“As this may be the last time we shall ever speak together in secret – ”

“You have promised as much, sir,” said she, interrupting; and the very rapidity of her utterance betrayed the eagerness of her wish.

“Be it so, madam,” replied he, coldly, and with a tone of sternness very different from that he had used at first. “I have ever preferred your wishes to my own. I shall never prove false to that allegiance. As we are now about to speak on terms which never can be resumed, let us at least be frank. Let us use candor with each other. Even unpleasing truth is better at such a moment than smooth-tongued insincerity.”

“This preamble does not promise well,” said Lady Kilgoff, with a cold smile.

“Not, perhaps, for the agreeability of our interview, but it may save us both much time and much temper. I have said that you are changed towards me.”

“Oh, sir! if I had suspected that this was to be the theme –” She stopped, and seemed uncertain, when he finished the speech for her.

“You would never have accorded me this meeting. Do be frank, madam, and spare me the pain of self-inflicted severity. Well, I will not impose upon your kindness, – nor indeed was such my intention, if you had but heard me out. Yes, madam, I should have told you that while I deplore that alteration, I no more make you chargeable with it, than *you* can call *me* to account for cherishing a passion without a hope. Both one and the other are independent of us. That one should forget and the other remember is beyond mere volition.”

He waited for some token of assent, some slight evidence of concurrence; but none came, and he resumed:

“When first I had the happiness of being distinguished by some slight show of your preference, there were many others who sought with eagerness for that position I was supposed to occupy in your favor. It was the first access of vanity in my heart, and it cost me dearly. Some envied me; some scoffed; some predicted that my triumph would be a brief one; some were rude enough to say that I was only placed like a buoy, to show the passage, and that I should lie fast at anchor while others sailed on with prosperous gale and favoring fortune. You, madam, best know which of these were right. I see that I weary you. I can conceive how distasteful all these memories must be, nor should I evoke them without absolute necessity. To be brief, then, you are now about to play over with another the very game by which you once deceived me. It is your caprice to sacrifice another to your vanity; but know, madam, the liberties which the world smiled at in Miss Gardiner will be keenly criticised in the Lady Kilgoff. In the former case, the most malevolent could but hint at a *mésalliance*; in the latter, evil tongues can take a wider latitude. To be sure, the fascinating qualities of the suitor, his wealth, his enviable position, will plead with some; my Lord’s age and decrepitude will weigh with others: but even these charitable persons will not spare *you*. Your own sex are seldom over-merciful in their judgments. Men are unscrupulous enough to hint that there was no secret in the matter; some will go further, and affect to say that they themselves were not unfavorably looked on.”

“Will you give me a chair, sir?” said she, in a voice which, though barely above a whisper, vibrated with intense passion. Linton hastened to fetch a seat, his whole features glowing with the elation of his vengeance. This passed rapidly away, and as he placed the chair for her to sit down, his face had resumed its former cold, almost melancholy expression.

“I hope you are not ill?” said he, with an air of feeling.

A glance of the most ineffable scorn was her only reply.

“It is with sincere sorrow that I inflict this pain upon you, – indeed, when I heard of that unhappy yacht excursion, my mind was made up to see Lord Kilgoff the very moment of his arrival, and, on any pretence, to induce him to leave this. This hope, however, was taken from me, when I beheld the sad state into which he had fallen, leaving me no other alternative than to address yourself. I will not hurt your ears by repeating the inventions, each full of falsehood, that heralded your arrival here. The insulting discussions how you should be met – whether your conduct had already precluded your acceptance amongst the circle of your equals – or, that you were only a subject of avoidance

to mothers of marriageable daughters, and maiden ladies of excessive virtue. You have mixed in the world, and therefore can well imagine every ingenious turn of this peculiar eloquence. How was I – I who have known – I who – nay, madam, not a word shall pass my lips in reference to that theme – I would only ask, Could I hear these things, could I see your foot nearing the cliff, and not cry out, Stop? – Another step, and you are lost! There are women who can play this dangerous game with cool heads and cooler hearts: schooled in all the frigid indifference that would seem the birthright of a certain class, the secrets of their affections die with them; but you are not one of these. Born in what they would call an humbler, but I should call a far higher sphere, where the feelings are fresher and the emotions purer, *you* might chance to – fall in love!”

A faint smile, so faint that it conveyed no expression to her eyes, was Lady Kilgoff’s acknowledgment of these last words.

“Have you finished, sir?” said she, as, after a pause of some seconds, he stood still.

“Not yet, madam,” replied he, dryly.

“In that case, sir, would it not be as well to tell the man who is lingering yonder to leave this? except, perhaps, it may be your desire to have a witness to your words.”

Linton started, and grew deadly pale; for he now perceived that the man must have been in the conservatory during the entire interview. Hastening round to where he stood, his fears were at once dispelled; for it was the Italian sailor, Giovanni, who, in the multiplicity of his accomplishments, was now assisting the gardener among the plants.

“It is of no consequence, madam,” said he, returning; “the man is an Italian, who understands nothing of English.”

“*You* are always fortunate, Mr. Linton,” said she, with a deep emphasis on the pronoun.

“I have ceased to boast of my good luck for many a day.”

“Having, doubtless, so many other qualities to be proud of,” said she, with a malicious sparkle of her dark eyes.

“The question is now, madam, of one far more interesting than me.”

“Can that be possible, sir? Is any one’s welfare of such moment to his friends – to the world at large – as the high-minded, the honorable, the open-hearted Mr. Linton, who condescends, for the sake of a warning to his young friends, to turn gambler and ruin them; while he has the daring courage to single out a poor unprotected woman, without one who could rightly defend her, and, under the miserable mask of interest, to insult her?”

“Is it thus you read my conduct, madam?” said he, with an air at once sad and reproachful.

“Not altogether, Mr. Linton. Besides the ineffable pleasure of giving pain, I perceive that you are acquitting a debt, – the debt of hate you owe me; because – But I cannot descend to occupy the same level with you in this business. My reply to you is a very short one. Your insult to me must go unpunished; for, as you well know, I have not one to resent it. You have, however, introduced another name in this discussion; to that gentleman I will reveal all that you have said this day. The consequences may be what they will, I care not; I never provoked them. You best know, sir, how the reckoning will fare with you.”

Linton grew pale, almost lividly so, while he bit his lip till the very blood came; then, suddenly recovering himself, he said: “I am not aware of having mentioned a name. I think your Ladyship must have been mistaken; but” – and here he laughed slightly – “you will scarce succeed in sowing discord between me and my old friend, Lord Charles Frobisher.”

“Lord Charles Frobisher!” echoed she, almost stunned with the effrontery.

“You seem surprised, madam. I trust your Ladyship meant no other.” The insolence of his manner, as he said this, left her unable for some minutes to reply, and when she did speak, it was with evident effort.

“I trust now, sir, that we have spoken for the last time together. I own – and it is, indeed, humiliation enough to own it – your words have deeply insulted me. I cannot deny you the satisfaction of knowing this; and yet, with all these things before me, I do not hate – I only despise you.”

So saying, she moved towards the door; but Linton stepped forward, and said: “One instant, madam. You seem to forget that we are pledged to walk through the rooms; our amiable friends are doubtless looking for us.”

“I will ask Mr. Cashel to be my chaperon another time,” said she, carelessly, and, drawing her shawl around her, passed out, leaving Linton alone in the conservatory.

“Ay, by St Paul! the work goes bravely on,” cried he, as soon as she had disappeared. “If she ruin not him and herself to boot, now, I am sore mistaken. The game is full of interest, and, if I had not so much in hand, would delight me.”

With this brief soliloquy, he turned to where the Italian was standing, pruning an orange-tree.

“Have you learned any English yet, Giovanni?”

A slight but significant gesture of one finger gave the negative.

“No matter, your own soft vowels are in more request here. The dress I told you of is now come, – my servant will give it to you; so, be ready with your guitar, if the ladies wish for it, this evening.”

Giovanni bowed respectfully, and went on with his work, and soon after Linton strolled into the garden to muse over the late scene.

Had any one been there to mark the signs of triumphant elation on his features, they would have seen the man in all the sincerity of his bold, bad heart. His success was perfect. Knowing well the proud nature of the young, high-spirited woman, thoroughly acquainted with her impatient temper and haughty character, he rightly foresaw that to tell her she had become the subject of a calumny was to rouse her pride to confront it openly. To whisper that the world would not admit of this or that, was to make her brave that world, or sink under the effort.

To sting her to such resistance was his wily game, and who knew better how to play it? The insinuated sneers at the class to which she had once belonged, as one not “patented” to assume the vices of their betters, was a deep and most telling hit; and he saw, when they separated, that her mind was made up, at any cost and every risk, to live down the slander by utter contempt of it Linton asked for no more. “Let her,” said he to himself, “but enter the lists with the world for an adversary! I ‘ll give her all the benefits of the best motives, – as much purity of heart, and so forth, as she cares for; but, ‘I ‘ll name the winner,’ after all.”

Too true. The worthy people who fancy that an innate honesty of purpose can compensate for all the breaches of conventional use, are like the volunteers of an army who refuse to wear its uniform, and are as often picked down by their allies as by their enemies.

CHAPTER III. A PARTIAL RECOVERY AND A RELAPSE

Such a concourse ne'er was seen
Of coaches, noddies, cars, and jingles,
"Chars-a-bancs," to hold sixteen,
And "sulkies," meant to carry singles.

The Pic-nic: A Lay.

It is an old remark that nothing is so stupid as love-letters; and, pretty much in the same spirit, we may affirm that there are few duller topics than festivities. The scenes in which the actor is most interested are, out of compensation, perhaps, those least worthy to record; the very inability of description to render them is disheartening too. One must eternally resort to the effects produced, as evidences of the cause, just as, when we would characterize a climate, we find ourselves obliged to fall back upon the vegetable productions, the fruits and flowers of the seasons, to convey even anything of what we desire. So is it Pleasure has its own atmosphere, – we may breathe, but hardly chronicle it.

These prosings of ours have reference to the gayeties of Tubbermore, which certainly were all that a merry party and an unbounded expenditure could compass. The style of living was princely in its splendor; luxuries fetched from every land, – the rarest wines of every country, the most exquisite flowers, – all that taste can suggest, and gold can buy, were there; and while the order of each day was maintained with undiminished splendor, every little fancy of the guests was studied with a watchful politeness that marks the highest delicacy of hospitality.

If a bachelor's house be wanting in the gracefulness which is the charm of a family reception, there is a freedom, a degree of liberty in all the movements of the guests, which some would accept as a fair compromise; for, while the men assume a full equality With their host, the ladies are supreme in all such establishments. Roland Cashel was, indeed, not the man to dislike this kind of democracy; it spared him trouble; it inflicted no tiresome routine of attentions; he was free as the others to follow the bent of his humor, and he asked for no more.

It was without one particle of vulgar pride of wealth that he delighted in the pleasure he saw around him; it was the mere buoyancy of a high-spirited nature. The cost no more entered into his calculations in a personal than a pecuniary sense. A consciousness that he was the source of all that splendid festivity, – that his will was the motive-power of all that complex machinery of pleasure, – increased, but did not constitute, his enjoyment. To see his guests happy, in the various modes they preferred, was his great delight, and, for once, he felt inclined to think that wealth had great privileges.

The display of all which gratified him most was that which usually took place each day after luncheon; when the great space before the house was thronged with equipages of various kinds and degrees, with saddle-horses and mounted grooms, and amid all the bustle of discussing where to, and with whom, the party issued forth to spend the hours before dinner.

A looker-on would have been amused to watch all the little devices in request, to join this party, to avoid that, to secure a seat in a certain carriage, or to escape from some other; Linton's chief amusement being to thwart as many of these plans as he could, and while he packed a sleepy Chief Justice into the same barouche with the gay Kennyfeck girls, to commit Lady Janet to the care of some dashing dragoon, who did not dare decline the wife of a "Commander of the Forces."

Cashel always joined the party on horseback, so long as Lady Kilgoff kept the house, which she did for the first week of her stay; but when she announced her intention of driving out, he offered his services to accompany her. By the merest accident it chanced that the very day she fixed on for

her first excursion was that on which Cashel had determined to try a new and most splendid equipage which had just arrived; it was a phaeton, built in all the costly splendor of the “Regency of the Duke of Orleans,” – one of those gorgeous toys which even a voluptuous age gazed at with wonder. Two jet-black Arabians, of perfect symmetry, drew it, the whole forming a most beautiful equipage.

Exclamations of astonishment and admiration broke from the whole party as the carriage drove up to the door, where all were now standing.

“Whose can it be? Where did it come from? What a magnificent phaeton! Mr. Cashel, pray tell us all about it. Do, Mr. Linton, give us its history.”

“It has none as yet, my dear Mrs. White; that it may have, one of these days, is quite possible.”

Lady Janet heard the speech, and nodded significantly in assent.

“Mr. Linton, you are coming with us, a’n’t you?” said a lady’s voice from a britzka close by.

“I really don’t know how the arrangement is; Cashel said something about my driving Lady Kilgoff.”

Lady Kilgoff pressed her lips close, and gathered her mantle together as if by some sudden impulse of temper, but never spoke a word. At the same instant Cashel made his appearance from the house.

“Are you to drive me, Mr. Cashel?” said she, calmly.

“If you will honor me so far,” replied he, bowing.

“I fancied you said something to me about being her Ladyship’s charioteer,” said Linton.

“You must have been dreaming, man,” cried Cashel, laughing.

“Will you allow my Lady to choose?” rejoined Linton, jokingly, while he stole at her a look of insolent malice.

Cashel stood uncertain what to say or do in the emergency, when, with a firm and determined voice, Lady Kilgoff said, —

“I must own I have no confidence in Mr. Linton’s guidance.”

“There, Tom,” said Cashel, gayly, “I ‘m glad your vanity came in for that.”

“I have only to hope that you are in safer conduct, my Lady,” said Linton; and he bowed with uncovered head, and then stood gazing after the swift carriage as it hastened down the avenue.

“Is it all true about these Kennyfeck girls having so much tin’?” said Captain Jennings, as he stroked down his moustache complacently.

“They say five-and-twenty thousand each,” said Linton, “and I rather credit the rumor.”

“Eh, aw! one might do worse,” yawned the hussar, languidly; “I wish they hadn’t that confounded accent!” And so he moved off to join the party on horseback.

“You are coming with me, Jemima,” said Mr. Downie Meek to his daughter. “I want to pay a visit to those works at Killaloe, we have so much committee talk in the House on inland navigation. Oh, dear! it is very tiresome.”

“Charley says I ‘m to go with him, pa; he ‘s about to try Smasher as a leader, and wants me, if anything goes wrong.”

“Oh, dear! quite impossible.”

“Yes, yes, Jim, I insist,” said Frobisher, in a half-whisper; “never mind the governor.”

“Here comes the drag, pa. Oh, how beautiful it looks! There they go, all together; and Smasher, how neatly he carries himself! I say, Charley, he has no fancy for that splinter-bar so near him, – it touches his near hock every instant; would n’t it be better to let his trace a hole looser?”

“So it would,” said Frobisher; “but get up and hold the ribbons till I have got my gloves on. I say, Linton, keep Downie in chat one moment, until we ‘re off.”

This kindly office was, however, anticipated by Lady Janet MacFarline, who, in her brief transit from the door to the carriage, always contrived to drop each of the twenty things she loaded herself with at starting, and thus to press into the service as many of the bystanders as possible, who followed, one with a muff, another with a smelling-bottle, a third with a book, a fourth with her knitting, and so

on; while Flint brought up the rear with more air-cushions and hot-water apparatus than ever were seen before for the accommodation of two persons. In fact, if the atmosphere of our dear island, instead of being the mere innocent thing of fog it is, had been surcharged with all the pestilential vapors of the mistral and the typhoon together, she could not have armed herself with stronger precautions against it; while even Sir Andrew, with the constitution of a Russian bear, was compelled to wear blue spectacles in sunshine, and a respirator when it lowered, – leaving him, as he said, to the “domnable alternative o’ being blind or dumb.”

“I maun say,” muttered he, behind his barrier of mouth plate, “that Mesther Cashel has his ain notions about amusin’ his company when he leaves ane o’ his guests to drive about wi’ his ain wife. Ech, sir, it is a pleasure I need na hae come so far to enjoy.”

“Where’s Sir Harvey Upton, Sir Andrew?” said my Lady, tartly; “he has never been near me to-day. I hope he ‘s not making a fool of himself with those Kennyfeck minxes.”

“I dinna ken, and I dinna care,” growled Sir Andrew; and then to himself, he added, “An’ if he be, it’s aye better fooling wi’ young lassies than doited auld women!”

“A place for you, Mr. Linton!” said Mrs. White, as she seated herself in a low drosky, where her companion, Mr. Howie, sat, surrounded with all the details for a sketching-excursion.

“Thanks, but I have nothing so agreeable in prospect.”

“Why, what are you about to do?”

“Alas! I must set out on a canvassing expedition, to court the sweet voices of my interesting constituency. You know that I am a candidate for the borough.”

“That must be very disagreeable.”

“It is, but I could not get off; Cashel is incurably lazy, and *I* never know how to say ‘no.’”

“Well, good-bye, and all fortune to you,” said she; and they drove away.

Mr. Kennyfeck and the Chief Justice, mounted on what are called sure-footed ponies, and a few others, still lingered about the door, but Linton took no notice of them, but at once re-entered the house.

For some time previous he had remarked that Lord Kilgoff seemed, as it were, struggling to emerge from the mist that had shrouded his faculties; his perceptions each day grew quicker and clearer, and even when silent, Linton observed that a shrewd expression of the eye would betoken a degree of apprehension few would have given him credit for. With the keenness of a close observer, too, Linton perceived that he more than once made use of his favorite expression, “It appears to me,” and slight as the remark might seem, there is no more certain evidence of the return to thought and reason than the resumption of any habitual mode of expression.

Resolved to profit by this gleam of coming intelligence, by showing the old peer an attention he knew would be acceptable, Linton sent up a message to ask “If his Lordship would like a visit from him?” A most cordial acceptance was returned; and, a few moments after, Linton entered the room where he sat, with all that delicate caution so becoming a sick chamber.

Motioning his visitor to sit down, by a slight gesture of the finger, while he made a faint effort to smile, in return for the other’s salutation, the old man sat, propped up by pillows, and enveloped in shawls, pale, sad, and careworn.

“I was hesitating for two entire days, my Lord,” said Linton, lowering his voice to suit the character of the occasion, “whether I might propose to come and sit an hour with you, and I have only to beg that you will not permit me to trespass a moment longer than you feel disposed to endure me.”

“Very kind of you – most considerate, sir,” said the old peer, bowing with an air of haughty courtesy.

“You seem to gain strength every day, my Lord,” resumed Linton, who well knew there was nothing like a personal topic to awaken a sick man’s interest.

“There is something here,” said the old man, slowly, as he placed the tip of his finger on the centre of his forehead.

“Mere debility, nervous debility, my Lord. You are paying the heavy debt an overworked intellect must always acquit; but rest and repose will soon restore you.”

“Yes, sir,” muttered the other, with a weak smile, as though, without fathoming the sentiment, he felt that something agreeable to his feelings had been spoken.

“I have been impatient for your recovery, my Lord, I will confess to you, on personal grounds; I feel now how much I have been indebted to your Lordship’s counsel and advice all through life, by the very incertitude that tracks me. In fact, I can resolve on nothing, determine nothing, without your sanction.”

The old man nodded assentingly; the assurance had his most sincere conviction.

“It would seem, my Lord, that I must – whether I will or no – stand for this borough, here; there is no alternative, for you are aware that Cashel is quite unfit for public business. Each day he exhibits more and more of those qualities which bespeak far more goodness of heart than intellectual training or culture. His waywardness and eccentricity might seriously damage his own party, – could he even be taught that he had one, – and become terrible weapons in the hands of the enemy. I was speaking of Cashel, my Lord,” said Linton, as it were answering the look of inquiry in the old man’s face.

“I hate him, sir,” said the old peer, with a bitterness of voice and look that well suited the words.

“I really cannot wonder at it,” said Linton, with a deep sigh; “such duplicity is too shocking – far too shocking – to contemplate.”

“Eh! what? What did you say, sir?” cried the old man, impatiently.

“I was remarking, my Lord, that I have no confidence in his sincerity; that he strikes me as capable of playing a double part.”

A look of disappointment succeeded to the excited expression of the old man’s face; he had evidently expected some revelation, and now his features became clouded and gloomy.

“We may be unjust, my Lord,” said Linton; “it may be a prejudice on our part: others would seem to have a different estimate of that gentleman. Meek thinks highly of him.”

“Who, sir? I didn’t hear you,” asked he, snappishly.

“Meek, – Downie Meek, my Lord.”

“Pshaw!” said the old man, with a shrewd twinkle of the eye that made Linton fear the mind behind it was clearer than he suspected.

“I know, my Lord,” said he, hastily, “that you always held the worthy secretary cheap; but you weighed him in a balance too nice for the majority of people – ”

“What does that old woman say? Tell me *her* opinion of Cashel,” said Lord Kilgoff, rallying into something like his accustomed manner. “You know whom I mean!” cried he, impatient at Linton’s delay in answering. “The old woman one sees everywhere, – she married that Scotch sergeant – ”

“Lady Janet MacFarline – ”

“Exactly, sir.”

“She thinks precisely with your Lordship.”

“I’m sure of it; I told my Lady so,” muttered he to himself.

Linton caught the words with eagerness, and his dark eyes kindled; for at last were they nearing the territory he wanted to occupy.

“Lady Kilgoff,” said he, slowly, “does not need any aid to appreciate him; she reads him thoroughly, the heartless, selfish, unprincipled spendthrift that he is.”

“She does not, sir,” rejoined the old man, with a loud voice, and a stroke of his cane upon the floor that echoed through the room; “you never were more mistaken in your life. His insufferable puppyism, his reckless effrontery, his underbred familiarity, are precisely the very qualities she is pleased with, – ‘They are so different,’ as she says, ‘from the tiresome routine of fashionable manners.’”

“Unquestionably they are, my Lord,” said Linton, with a smile.

“Exactly, sir; they differ as do her Ladyship’s own habits from those of every lady in the peerage. I told her so; I begged to set her right on that subject, at least.”

“Your Lordship’s refinement is a most severe standard,” said Linton, bowing low.

“It should be an example, sir, as well as a chastisement. Indeed, I believe few would have failed to profit by it.” The air of insolent pride in which he spoke seemed for an instant to have brought back the wonted look to his features, and he sat up, with his lips compressed, and his chin pro-traded, as in his days of yore.

“I would entreat your Lordship to remember,” said Linton, “how few have studied in the same school you have; how few have enjoyed the intimacy of ‘the most perfect gentleman of all Europe;’ and of that small circle, who is there could have derived the same advantage from the privilege?”

“Your remark is very Just, sir. I owe much – very much – to his Royal Highness.”

The tone of humility in which he said this was a high treat to the sardonic spirit of his listener.

“And what a penance to you must be a visit in such a house as this!” said Linton, with a sigh.

“True, sir; but who induced me to make it? Answer me that.”

Linton started with amazement, for he was very far from supposing that his Lordship’s memory was clear enough to retain the events of an interview that occurred some months before.

“I never anticipated that it would cost you so dearly, my Lord,” said he, cautiously, and prepared to give his words any turn events might warrant. For once, however, the ingenuity was wasted; Lord Kilgoff, wearied and exhausted by the increased effort of his intellect, had fallen back in his chair, and, with drooping lips and fallen jaw, sat the very picture of helpless fatuity.

“So, then,” said Linton, as on tiptoe he stole noiselessly away, “if your memory was inopportune, it was, at least, very short-lived. And now, adieu, my Lord, till we want you for another act of the drama.”

CHAPTER IV. MORE KENNYFECK INTRIGUING

We'll have you at our merry-making, too.
Honeymoon.

If we should appear, of late, to have forgotten some of those friends with whom we first made our readers acquainted in this veracious history, we beg to plead against any charge of caprice or neglect. The cause is simply this: a story, like a stream, has one main current; and he who would follow the broad river must eschew being led away by every rivulet which may separate from the great flood to follow its own vagrant fancy elsewhere. Now, the Kennyfecks had been meandering after this fashion for some time back. The elder had commenced a very vigorous flirtation with the dashing Captain Jennings, while the younger sister was coyly dallying under the attentions of his brother hussar, – less, be it remembered, with any direct intention of surrender, than with the faint hope that Cashel, perceiving the siege, should think fit to rescue the fortress; “Aunt Fanny” hovering near, as “an army of observation,” and ready, like the Prussians in the last war, to take part with the victorious side, whichever that might be.

And now, we ask in shame and sorrow, is it not humiliating to think, that of a party of some thirty or more, met together to enjoy in careless freedom the hospitality of a country house, all should have been animated with the same spirit of intrigue, – each bent on his own deep game, and, in some one guise or other of deceitfulness, each following out some scheme of selfish advantage?

Some may say these things are forced and unnatural; that pleasure proclaims a truce in the great war of life, where combatants lay down their weapons, and mix like friends and allies. We fear this is not the case; our own brief experiences would certainly tend to a different conclusion. Less a player than a looker-on in the great game, we have seen, through all the excitements of dissipation, all the fascinating pleasures of the most brilliant circles, the steady onward pursuit of self-interest; and, instead of the occasions of social enjoyment being like the palm-shaded wells in the desert, where men meet to taste the peacefulness of perfect rest, they are rather the arena where, in all the glitter of the most splendid armor, the combatants have come to tilt, with more than life upon the issue.

For this, the beauty wreathes herself in all the winning smiles of loveliness; for this, the courtier puts forth his most captivating address and his most seductive manner; for this, the wit sharpens the keen edge of his fancy, and the statesman matures the deep resolve of his judgment. The diamond coronets that deck the hair and add lustre to the eyes; the war-won medals that glitter on the coat of some hardy veteran; the proud insignia of merit that a sovereign's favor grants, – all are worn to this end! Each brings to the game whatever he may possess of superiority, for the contest is ever a severe one.

And now to go back to our company. From Lady Janet, intent upon everything which might minister to her own comfort or mortify her neighbor, to the smooth and soft-voiced Downie Meek, – with the kindest of wishes and the coldest of hearts, – they were, we grieve to own it, far more imposing to look at, full dressed at dinner, than to investigate by the searching anatomy that discloses the vices and foibles of humanity; and it is, therefore, with less regret we turn from the great house, in all the pomp of its splendor, to the humble cottage where Mr. Corrigan dwelt with his granddaughter.

In wide contrast to the magnificence and profusion of the costly household, where each seemed bent on giving way to every caprice that extravagance could suggest, was the simple quietude of that unpretending family. The efforts by which Corrigan had overcome his difficulties not only cost him all the little capital he possessed in the world, but had also necessitated a mode of living more restricted than he had ever known before. The little luxuries that his station, as well as his age and long use, had made necessaries, the refinements that adorn even the very simplest lives, had all to be, one by one, surrendered. Some of these he gave up manfully, others cost him deeply; and when the day came that

he had to take leave of his old gray pony, the faithful companion of so many a lonely ramble, the creature he had reared and petted like a dog, the struggle was almost too much for him.

He walked along beside the man who led the beast to the gate, telling him to be sure and seek out some one who would treat her kindly. "Some there are would do so for my sake; but she deserves it better for her own. – Yes, Nora, I 'm speaking of you," said he, caressing her, as she laid her nose over his arm. "I'm sure I never thought we'd have to part."

"She's good as goold this minit," said the man; "an' it'll go hard but 'll get six pounds for her, any way."

"Tell whoever buys her that Mr. Corrigan will give him a crown-piece every Christmas-day that he sees her looking well and in good heart. To be sure, it's no great bribe, we're both so old," said he, smiling; "but my blessing goes with the man that's a friend to her." He sat down as he said this, and held his hand over his face till she was gone. "God forgive me, if I set my heart too much on such things, but it's like parting with an old friend. Poor Mary's harp must go next. But here comes Tiernay. Well, doctor, what news?"

The doctor shook his head twice or thrice despondingly, but said nothing; at last, he muttered, in a grumbling voice, —

"I was twice at the Hall, but there's no seeing Cashel himself; an insolent puppy of a valet turned away contemptuously as I asked for him, and said, —

"Mr. Linton, perhaps, might hear what you have to say."

"Is Kennyfeck to be found?"

"Yes, I saw him for a few minutes; but he's like the rest of them. The old fool fancies he 's a man of fashion here, and told me he had left 'the attorney' behind, in Merrion Square. He half confessed to me, however, what I feared. Cashel has either given a promise to give this farm of yours to Linton —

"Well, the new landlord will not be less kind than the old one."

"You think so," said Tiernay, sternly. "Is your knowledge of life no better than this? Have you lived till now without being able to read that man? Come, come, Corrigan, don't treat this as a prejudice of mine; I have watched him closely, and he sees it. I tell you again, the fellow is a villain."

"Ay, ay," said Corrigan, laughing; "your doctor's craft has made you always on the look-out for some hidden mischief."

"My doctor's craft has taught me to know that symptoms are never without a meaning. But enough of him. The question is simply this: we have, then, merely to propose to Cashel the purchase of your interest in the cottage, on which you will cede the possession."

"Yes; and give up, besides, all claim at law; for you know we are supported by the highest opinions."

"Pooh! nonsense, man; don't embarrass the case by a pretension they 're sure to sneer at. The cottage and the little fields behind it are tangible and palpable; don't weaken your case by a plea you could not press."

"Have your own way, then," said the old man, mildly.

"It is an annuity, you say, you 'd wish?"

"On Mary's life, not on mine, doctor."

"It will be a poor thing," said Tiernay, with a sigh.

"They say we could live in some of the towns in Flanders very cheaply," said Corrigan, cheerfully.

"You don't know how to live cheaply," rejoined Tiernay, crankily. "You think, if you don't see a man in black behind your chair, and that you eat off delf instead of silver, that you are a miracle of simplicity. I saw you last Sunday put by the decanter with half a glass of sherry at the bottom of it, and you were as proud of your thrift as if you had reformed your whole household."

"Everything is not learned in a moment, Tiernay," said Corrigan, mildly.

“You are too old to begin, Con Corrigan,” said the other, gravely. “Such men as you, who have not been educated to narrow fortunes, never learn thrift; they can endure great privations well enough, but it is the little, petty, dropping ones that break down the spirit, – these they cannot meet.”

“A good conscience and a strong will can do a great deal, Tiernay. One thing is certain, – that we shall escape persecution from *him*. *He* will scarcely discover us in our humble retreat.”

“I’ve thought of that too,” said Tiernay; “it is the greatest advantage the plan possesses. Now, the next point is, how to see this same Cashel; from all that I can learn, his life is one of dissipation from morning till night. Those fashionable sharpers by whom he is surrounded are making him pay dearly for his admission into the honorable guild.”

“The greater the pity,” sighed Corrigan; “he appeared to me deserving of a different fate. An easy, complying temper – ”

“The devil a worse fault I ‘d with my enemy,” broke in Tiernay, passionately. “A field without a fence, – a house without a door to it! And there, if I am not mistaken, I hear his voice; yes, he ‘s coming along the path, and some one with him too.”

“I ‘ll leave you to talk to him, Tiernay, for you seem in ‘the vein.” And with these words the old man turned into a by-path, just as Cashel, with Lady Kilgoff on his arm, advanced up the avenue.

Nothing is more remarkable than the unconscious homage tendered to female beauty and elegance by men whose mould of mind, as well as habit, would seem to render them insensible to such fascinations, nor is their instinctive admiration a tribute which beauty ever despises.

The change which came over the rough doctor’s expression as the party came nearer exemplified this truth strongly. The look of stern determination with which he was preparing to meet Cashel changed to one of astonishment, and, at last, to undisguised admiration, as he surveyed the graceful mien and brilliant beauty before him. They had left the phaeton at the little wicket, and the exercise on foot had slightly colored her cheek, and added animation to her features, – the only aid necessary to make her loveliness perfect.

“I have taken a great liberty with my neighbor, Doctor Tiernay,” said Cashel, as he came near. “Let me present you, however, first, – Doctor Tiernay, Lady Kilgoff. I had been telling her Ladyship that the only picturesque portion of this country lies within this holly enclosure, and is the property of my friend Mr. Corrigan, who, although he will not visit me, will not, I ‘m sure, deny me the pleasure of showing his tasteful grounds to my friends.”

“My old friend would be but too proud of such a visitor,” said Tiernay, bowing low to Lady Kilgoff.

“Mr. Cashel has not confessed all our object, Mr. Tiernay,” said she, assuming her most gracious manner. “Our visit has in prospect the hope of making Miss Leicester’s acquaintance; as I know you are the intimate friend of the family, will you kindly say if this be a suitable hour, or, indeed, if our presence here at all would not be deemed an intrusion?”

The doctor colored deeply, and his eye sparkled with pleasure; for strange enough as it may appear, while sneering at the dissipations of the great house, he felt a degree of indignant anger at the thought of Mary sitting alone and neglected, with gayeties around her on every side.

“It was a most thoughtful kindness of your Ladyship,” replied he, “for my friend is too old and too infirm to seek society; and so the poor child has no other companionship than two old men, only fit to weary each other.”

“You make me hope that our mission will succeed, sir,” said Lady Kilgoff, still employing her most fascinating look and voice; “we may reckon you as an ally, I trust.”

“I am your Ladyship’s most devoted,” said the old man, courteously; “how can I be of service?”

“Our object is to induce Miss Leicester to pass some days with us,” said she. “We are plotting various amusements that might interest her, – private theatricals among the rest.”

“Here she comes, my Lady,” said Tiernay, with animation; “I am proud to be the means of introducing her.”

Just at this instant Mary Leicester had caught sight of the party, and, uncertain whether to advance or retire, was standing for a moment undecided, when Tiernay called out:

“Stay a minute, Miss Mary; Lady Kilgoff is anxious to make your acquaintance.”

“This is a very informal mode of opening an intimacy, Miss Leicester,” said Lady Kilgoff; “pray let it have the merit of sincerity, for I have long desired to know one of whom I have heard so much.”

Mary replied courteously to the speech, and looked pleasedly towards Cashel, to whom she justly attributed the compliment insinuated.

As the two ladies moved on side by side, engaged in conversation, Tiernay slackened his pace slightly, and, in a voice of low but earnest import, said, —

“Will Mr. Cashel consider it an intrusion if I take this opportunity of speaking to him on a matter of business?”

“Not in the least, doctor,” said Cashel, gayly; “but it’s right I should mention that I am most lamentably ignorant of everything that deserves that name. My agent has always saved me from the confession, but the truth will out at last.”

“So much the worse, sir, — for others as well as for yourself,” replied Tiernay, bluntly. “The trust a large fortune imposes — But I shall forget myself if I touch on such a theme. My business is this, sir, — and, in mercy to you, I’ll make it very brief. My old friend, Mr. Corrigan, deems it expedient to leave this country, and, in consequence, to dispose of the interest he possesses in these grounds, so long embellished by his taste and culture. He is well aware that much of what he has expended here has not added substantial value to the property; that, purely ornamental, it has, in great part, repaid himself by the many years of enjoyment it has afforded him. Still, he hopes, or, rather, I do for him, — for, to speak candidly, sir, *he* has neither courage nor hardihood for these kind of transactions, — I hope, sir, that you, desirous of uniting this farm to the large demesne, as I understand to be the case, will not deem this an unfitting occasion to treat liberally with one whose position is no longer what it once was. I must take care, Mr. Cashel, that I say nothing which looks like solicitation here; the confidence my friend has placed in me would be ill requited by such an error.”

“Is there no means of securing Mr. Corrigan’s residence here?” said Cashel. “Can I not accommodate his wishes in some other way, and which should not deprive me of a neighbor I prize so highly?”

“I fear not. The circumstances which induce him to go abroad are imperative.”

“Would it not be better to reflect on this?” said Cashel. “I do not seek to pry into concerns which are not mine, but I would earnestly ask if some other arrangement be not possible?”

Tiernay shook his head dubiously.

“If this be so, then I can oppose no longer. It only remains for Mr. Corrigan to put his own value on the property, and I accept it.”

“Nay, sir; this generosity will but raise new difficulties. You are about to deal with a man as high-hearted as yourself, and with the punctilious delicacy that a narrow fortune suggests, besides.”

“Do you, then, doctor, who know both of us, be arbitrator. Let it not be a thing for parchments and lawyers’ clerks; let it be an honorable understanding between two gentlemen, and so, no more of it.”

“If the world were made up of men like yourself and my old friend, this would be, doubtless, the readiest and the best solution of the difficulty,” said Tiernay; “but what would be said if we consented to such an arrangement? What would not be said? Ay, faith, there’s not a scandalous rumor that malice could forge would not be rife upon us.”

“And do you think such calumnies have any terror for *me*?” cried Cashel.

“When you’ve lived to *my* age, sir, you’ll reason differently.”

“It shall be all as you wish, then,” said Cashel. “But stay!” cried he, after a moment’s thought; “there is a difficulty I had almost forgotten. I must look that it may not interfere with our plans. When

can I see you again? Would it suit you to come and breakfast with me tomorrow? I 'll have my man of business, and we 'll arrange everything.”

“Agreed, sir; I'll not fail. I like your promptitude. A favor is a double benefit when speedily granted.”

“Now I shall ask one from you, doctor. If I can persuade my kind friends here to visit us, will you too be of the party sometimes?”

“Not a bit of it. Why should I, sir, expose you to the insolent criticism my unpolished manners and rude address would bring upon you – or myself to the disdain that fashionable folk would show me? I am proud – too proud, perhaps – at the confidence you would repose in my honor; I don't wish to blush for my breeding by way of recompense. There, sir, – there is one yonder in every way worthy all the distinction rank and wealth can give her. I feel happy to think that she is to move amongst those who, if they cannot prize her worth, will at least appreciate her fascinations.”

“Will Mr. Corrigan consent?”

“He must, – he shall,” broke in Tiernay; “I'll insist upon it. But come along with me into the cottage, while the ladies are cementing their acquaintance; we'll see him, and talk him over.”

So saying, he led Cashel into the little library, where, deep sunk in his thoughts, the old man was seated, with an open book before him, but of which he had not read a line.

“Con!” cried Tiernay, “Mr. Cashel has come to bring you and Miss Mary up to the Hall to dinner. There, sir, look at the face he puts on, – an excuse in every wrinkle of it!”

“But, my dear friend – my worthy doctor – you know perfectly – ”

“I 'll know perfectly that you must go, – no help for it I have told Mr. Cashel that you 'd make fifty apologies – pretend age – Ill-health – want of habit, and so on; the valid reason being that you think his company a set of raffs, and – ”

“Oh, Tiernay, I beg you 'll not ascribe such sentiments to *me*.”

“Well, I thought so myself, t' other day, – ay, half-an-hour ago; but there is a lady yonder, walking up and down the grass-plot, has made me change my mind. Come out and see her, man, and then say as many 'No's' as you please.” And, half-dragging, half-leading the old man out, Tiernay went on: —

“You 'll see, Mr. Cashel, how polite he 'll grow when he sees the bright eyes and the fair cheek. You 'll not hear of any more refusals then, I promise you.”

Meanwhile, so far had Lady Kilgoff advanced in the favorable opinion of Miss Leicester that the young girl was already eager to accept the proffered invitation. Old Mr. Corrigan, however, could not be induced to leave his home, and so it was arranged that Lady Kilgoff should drive over on the following day to fetch her; with which understanding they parted, each looking forward with pleasure to their next meeting.

CHAPTER V. LINTON'S MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE

"Gone! and in secret, too!"

Amid all the plans for pleasure which engaged the attention of the great house, two subjects now divided the interest between them. One was the expected arrival of the beautiful Miss Leicester, – "Mr. Cashel's babe in the wood," as Lady Janet called her, – the other, the reading of a little one-act piece which Mr. Linton had written for the company. Although both were, in their several ways, "events," the degree of interest they excited was very disproportioned to their intrinsic consequence, and can only be explained by dwelling on the various intrigues and schemes by which that little world was agitated.

Lady Janet, whose natural spitefulness was a most catholic feeling, began to fear that Lady Kilgoff had acquired such an influence over Cashel that she could mould him to any course she pleased, – even a marriage. She suspected, therefore, that this rustic beauty had been selected by her Ladyship as one very unlikely to compete with herself in Roland's regard, and that she was thus securing a lasting ascendancy over him.

Mrs. Leicester White, who saw, or believed she saw, herself neglected by Roland, took an indignant view of the matter, and threw out dubious and shadowy suspicions about "who this young lady might be, who seemed so opportunely to have sprung up in the neighborhood," and expressed, in confidence, her great surprise "how Lady Kilgoff could lend herself to such an arrangement."

Mrs. Kennyfeck was outraged at the entrance of a new competitor into the field, where her daughter was no longer a "favorite." In fact, the new visitor's arrival was heralded by no signs of welcome, save from the young men of the party, who naturally were pleased to hear that a very handsome and attractive girl was expected.

As for Aunt Fanny, her indignation knew no bounds; indeed, ever since she had set foot in the house her state had been one little short of insanity. In her own very graphic phrase, "She was fit to be tied at all she saw." Now, when an elderly maiden lady thus comprehensively sums up the cause of her anger, without descending to "a bill of particulars," the chances are that some personal wrong – real or imaginary – is more in fault than anything reprehensible in the case she is so severe upon. So was it here. Aunt Fanny literally saw nothing, although she heard a great deal. Daily, hourly, were the accusations of the whole Kennyfeck family directed against her for the loss of Cashel. But for her, and her absurd credulity on the statement of an anonymous letter, and there had been no yacht voyage with Lady Kilgoff – no shipwreck – no life in a cabin on the coast – no – In a word, all these events had either not happened at all, or only occurred with Livy Kennyfeck for their heroine.

Roland's cold, almost distant politeness to the young ladies, was marked enough to appear intentional; nor could all the little by-play of flirtation with others excite in him the slightest evidence of displeasure. If the family were outraged at this change, poor Livy herself bore up admirably; and while playing a hundred little attractive devices for Cashel, succeeded in making a very deep impression on the well-whiskered Sir Harvey Upton, of the – th. Indeed, as Linton, who saw everything, shrewdly remarked, "She may not pocket the ball she intended, but, rely on't, she 'll make a 'hazard' somewhere."

Of all that great company, but one alone found no place in her heart for some secret wile; this was Miss Meek, who, sadly disappointed at the little influence of her royalty, had ceased to care much for in-door affairs, and spent her mornings "schooling" with Charley, and her evenings listening to sporting talk whenever two or three "fast men" got together in the drawing-room.

The evening that preceded Miss Leicester's intended arrival had been fixed for the reading of Mr. Linton's comedy, – a little dramatic piece, which, whether he had stolen wholesale from the French, or only borrowed in part, none knew; but various were the rumors that it would turn out to be a very satirical composition, with allusions to many of those who were to sit in judgment over it. How this supposition originated, or with whom, there is no saying, nor if well-founded in any respect, for Linton had never shown his sketch to any one, nor alluded to it, save in the most vague manner.

Each, however, looked to see his neighbor "shown up;" and while one said, "What a character could be made of old Sir Andrew, with his vulgarity, his deafness, and his gluttony!" another thought that Downie Meek, in his oily smoothness, his sighings, and his "dear me's," would be admirable, – all the ladies averring that Lady Kilgoff would be a perfect embodiment of Lady Teazle as Sir Peter suspected and Joseph intended her to be.

Fears for individual safety were merged in hopes of seeing others assailed, and it was in something like a flutter of expectancy that the party assembled in the drawing-room before dinner. Great was their surprise to find that Mr. Linton did not make his appearance. The dinner was announced, but he never came, and his place vacant at the foot of the table was the continual suggester of every possible reason for his absence. If Lady Kilgoff could not divest herself of a certain terror, – vague and meaningless, it is true, – the dread she felt proceeded from knowing him to be one whose every act had some deep purpose; while others were then canvassing his absence in easy freedom, she took the first opportunity of asking Cashel whether he were in the secret, or if it were really true that Linton had not communicated, even with him, about his departure.

"I am no better informed than my friends here," said Roland; "and, to say truth, I have given little thought about the matter. We have not, as you are aware, of late seen so much of each other as we used once; he has himself rather drawn off me, and I have left the interval between us to widen, without much regret."

"Remember, however, what I told you: he can be a terrible enemy."

Cashel smiled calmly as he said, "I have consorted with men whose vengeance never took longer to acquit than the time occupied in drawing a knife from the sleeve or a pistol from the girdle. I care very little for him whose weapon is mere subtlety."

"It is this over-confidence makes me fear for you," said she, anxiously; "for, I say again, you do not know him."

"I wish I never had," said Cashel, with an earnestness of voice and accent. "He has involved me in a hundred pursuits for which I feel neither taste nor enjoyment. To him I owe it that pleasure is always associated in my mind with mere debauch; and the only generosity he has taught me has been the spendthrift waste of the gaming-table."

"Could you not find out something of him, – when he went, and in what direction?" said she, anxiously. "I cannot tell you why, but my heart misgives me about his departure."

More in compliance with her scruples than that he deemed the matter worth a thought, Cashel left the room to make inquiries from the servants; but all he could learn was, that Mr. Linton arose before daybreak and left the house on foot, his own servant not knowing in what direction, nor having heard anything of his master's previous intention.

His intimacy with the family at the cottage left it possible that they might know something of his movements and Cashel accordingly despatched a messenger thither to ask; but with the same fruitless result as every previous inquiry.

While Cashel was following up this search with a degree of interest that increased as the difficulty augmented, he little knew how watchfully his every word and gesture was noted down by one who stood at his side. This was Mr. Phillis, who, while seeming to participate in his master's astonishment, threw out from time to time certain strange, vague hints, less suggestive of his own opinions than as baits to attract those of his master.

“Very odd, indeed, sir, – very strange; so regular a gentleman, too, – always rising at the same hour. His man says, he ‘s like the clock. To be sure,” added he, after a pause, “his manner is changed of late.”

“How do you mean?” asked Cashel, hurriedly.

“He seems anxious, sir, – uneasy, as one might say.”

“I have not perceived it.”

“His man says – ”

“What care I for that?” said Cashel, impatiently. “It is not to pry into Mr. Linton’s habits that I am here, it is to assure myself that no accident has happened to him, and that if he stand in need of my assistance, I shall not be neglecting him. Tell two of the grooms to take horses and ride down to Killaloe and Dunkeeran, and ask at the inns there if he has been seen. Let them make inquiry, too, along the road.” With these directions, hastily given, he returned to the drawing-room, his mind far more interested in the event than he knew how to account for.

“No tidings of Tom?” said Lord Charles Frobisher, lounging carelessly in a well-cushioned chair.

Cashel made a sign in the negative.

“Well, it’s always a satisfaction to his friends to know that he ‘ll not come to harm,” said he, with an ambiguous smile.

“The country is much disturbed at this moment,” said the Chief Justice; “the calendar was a very heavy one last assize. I trust no marauding party may have laid hold of him.”

“Ah, yes, that would be very sad indeed,” sighed Meek; “mistaking him for a spy.”

“No great blunder, after all,” said Lady Janet, almost loud enough for other ears than her next neighbor’s.

“If the night were moonlight,” said Miss Meek, as she opened a shutter and peeped out into the darkness, “I ‘d say he was trying those fences we have laid out for the hurdle-race.”

“By Jove, Jim, that is a shrewd thought!” said Lord Charles, forgetting that he was addressing her by a familiar sobriquet he never used before company.

“You have a bet with him, Charley?” said Upton.

“Yes, we have all manner of bets on the race, and I ‘ll have one with you, if you like it, – an even fifty that Tom turns up ‘all right and no accident,’ after this bolt.”

“Ah, my Lord, you ‘re in the secret, then!” said Aunt Fanny, whose experiences of sporting transactions, derived from “the West,” induced her to suspect that a wager contained a trap-fall.

A very cool stare was the only acknowledgment he deigned to return to this speech, while Mrs. Kennyfeck looked unutterable reproaches at her unhappy relative.

“I call the present company to witness,” said Sir Harvey Upton, “that if Tom has to come to an untimely end, he has bequeathed to me his brown cob pony, Batter.”

“I protest against the gift,” said Miss Kennyfeck; “Mr. Linton told me, if he were killed in the steeplechase on Tuesday next, I should have Batter.”

“That was a special reservation, Miss Kennyfeck,” said the Chief Justice; “so that if his death did not occur in the manner specified, the deed or gift became null and void.”

“I only know,” said Miss Meek, “that Mr. Linton said, as we came back from the hurdle-field, – ‘Remember, Batter is yours if – if – ’” She hesitated and grew red, and then stopped speaking, in evident shame and confusion.

“If what? Tell us the condition; you are bound to be candid,” said several voices together.

“I’ll tell *you* but I’ll not tell any one else,” said the young girl, turning to Lady Kilgoff; and at the same instant she whispered in her ear, “if I were to be married to Mr. Cashel.”

“Well,” said her Ladyship, laughing, “and was the bribe sufficient?”

“I should think not!” replied she, with a scornful toss of the head, as she walked back to her seat.

“I winna say,” said Sir Andrew, “but I ha’ a bit claim mysel to that bonnie snuff-box he ca’d a Louis-Quatorze; if ye mind, leddies, I asked him to mak’ me a present o’ it, and he replied, ‘In my weell, Sir Andrew; I’ll leave it ye in my weell.’”

“I foresee there will be abundance of litigation,” said the Chief Justice, “for the claims are both numerous and conflicting.”

“You ‘ll not be troubled with the next of kin, I believe,” said Lady Janet, in her most spiteful of voices.

“I say, my Lord Chief Justice,” said Frobisher, “let me have a travelling opinion from you, on a legal point. Wouldn’t Linton’s heirs, or representatives, or whatever they ‘re called, be bound to ‘book up’ if Ramekin is beaten in the handicap?”

“The law expressly declares such transactions without its pale, my Lord,” said the judge, rebukingly.

“Well, I can only say,” interrupted Upton, “that when we were in cantonments at Sickmabund, Jack Faris ‘of ours’ had a heavy stake in a game of piquet with the major, and just as he was going to count his point, he gave a tremendous yell, and jumped up from the table. It was a cobra capella had bitten him in the calf of the leg. Everything was done for him at once, but all in vain; he swelled up to the size of four, and died in about two hours. It was rather hard on old Cox, the major, who had two hundred pounds on it, and a capital hand; and so he made a representation to the mess, showing that he had seven cards to his point, with a quint in hearts; that, taking in the ace of clubs, he should count a quatorze, and, therefore, unquestionably win the game. The thing was clear as day, and so they awarded him the stakes. Cox behaved very handsomely, too; for he said, ‘If Faris’s widow likes to play the game out, I ‘ll give her the opportunity when we get back to England, and back myself, two to one.’”

“The Chevalier Bayard himself could not have done more,” said Miss Kennyfeck, with admirable gravity.

“I must say,” resumed the dragoon, “we thought it handsome, for old Cox was always hard up for money.”

“And what is to become of our theatricals, if Mr. Linton should have been so ill-natured as to drown himself?” said Mrs. White, in a most disconsolate tone; for she had already made terrible havoc in her wardrobe to accomplish a Turkish costume.

“Such a disappointment as it will be,” sighed Olivia Kennyfeck, who had speculated on a last effort upon Cashel in a Mexican dress, where, certes, superfluity should not be the fault.

“You can always make some compensation for the disappointment,” said Lady Kilgoff, “by a fancy ball.”

“Oh, delightful! the very thing!” exclaimed several together. “When shall it be, Mr. Cashel?”

“I am entirely at your orders,” said he, bowing courteously.

“Shall we say Tuesday, then?”

“Not Tuesday; we have the race on that morning,” said Frobisher; “and some of us, at least, will be too tired for a ball afterwards.”

“Well, Wednesday, – is Wednesday open?”

“Wednesday was fixed for a boat excursion to Holy Island,” said Cashel.

“You can’t have Thursday, then,” exclaimed Lady Janet; “that is the only evening we ever have our rubber. I’ll not give you Thursday.”

“Friday we are to have some people at dinner,” said Cashel; “and Saturday was to have been some piece of electioneering festivity for Linton’s constituents.”

“What matter now?” said Mrs. White; “perhaps the poor dear man is in a better place. A very sad thought,” sighed she; “but such things are happening every day.”

“Ah, yes, very sad,” responded Meek, who never failed to perform echo to any one’s lamentation.

“Ah, indeed!” chimed in Aunt Fanny, “cut off like a daisy.” And she wiped her eyes and looked solemn, for she believed she was quoting Scripture.

At last it was decided that the ball should come off on the earliest evening possible, irrespective of all other arrangements; and now the company formed in a great circle, discussing dresses and characters and costumes with an eager interest that showed how little Linton’s fate had thrown a shadow over the bright picture of anticipated pleasure.

CHAPTER VI. THE SEASON OF LINTON'S FLITTING

*He could outogue a lawyer.
Oldham.*

Revealing so freely as we do the hidden wiles of our characters for the reader's pleasure, it would ill become us to affect any reserve or mystery regarding their actions. We shall not make, therefore, any secret of Mr. Linton's absence, nor ask of our patient reader to partake of the mystification that prevailed among the company at Tubbermore.

It so chanced, that on the evening preceding his departure he saw in a newspaper paragraph the arrival of a very distinguished lawyer at Limerick on his way to Dublin, and the thought at once occurred to him, that the opportunity was most favorable for obtaining an opinion respecting the "Corrigan Pardon," without incurring either suspicion or any lengthened absence.

Another object, inferior, but not devoid of interest, also suggested itself. It was this: profiting by a secret passage which led from the theatre to Cashel's bedroom, it was Linton's custom to visit this chamber every day, ransacking the letters and papers which, in his careless indolence, Roland left loose upon the tables, and thus possessing himself of the minutest knowledge of Cashel's affairs. In his very last visit to this room, he perceived a cumbrous document, of which the seal of the envelope was broken, but apparently the contents unlooked at. It was enough that he read the indorsement, "Deed of conveyance of the Cottage and Lands of Tubber-beg."

Feeling how far he himself was interested in the paper, and well knowing the forgetful habits of Cashel, who would never detect its removal, he coolly folded it up and carried it away.

At first, his intention was simply to peruse the paper at his ease, and, if need were, to show it in confidence to Cor-rigan, and thus establish for himself that degree of influence over the old man which the character of his landlord might convey. But another and a bolder expedient soon suggested itself to his mind – nor was he one to shrink from an enterprise merely on account of its hazard – and this was no less than to forge Cashel's signature to the deed; for, as yet, it was wanting in that most essential particular.

That Roland would never remember anything of the matter, and that he would always incline to believe his own memory defective, than suppose such a falsification possible, Linton was well convinced. There was but one difficulty; how should he manage for the witnesses, whose names were to be appended as actually present at the moment of signing. Here was a stumbling-block – since he could scarcely hope to find others as short of memory as was Roland Cashel. It was while still canvassing the question in his mind that he came upon the intelligence in the newspaper of the lawyer's arrival at Limerick, and suddenly it struck him that he could easily in that city find out two persons, who, for a sufficient consideration, would append their signatures to the deed. A little further reflection devised even an easier plan, which was to take along with him the Italian sailor Giovanni, and make him represent Cashel, whose appearance was quite unknown. By Giovanni's personation of Roland, Linton escaped all the hazard of letting others into his confidence, while the sailor himself, in a few days more, would leave the country – never to return.

It was with the calm assurance of a man who could put a price upon any action required of him, that Giovanni found himself, an hour after midnight, summoned to Linton's dressing-room.

"I told you some time back, Giovanni, that we might be serviceable to each other. The hour has come a little earlier than I looked for; and now the question is, are you of the same mind as you then were?"

"I know nothing of the laws of this country, signor, but if there be life on the issue – "

"No, no, nothing like that, my worthy fellow. In the present case, all I ask for is your silence and your secrecy."

“Oh, that is easily had – go on, signor.”

“Well, I wish to go over to-morrow by daybreak to Limerick. I desire, too, that you should accompany me – as my companion, however, and my equal. We are about the same height and size, so take that suit there, dress yourself, and wait for me at the cross-roads below the village.”

The Italian took the parcel without speaking, and was about to retire, when Linton said, —

“You can write, I suppose?”

The other nodded.

“I shall want you to sign a document in presence of witnesses – not your own name, but another, which I’ll tell you.”

The Italian’s dark eyes flashed with a keen and subtle meaning, and leaning forward, he said in a low, distinct tone, —

“His Excellency means that I should forge a name?”

“It is scarcely deserving so grave a phrase,” replied Linton, affecting an easy smile; “but what I ask amounts pretty much to that. Have you scruples about it?”

“My scruples are not easily alarmed, signor; only let us understand each other. I’ll do *anything* – and he laid a deep emphasis on the word – “when I see my way clear before me, nothing when I am blindfolded.”

“A man after my own heart!” cried Linton; “and now, good-night. Be true to the time and place.” And with this they parted.

The gray mist of a winter morning was just clearing away as Linton, accompanied by Giovanni, drove up to the principal hotel of Limerick, where Mr. Hammond, the eminent barrister, was then stopping. Having ascertained that he was still in the house, Linton at once sent up his name, with a request to be admitted to an interview with him. The position he had so long enjoyed among the officials of the Viceroy had made Linton a person of considerable importance in a city where the “plated article” so often passes for silver: and no sooner had the lawyer read the name, than he immediately returned a polite answer, saying that he was perfectly at Mr. Linton’s orders.

The few inquiries which Mr. Linton had meanwhile made at the bar of the hotel informed him that Mr. Hammond was making all haste to England, where he was about to appear in a case before the House of Lords; that horses had been already ordered for him along the whole line of road, and his presence in London was imperative. Armed with these facts, Linton entered the room, where, surrounded with deeds, drafts, and acts of Parliament, the learned counsel was sitting at his breakfast.

“It was but last night late, Mr. Hammond,” said he, advancing with his very frankest manner, “that we caught sight of your name as having arrived here, and you see I have lost no time in profiting by the intelligence. I have come thirty Irish miles this day to catch and carry you off with me to Mr. Cashel’s, at Tubbermore.”

“Most kind, indeed – very flattering – I am really overpowered,” said the lawyer, actually reddening with pleasure; and he said the exact truth, he was “overpowered” by a compliment so little expected. For, although high in his profession, and in considerable repute among his brethren, he had never been admitted into that peculiar class which calls itself the first society of the metropolis.

“I assure you,” resumed Linton, “it was by a vote of the whole house I undertook my mission. The Kilgoffs, the MacFarlines, the Chief Justice, Meek, and, in fact, all your friends, are there, and we only want *you* to make the party complete.”

“I cannot express the regret – the very deep regret – I feel at being obliged to decline such an honor; one which, I am free to confess, actually takes me by surprise. But, my dear Mr. Linton, you see these weighty papers – that formidable heap yonder – ”

“Meek said so,” said Linton, interrupting, and at the same time assuming a look of deep despondency. “Hammond will refuse,” said he. “There’s no man at the Irish bar has the same amount of business; he cannot give his friends even one hour from his clients.”

“I ‘m sure I scarcely suspected the Right Honorable Secretary knew of me,” said Hammond, blushing between pleasure and shame.

“Downie not know of you! – not know Mr. Hammond! – come, come – this may do for a bit of quiz in those Irish newspapers that are always affecting to charge English officials with ignorance of the distinguished men here; but I cannot permit Mr. Hammond himself to throw out the aspersion, nor, indeed, can I suffer Meek, one of my oldest friends, to lie under the obloquy. I need not tell one so much more capable of appreciating these things than myself how every administration comes into office with a host of followers far more eager for place, and infinitely more confident of high deservings, than the truly capable men of the party. These ‘locusts’ eat up the first harvest, but, happily for humanity, they rarely live for a second.”

Linton leaned back in his chair, and appeared to be taking counsel with himself, and at length, as if having formed his resolve, said, —

“Of course frankness with such a man is never a mistaken policy.” And with this muttered soliloquy again became silent.

CHAPTER VII. FORGERY

It was not “Flattery,” he sold, but “Hope.”

Bell.

We left Mr. Linton and Mr. Hammond seated opposite each other, the former lost in seeming reflection, the latter awaiting with eager expectancy for something which might explain the few strange words he had just listened to.

“May I venture on a bit of confidence, Mr. Hammond?” said Linton, clearing his brow as he spoke; “you’ll never betray me?”

“Never – on my honor.”

“Never, willingly, I well know; but I mean, will you strictly keep what I shall tell you – for yourself alone – because, as I am the only depositary of the fact, it would be inevitable ruin to me if it got about?”

“I give you my solemn pledge – I promise.”

“Quite enough – well – ” Here he leaned on the other’s shoulder, and putting his lips close to his ear, said: “Malone will retire – Repton will be chief – and” – here he prodded the listener with his finger – “Attorney-General.”

“You mean me, sir – do you mean that I am to be Attor – ”

“Hush!” said Linton, in a long low note; “do not breathe it, even in your sleep! If I know these things, it is because I am trusted in quarters where men of far more influence are hoodwinked. Were I once to be suspected of even this much, it would be ‘up’ with me forever.”

“My dear friend – will you pardon me for calling you so? – I ‘d suffer the torture of the rack before I ‘d divulge one syllable of it. I own to you, my family and my friends in general have not been patient under what they deemed the Government neglect of me.”

“And with too good reason, sir,” said Linton, assuming the look and air of a moralizer. “And do you know why you have been passed over, Mr. Hammond? I’ll tell you, sir; because your talents were too brilliant, and your integrity too spotless, for promotion, in times when inferior capacities and more convenient consciences were easier tools to handle! – Because you are not a man who, once placed in a conspicuous position, can be consigned to darkness and neglect when his capabilities have been proved to the world! – Because your knowledge, sir, your deep insight into the political condition of this country, would soon have placed you above the heads of the very men who appointed you. But times are changed; capable men, zealous men – ay, sir, and I will say, great men – are in request now. The public *will* have them, and ministers can no longer either overlook their claim or ignore their merit. You may rely upon it; I see something of what goes on behind the scenes of the great State drama, and be assured that a new era is about to dawn on the really able men of this country.”

“Your words have given me a degree of encouragement, Mr. Linton, that I was very far from ever expecting to receive. I have often deplored – not on my own account, I pledge my honor – but I have grieved for others, whom I have seen here, unnoticed and undistinguished by successive Governments.”

“Well, there is an end of the system now, and it was time!” said Linton, solemnly. “But to come back. Is there no chance of stealing you away, even for a couple of days?”

“Impossible, my dear Mr. Linton. The voluminous mass of evidence yonder relates to an appeal case, in which I am to appear before ‘the Lords.’ It is a most important suit; and I am at this very moment on my way to London, to attend a consultation with the Solicitor-General.”

“How unfortunate! – for *us*, I mean – for, indeed, your client cannot join in the plaint. By the way, your mention of ‘the Lords’ reminds me of a very curious circumstance. You are aware of the manner in which my friend Cashel succeeded to this great estate here?”

“Yes. I was consulted on a point of law in it, and was present at the two trials.”

“Well, a most singular discovery has been made within the last few days. I suppose you remember that the property had been part of a confiscated estate, belonging to an old Irish family, named Corrigan?”

“I remember perfectly, – a very fine old man, that used to be well known at Daly’s Club, long ago.”

“The same. Well, this old gentleman has been always under the impression that shortly after the accession of George III. the Act of Confiscation was repealed, and a full pardon granted to his ancestors for the part they had taken in the events of the time.”

“I never knew the descendants of one of those ‘confiscated’ families who had not some such hallucination,” said Hammond, laughing; “they cling to the straw, like the drowning man.”

“Exactly,” said Linton. “I quite agree with you. In the present case, however, the support is better than a straw; for there is an actual *bona fide* document extant, purporting to be the very pardon in question, signed by the king, and bearing the royal seal.”

“Where is this? In whose possession?” said Hammond, eagerly.

Linton did not heed the question, but continued, —

“By a very singular coincidence, the discovery is not of so much moment as it might be; because, as Cashel is about to marry the old man’s granddaughter – his sole heiress – no change in the destination of the estate would ensue, even supposing Corrigan’s title to be all that he ever conceived it. However, Cashel is really anxious on the point: he feels scruples about making settlements and so forth, with the consciousness that he may be actually disposing of what he has no real claim to. He is a sensitive fellow; and yet he dreads, on the other side, the kind of exposure that would ensue in the event of this discovery becoming known. The fact is, his own ancestors were little better than bailiffs on the estate; and the inference from this new-found paper would lead one to say, not over-honest stewards besides.”

“But if this document be authentic, Mr. Linton, Cashel’s title is not worth sixpence.”

“That is exactly what I ‘m coming to,” said Linton, who, the reader may have already perceived, was merely inventing a case regarding a marriage, the better to learn from the counsel the precise position the estate would stand in towards Mary Leicester’s husband. “If this document be authentic, Cashel’s title is invalid. Now, what would constitute its authenticity?”

“Several circumstances: the registry of the pardon in the State Paper Office – the document itself, bearing the unmistakable evidences of its origin – the signature and seal – in fact, it could not admit of much doubt when submitted to examination.”

“I told Cashel so,” said Linton. “I said to him, ‘My opinion unquestionably is that the pardon is genuine; but,’ said I, ‘when we have Hammond here, he shall see it, and decide the question.’”

“Ah! that is impossible – ”

“So I perceive,” broke in Linton; “we then hoped otherwise.”

“Why did n’t you bring it over with you?”

“So I did,” said Linton; “here it is.” And opening a carefully folded envelope, he placed the important document in the lawyer’s bands.

Hammond spread it out upon the table, and sat down to read it over carefully, while Linton, to afford the more time to the scrutiny, took the opportunity of descending to his breakfast.

He stopped as he passed the bar to say a few words to the landlord, – one of those easy speeches he knew so well how to make about the “state of trade,” “what travellers were passing,” and “how the prospect looked for the coming season,” – and then, when turning away, as if suddenly recollecting himself, said: —

“By the way, Swindon, you are a cautious fellow, that a man may trust with a secret – you know who the gentleman is that came with me?”

“No, sir; never saw him before. Indeed, I did not remark him closely.”

“All the better, Swindon. He does not fancy anything like scrutiny. He is Mr. Roland Cashel.”

“Of Tubbermore, sir?”

“The same. Hush, man, – be cautious! He has come up here about a little law business on which he desired to consult Mr. Hammond, and now we have a document for signature, if you could only find us another person equally discreet with yourself to be the witness, for these kind of things, when they get about in the world, are misrepresented in a thousand ways. Do you happen to have any confidential man here would suit us?”

“If my head waiter, sir, Mr. Nipkin, would do; he writes an excellent hand, and is a most reserved, cautious young man.”

“Perfectly, Swindon; he’ll do perfectly. Will you join us upstairs, where my friend is in waiting? Pray, also, give Nipkin a hint not to bestow any undue attention on Mr. Cashel, who wants to be *incog.* so far as may be; as for yourself, Swindon, no hint is necessary.”

A graceful bow from the landlord acknowledged the compliment, and he hastened to give the necessary orders, while Linton continued his way to the apartment where the Italian awaited him.

“Impatient for breakfast, I suppose, Giovanni?” said Linton, gayly, as he entered. “Well? sit down, and let us begin. Already I have done more than half the business which brought me here, and we may be on our way back within an hour.”

Giovanni seated himself at the table without any of that constraint a sense of inferiority enforces, and began his breakfast in silence.

“You understand,” said Linton, “that when you have written the name ‘Roland Cashel,’ and are asked if that be your act and deed, you have simply to say ‘Yes;’ a bow – a mere nod, indeed – is sufficient.”

“I understand,” said he, thoughtfully, as if reflecting over the matter with himself. “I conclude, then,” added he, after a pause, “that the sooner I leave the country afterwards, the better – I mean the safer – for me.”

“As to any positive danger,” said Linton, affecting an easy carelessness, “there is none. The document is merely a copy of one already signed by Mr. Cashel, but which I have mislaid, and I am so ashamed of my negligence I cannot bring myself to confess it.”

This tame explanation Linton was unable to finish without faltering, for the Italian’s keen and piercing dark eyes seemed to penetrate into him as he was speaking.

“With this I have nothing to do,” said he, abruptly. “It is quite clear, however, that Giovanni Santini is not Roland Cashel; nor, if there be a penalty on what I have done, am I so certain that he whose name I shall have forged will undergo it in my place.”

“You talk of forgery and penalties as if we were about to commit a felony,” said Linton, laughing. “Pray give me the cream. There is really no such peril in the case, and if there were, it would be all mine.”

“I know nothing of your laws here – I desire to know nothing of them,” said the Italian, haughtily; “but if it should be my lot to be arraigned, let it be for something more worthy of manhood. I’ll sign the paper, but I shall leave the country at once.”

No words could have been more grateful to Linton’s ears than these; he was, even at that very moment, considering in his own mind in what way to disembarass himself of his “friend” when this service should have been effected.

“As you please, Giovanni,” said he, gravely. “I regret to part company so soon with one whose frankness so well accords with my own humor.”

The Italian’s lips parted slightly, and a smile of cold and dubious meaning flitted across his dark features.

“We part here, then,” said he, rising from the table. “There is a vessel leaves this for Bristol at noon to-day; it is already past eleven o’clock.”

“I’ll not delay,” said Linton, rising and ringing the bell; “send Mr. Swindon here,” said he to the waiter, while he opened a parchment document upon the table, and after hastily glancing over it, folded it carefully again, leaving uppermost the margin, where certain pencil-marks indicated the places of signature. “This is yours, Giovanni,” said he, placing a weighty purse in the Italian’s hand, who took it with all the easy indifference of one whose feelings of shame were not too acute. “Remember what I have – ”

There was no time to finish, for already a light tap was heard at the door, and the landlord, followed by the head waiter, entered.

“We were pressed for time, Swindon,” said Linton, as he examined the pens, which, like all hotel ones, seemed invented for ruling music paper, “and have sent for you to witness the signature to this document. Here, Cashel, you are to sign here,” said he, turning to Giovanni, who had just lighted a cigar, and was smoking away with all imaginable coolness. The Italian took the pen, and with a bold and steady hand wrote the words “Roland Cashel.”

“Mr. Swindon at this side; Mr. Nipkin’s name comes underneath.”

“You acknowledge this for your hand and seal, sir?” said Swindon, turning towards Giovanni.

“I do,” said the Italian, in an accent which did not betray the slightest emotion, nor any trace of foreign pronunciation.

“All right; thank you, Swindon – thanks, Mr. Nipkin,” said Linton, as, with an elation of countenance all his efforts could not suppress, he folded up the parchment; “and now, will you order my horses at once?”

The landlord and the waiter left the room, and Linton found himself once more alone with Giovanni; the only consolation he felt being that it was for the last time. There was a pause, in which each gazed steadily at the other without a word. At last, with a long-drawn sigh, Giovanni exclaimed,

—
“Perdio! but it is hard to do.” And with this he pressed his hat upon his brows, and waving a careless farewell with his hand, walked out, leaving Linton in a state of amazement not altogether unmingled with fear. Tom watched the tall and stalwart figure of the foreigner as he moved through the crowd that filled the quay, and it was with a sense of relief he could not explain to himself that he saw him cross the plank that led to the steamer, on whose deck numerous passengers were already assembled.

The bell rang out in warning of her approaching departure, and Linton kept his eyes intently fixed upon the one figure, which towered above the others around him. Already the scene of bustle portended the moment of starting, and some were hastening on board, as others, with not less eagerness, were endeavoring to get on shore; when, just at that instant, the landlord’s voice was heard.

“Mr. Hammond is just going off, sir; he wants to say one word to you before he goes.”

Mr. Hammond had just taken his seat in his carriage, and sat with one hand upon the door, awaiting Linton’s coming.

“I am run sharp for time, Mr. Linton,” cried he, “and have not a second to lose. I wish sincerely I could have given a little more time to that document – not indeed that any feature of difficulty exists in forming an opinion, only that I believe I could have put your friend on the safe road as to his future course.”

“You regard it then as authentic – as a good and valid instrument?” said Linton, in a low but eager voice.

“So much so,” said Hammond, lowering his tone to a mere whisper, “that if he does not marry the young lady in question, I would not give him twenty shillings for his title.”

“By Jove!” exclaimed Linton, leaning his head on the door of the carriage, as if to conceal his chagrin, but in reality to hide the exuberance of his joy; “and this is your candid opinion of the case?”

“I am willing to stake my fame as a lawyer on the issue; for, remember, the whole history of the suit is familiar to me. I recollect well the flaws in the course of proofs adduced, and I see how this discovery reconciles each discrepancy, and supplies every missing link of the chain.”

“Poor fellow! – it will be a sad blow for him,” said Linton, with admirably feigned emotion.

“But it need not, Mr. Linton; the church can tie a knot not even an equity suit can open. Let him marry.”

“Ay, if he will.”

“Tell him he must; tell him what I now tell you, that this girl is the greatest heiress in the land, and that he is a beggar. Plain speaking, Mr. Linton, but time is short Good-bye.”

“One word more. Is the document of such a nature that leaves him no case whatever? Is all the ground cut away beneath his feet?”

“Every inch of it. Once more, good-bye. Here is your parchment; keep it safely. There are few men in this city hold in their hands a paper of such moment.”

“I’ll take good care of it,” said Linton, sententiously; “and so good-bye, and a safe journey to you. I’ll not forget our conversation of this morning; Meek shall hear of it before I sleep to-night. Adieu.”

“The richest heiress in the land, and Cashel a beggar,” repeated Linton, slowly, to himself, as the carriage drove off. “Charley Frobisher would say, ‘Hedge on the double event,’ but I’ll keep my book.” And, with this slang reflection, he sauntered into the inn to wait for his horses.

CHAPTER VIII. ROLAND DISCOVERS THAT HE HAS OVERDRAWN

– His counsel, like his physic,
If hard to take, was good when taken.

Village Worthies.

Long before the guests of Tubbermore were astir, Cashel sat in his library awaiting the arrival of Dr. Tiernay. In obedience to Roland's request, Mr. Kennyfeck was present, and affected to look over books or out of windows, – to scan over prints or inspect maps, – anything, in short, which should pass the time and shorten the interval of waiting, doubly awkward from being the first moment he had been alone with Cashel since his arrival. Cashel was silent and absorbed, and, more intent upon following out the train of his own thoughts, never noticed the various arts by which Kennyfeck affected to interest himself. The solicitor, too, bent from time to time a stealthy look on the young man, on whose features he had rarely seen the same traces of deep reflection.

At last, with a half start, as if suddenly awaking, Cashel sat up in his chair, and said, —

“Have I explained to you what Dr. Tiernay's business is here this morning? It is to make a proposition from Mr. Corrigan for the sale of his interest in Tubber-beg. He wishes to leave the country and go abroad.”

“His interest, sir,” replied Kennyfeck, calmly, “although more valuable to you than to any one else, must be a matter of small amount; for years back, he has done little more than vegetate on the property, without capital or skill to improve it.”

“I 'm not asking you to appraise it, just yet,” said Roland, snappishly; “I was simply informing you of the object of the gentleman's visit. It is the advantage of this purchase that I wished you to consider, not its cost.”

“The cost will define the advantage, sir,” rejoined Kennyfeck, “particularly as the demand may be high, and the payment inconvenient.”

“How do you mean, inconvenient?”

Kennyfeck hesitated. There was something in the hurried abruptness of the question, as well as in the excited expression of the questioner's face, that confused him; so that Cashel had time to repeat the words before he could reply.

“Is it that I am straitened for money?” said he, passionately.

“Not quite – that – sir,” replied Kennyfeck, stopping between every word. “You have resources – very great resources – untouched, and you have considerable sums in foreign securities, intact – ”

“Never mind these,” broke in Roland, hurriedly. “How do we stand with those London fellows?”

Kennyfeck shook his head gravely, but without speaking.

“I pray you, sir,” said Roland, in a voice of hardly suppressed passion, “keep pantomime for another moment, or a keener interpreter of it, and condescend, in plain English, to answer me my last question.”

“There is no difficulty with Bigger and Swain, sir,” said Kennyfeck, as his cheek grew slightly red. “They will neither be pressing for a settlement, nor exacting when making it; besides, you have not overdrawn very heavily, After all.”

“Overdrawn, said you? – did you say overdrawn, Mr. Kennyfeck?”

“Yes, sir. In the account last forwarded, your debit was eleven thousand four hundred and forty pounds; since that you have drawn – but not for any large amount.”

“Overdrawn!” repeated Cashel, as though his thoughts had never wandered beyond the first shock of that fact; then rallying into something like his habitual easy humor, he said, “I am, I need not tell you, the stupidest man of business that ever breathed, so pray forgive me if I ask you once more if I understood you aright, that I have not only expended all the money I owned in these people’s hands, but actually had contracted a debt to them?”

“That is the case, sir,” said Kennyfeck, gravely.

A deep groan broke from Cashel, and he sat silent and still.

“I would wish to observe, sir,” said Kennyfeck, who was shocked at the alteration a few moments had made in the young man’s countenance – “I would wish to observe, sir, that if you desire a sum of money for any purpose – ”

“Stay – let me interrupt you here,” said Cashel, laying his hand on Kennyfeck’s arm, and using a tone whose earnest distinctness thrilled through his hearer’s heart; “I should deceive you, were you to suppose that it is the want of money gives me the pain I am now suffering. That I had believed myself rich a few moments back, and now found myself a beggar, could not give one-thousandth part of that suffering which I feel here. I have braved poverty in every form, and I could brave it again; but I ‘ll tell you what it is that now cuts me to the soul, and lowers me to myself. It is that, in a senseless, heartless career, I should have squandered the wealth by which I once imagined I was to bless and succor hundreds. It is to think, that of all the gold I have wasted, not one memory has been purchased of a sick-bed consoled, a suffering lessened, a sinking spirit encouraged, – I have done nothing, actually nothing, save pamper vice and sensual heartlessness. I came to this kingdom a few months back, my very dreams filled with schemes of benevolence; I felt as if this wealth were given to me that I might show the world how much of good may be done by one who, having experienced narrow fortune, should best know how to relieve it in others; and now, here am I, the wealth and the high aspirations alike departed, with no tradition to carry away, save of a life passed in debauch, the friendship of worthless, the pitying contempt of good men! Hear me out I was nurtured in no school of sentiment; I belonged to a class who had too little time or taste to indulge in scruples. We were reckless, passionate, – cruel, if you will, – but we were not bad in cold blood; we seldom hated long; we never could turn on a benefactor. These are not the lessons I ‘ve lived to learn here! It is over, however – it is past now! I ‘ll go back to the old haunts, and the old comrades. It will go hard with me if I quarrel with their rude speech and rough demeanor. I ‘ll think of *gentlemen!* and be grateful.”

The rapid utterance in which he poured forth these words, and the fervid excitement of his manner, abashed Kenny-feck, and deterred him from reply. Cashel was the first to speak.

“This arrangement, however, must be provided for; whatever Mr. Corrigan’s interest be worth – or rather, whatever he will accept in lieu of it – I insist upon his having. But I see Dr. Tiernay coming up to the door; we can talk of these things at another time.”

When Tiernay entered the library he was heated with his walk, and his face betrayed unmistakable signs of recent irritation; indeed, he did not long conceal the reason.

“Is it true, Mr. Cashel, that Mr. Linton is your nominee for the borough of Derrahenny?”

“Yes; what of that?”

“Why, that he canvasses the constituency in a fashion we have not yet been accustomed to; at least *your* tenants, of whom I am one, are told that our votes are the condition on which our leases will receive renewal; that you will not brook opposition in any one who holds under you. Are these your sentiments, Mr. Cashel, or only his?”

“Not mine, assuredly,” replied Cashel, gravely.

“I said as much. I told several of my neighbors that if this mode of canvass had your sanction, it was from not knowing the privileges of an elector.”

“I neither sanctioned nor knew of it,” rejoined Cashel, eagerly.

“So much the better – at least for me,” said Tiernay, seating himself at the breakfast-table, “for I shall not lose a good breakfast, as I should have been forced to do had these been your intentions.”

“I would observe, Dr. Tiernay,” interposed Kennyfeck, mildly, “that the borough, being entirely the property of Mr. Cashel, its charities maintained by his bounty, and its schools supported at his cost, he has a fair claim on the gratitude of those who benefit by his benevolence.”

“Let him stand himself for the borough, and we ‘ll not deny the debt,” said Tiernay, roughly; “but if for every ten he should expend a hundred, ay, sir, or a thousand, on the village, I ‘d not vote for Mr. Linton.”

“Most certainly, doctor; I ‘d never seek to coerce you,” said Cashel, smiling.

“Labor lost, sir. I am your tenant for a holding of twenty-two pounds a year. I have never been in arrear; you, consequently, have not granted me any favor, save that of extending your acquaintance to me. Now, sir, except that you are a rich man and I a poor one, how is even that condescension on your part a favor? and how could *you* purpose, upon it, to ask me to surrender my right of judgment on an important point to you, who, from your high station, your rank and influence, have a thousand prerogatives, while I have but this one?”

“I never heard the just influence of the landed proprietor disputed before,” said Kenny feck, who felt outraged at the doctor’s hardihood.

“It is only *just* influence, sir,” said Tiernay, “when he who wields it is an example, as much by his life, as by the exercise of an ability that commands respect. Show me a man at the head of a large property extending the happiness of his tenantry, succoring the sick, assisting the needy, spreading the blessings of his own knowledge among those who have neither leisure nor opportunity to acquire it for themselves. Let me see him, while enjoying to the fullest the bounteous gifts that are the portion of but few in this world, not forgetful of those whose life is toil, and whose struggle is for mere existence. Let me not know the landlord only by his liveries and his equipage, his fox-hounds, his plate, his racers, and his sycophants.”

“Hard hitting, doctor!” cried Cashel, interrupting.

“Not if you can take it so good-humoredly,” said Tiernay; “not if it only lose me the honor of ever entering here, and teach you to reflect on these things.”

“You mistake me much,” said Cashel, “if you judge me so narrowly.”

“I did not think thus meanly of you; nor, if I did, would it have stopped me. I often promised myself, that if I could but eat of a rich man’s salt, I ‘d tell him my mind, while under the protection of his hospitality. I have paid my debt now; and so, no more of it. Kennyfeck could tell you better than I, if it be not, in part at least, deserved. All this splendor that dazzles our eyes, – all this luxury, that makes the contrast of our poverty the colder, – all this reckless waste, that is like an unfeeling jest upon our small thrift, is hard to bear when we see it, not the pastime of an idle hour, but the business of a life. You can do far better things than these, and be happier as well as better for doing them! And now, sir, are you in the mood to discuss my friend’s project?”

“Perfectly so, doctor; you have only to speak your sentiments on the matter before Mr. Kennyfeck; my concurrence is already with you.”

“We want you to buy our interest in Tubber-beg,” said the doctor, drawing his chair in front of Kennyfeck; “and though you tell us that flower-plats and hollies, laurustinus and geraniums, are not wealth, we ‘ll insist on your remunerating us for some share of the cost. The spot is a sweet one, and will improve your demesne. Now, what’s it worth?”

“There are difficulties which may preclude any arrangement,” said Kennyfeck, gravely. “There was a deed of gift of this very property made out, and only awaiting Mr. Cashel’s signature.”

“To whom?” said Tiernay, gasping with anxiety.

“To Mr. Linton.”

“The very thing I feared,” said the old man, dropping his head sorrowfully.

“It is easily remedied, I fancy,” said Cashel. “It was a hasty promise given to afford him qualification for Parliament. I ‘ll give him something of larger value; I know he ‘ll not stand in our way here.”

“How you talk of giving, sir! You should have been the Good Fairy of a nursery tale, and not a mere man of acres and bank-notes. But have your own way. It’s only anticipating the crash a month or so; ruined you must be!”

“Is that so certain?” said Cashel, half smiling, half seriously.

“Ask Mr. Kennyfeck, there, whose highest ambition half a year ago was to be your agent, and now he ‘d scarcely take you for a son-in-law! Don’t look so angry, man; what I said is but an illustration. It will be with your property as it was with your pleasure-boat t’other day; you ‘ll never know you ‘ve struck till you ‘re sinking.”

“You affect to have a very intimate knowledge of Mr. Cashel’s affairs, sir,” said Kennyfeck, who was driven beyond all further endurance.

“Somewhat more than you possess, Mr. Kennyfeck; for I know his tenantry. Not as you know them, from answering to their names at rent-day, but from seeing them in seasons of distress and famine, – from hearing their half-uttered hopes that better days were coming when the new landlord himself was about to visit them; from listening to their sanguine expectations of benefits; and now, within some few days, from hearing the low mutterings of their discontent, – the prelude of worse than that.”

“I have seen nothing else than the same scenes for forty years, but I never remember the people more regular in their payments,” said the attorney.

“Well, don’t venture among the Drumcoolohan boys alone; that, at least, I would recommend you,” said the doctor, menacingly.

“Why not? – who are they? – where are these fellows?” cried Cashel, for danger was a theme that never failed to stir his heart.

“It ‘s a bad barony, sir,” said Kennyfeck, solemnly.

“A district that has supplied the gallows and the convict-ship for many a year; but we are wandering away from the theme we ought to discuss,” interposed Tiernay, “and the question narrows itself to this; if this property is still yours, – if you have not already consigned it to another, – what is my friend’s interest worth?”

“That will require calculation and reflection.”

“Neither, Mr. Kennyfeck,” broke in Cashel. “Learn Mr. Corrigan’s expectations, and see that they are complied with.”

“My friend desired a small annuity on the life of his granddaughter.”

“Be it an annuity, then,” replied Cashel.

“By heaven!” exclaimed Tiernay, as if he could not restrain the impulse that worked within him, “you are a fine-hearted fellow. Here, sir,” said he, taking a paper from his pocket, – “here is a document, which my poor friend sat up half the night to write, but which I’d half made up my mind never to give you. You’d never guess what it is, nor your keen friend either, but I ‘ll spare you the trouble of spelling it over. It’s a renunciation of Cornelius Corrigan, Esq., for himself and his heirs forever, of all right, direct or contingent, to the estate of Tubbermore, once the family property of his ancestors for eleven generations. You never heard of such a claim,” said Tiernay, turning to Cashel, “but Mr. Kennyfeck did; he knows well the importance of that piece of paper he affects to treat with such indifference.”

“And do you suppose, sir, that if this claim you speak of be a good and valid one, I could, as a man of honor, maintain a possession to which I had no right? No; let Mr. Corrigan take back that paper; let him try his right, as the laws enable him. If I stand not here as the just owner of this house, I am ready to leave it at this instant; but I am neither to be intimidated by a threat nor conciliated by a compromise.”

“Mr. Corrigan’s claim has nothing to go upon, I assure you,” broke in Kennyfeck. “If we accept the paper, it is by courtesy, – to show that we respect the feeling that suggested it, – nothing more.”

While these words were addressed to Tiernay, Cashel, who had walked towards one of the windows, did not hear them.

“Well,” cried Tiernay, after an awkward pause, “the devil a worse negotiator ever accepted a mission than myself! When I desire to be frank, the only truths that occur to me are sure to be offensive, and I never am so certain to insult as when I fancy I ‘m doing a favor. Goodbye, sir; pardon the liberties of an old man, whose profession has taught him to believe that remedies are seldom painless, and who, although a poor man, would rather any day lose the fee than the patient! You’ll not treat Con Corrigan the less kindly because he has an imprudent friend. I’m sorry to think that I leave an unfavorable impression behind me; but I’m glad, heartily glad, I came here to breakfast, for I go away convinced of two things, that I was far from believing so certain when I entered,” – he paused for a second or two, and then said, – “that a spendthrift could have an unblemished sense of honor, and that an attorney could appreciate it!”

With these words he departed, while Cashel, after staring for a few moments at Kennyfeck, threw himself back in his chair, and laughed long and heartily.

“An original, sir, – quite an original,” said Kennyfeck, who, not exactly knowing whether to accept the doctor’s parting speech as a compliment, or the reverse, contented himself with this very vague expression.

“He’s a fine old fellow, although he does lay on his salve in Indian fashion, with a scalping-knife; but I wish he’d not have said anything of that confounded paper.”

“Pardon me, sir,” interposed Kennyfeck, taking it from his pocket, “but it might prove of inestimable value, in the event of any future litigation.”

“What! you kept it, then?” cried Cashel.

“Of course I did, sir. It is a document scarce inferior to a deed of title; for, although Mr. Corrigan has nothing to substantiate a claim at law, it is incontestable that his family were the original owners of this estate.”

Cashel took the paper from Kennyfeck’s hand, and seemed to peruse it for some minutes, and then approaching the fire he threw it into the blaze, and pressed it down with a poker till it was consumed; while Kennyfeck, too much consternated to utter a word, stood the personification of terror-struck astonishment.

“You have burnt it, sir!” said he at last, in a whisper.

“Why not, sir?” cried Cashel, rudely. “Should I have made use of it against the man who wrote it, or against his heirs, if by chance they should seek one day to dispute my right?”

A deep sigh was all the reply Kennyfeck could make.

“I understand your compassion well,” said Cashel, scornfully. “You are right, sir. It was the buccaneer, not the gentleman, spoke there; but I ‘m sick of masquerading, and I long for a little reality.”

Without waiting for a reply, Roland left the room, and wandered out into the park.

CHAPTER IX. THE BURNT LETTER – “GREAT EXPECTATIONS”

“‘Like Dido’s self,’ she said, ‘I’m free!
Trojan or Tyrian are alike to me.’”

There was but one species of tyranny Mr. Kennyfeck ever attempted in his family: this was, to shroud with a solemn mystery every little event in his professional career which he saw excited any curiosity with his wife and daughters. It was true that on such occasions he became a mark for most sneering insinuations and derisive commentaries, but he rose with the dignity of a martyr above all their taunts, and doubtless felt in his heart the supporting energy of a high-priest standing watch over the gate of the Temple.

The few pencilled lines by Cashel, which had summoned him to the meeting recorded in the last chapter, he threw into the fire as soon as he had read, and then arising from the breakfast-table, dryly observed, —

“Don’t wait breakfast, Mrs. Kennyfeck; I shall not be back for some time.”

“Another secret, Mr. Kennyfeck?” said his wife, scoffingly.

He only smiled in reply.

“It ought to be a duel, at least, pa,” said his eldest daughter, “from the urgent haste of your departure.”

“Or a runaway couple, who wish to have the settlements — ”

“Is that all you know of the matter, Livy?” said her sister, laughing heartily; “why, child, your Gretna Green folks never have settlements — never think of them till six months later, when they are wanting to separate.”

“Is there any occasion for mystery in this case?” rejoined Mrs. Kennyfeck, haughtily.

“To be sure there may, my dear,” broke in Aunt Fanny; “there ‘s many a dirty thing the lawyers have to do they ‘d be ashamed to own before their families.”

Even this did not move Mr. Kennyfeck, and, although from the way he nestled his chin behind the folds of his white cravat, and a certain scarcely perceptible shake of the head, it was clear he longed to refute the foul aspersion.

“I suppose you will appear at dinner, sir?” said Mrs. Kennyfeck, with her grandest air.

“I hope so, Mrs. Kennyfeck,” was the mild answer.

“Without you should take it into your head, pa, to enter into rivalry with Mr. Linton, and stay away, heaven knows where or how long,” said Miss Kennyfeck.

Mr. Kennyfeck did not wait for more, but left the room with an air whose solemnity well suited any amount of secrecy.

“Is there a carriage at the door?” said Mrs. Kennyfeck.

“No, mamma; there are three saddle-horses — one with a side-saddle. That odious Miss Meek!” exclaimed Miss Kennyfeck; “what Lord Charles can see in her I cannot conceive. To be sure, she saves a stable-boy the more, and that to him is something.”

“Has your father gone out by the back terrace?” resumed Mrs. Kennyfeck, one only theme occupying her thoughts.

Olivia retired into an adjoining room, and soon returned, saying, —

“No, ma; there’s no one there, except Sir Andrew and Lady Janet, taking their morning walk.”

“Their run, rather, my dear,” chimed in Miss Kennyfeck, “for she chases the poor old man up and down with a cup of camomile tea, which either scalds or sets him a-coughing. I ‘m sure that tiresome old couple have awoke me every day the last week with their squabbling.”

“Step down into the library, my love,” said Mrs. Kennyfeck to her younger daughter, “and bring, me up the ‘Post’ or the ‘St. James’s Chronicle.’”

“And if you meet Phillis, Just ask if he saw your father, for he forgot his gloves.” And, suiting the action to the word, Aunt Fanny dived into a cavern of an apron-pocket, and drew out a pair of knitted things without fingers, which she offered to Olivia.

“Do no such thing, Miss Olivia Kennyfeck,” said her mamma, with an air of imposing grandeur.

“Ma wants the newspaper, Olivia, and is not thinking of papa,” said Miss Kennyfeck; and her eyes sparkled with a malicious fun she well knew how to enjoy.

As Miss Olivia Kennyfeck left the room, her sister approached the fireplace, where a small charred portion of the note thrown down by her father was yet lying. She took it, and walking toward the window, examined it carefully.

And while we leave her thus occupied, let us, for the reader’s information – albeit he may deem the matter trivial – give the contents as Cashel wrote them: —

Dear Mr. Kennyfeck, – Make my excuses to Mrs. Kennyfeck and the Demoiselles Cary and Olivia, if I deprive them of your society this morning at breakfast, for I shall want your counsel and assistance in the settlement of some difficult affairs. I have been shamefully backward in paying my respectful addresses to the ladies of your family; but to-day, if they will permit, I intend to afford myself that pleasure. It is as a friend, and not as my counsel learned in law, I ask your presence with me in my library at ten o’clock. Till then,

Believe me yours,
R. C.

Now, of this very commonplace document, a few blackened, crumpled, frail fragments were all that remained; and these, even to the searching dark eyes of Miss Kennyfeck, revealed very little. Indeed, had they not been written in Cashel’s hand, she would have thrown them away at once, as unworthy of further thought. This fact, and the word “Olivia,” which she discovered after much scrutiny, however, excited all her zeal, and she labored now like an antiquarian who believes he has gained the clew to some mysterious inscription. She gathered up the two or three filmy black bits of paper which yet lay within the fender, and placing them before her, studied them long and carefully. The word “settlement” was clear as print.

“Olivia and ‘settlement’ in the same paper,” thought she; “what can this mean?”

“Come here, mamma – Aunt Fanny – look at this for a moment,” said she, eagerly; and the two ladies approached at her bidding.

“What is that word?” she said to Mrs. Kennyfeck; “is it not ‘Olivia’? Don’t you see the end of the ‘l’ has been burned away, but the rest is quite plain?”

“So it is – upon my life! – and in Cashel’s hand, too!” exclaimed Mrs. Kennyfeck.

“And what is that?” asked Miss Kennyfeck, triumphantly, pointing to another word.

Aunt Fanny, with her spectacles on, bent down, and examined it long.

“‘Battlement.’ That is ‘battlement’ as clear as day,” said she.

“What nonsense, aunt – it is ‘settlement.’ Look at what you call a ‘b’ – it is an ‘s.’”

“Cary’s quite right. The word is ‘settlement,’” said Mrs. Kennyfeck, in a voice tremulous with joy.

“And there! – I hope you can read!” exclaimed Miss Kennyfeck, “even without your spectacles – ‘paying’ – ‘addresses.’”

“Show it to me, Cary,” said her mother, eagerly. “I declare I can read it perfectly. Is it possible? – can this be indeed true?”

“Of course it is, mamma. Will you tell me by what other coincidence you could find Olivia’s name coupled with the words ‘settlement’ and ‘addresses’ in the same note?”

“It is very suspicious, certainly,” said Aunt Fanny.

“I think it very convincing, aunt – not suspicious,” said Miss Kennyfeck, proudly. “Here is something about ‘friend,’ and another word I can’t make out.”

“That’s something about a ‘saw,’ my love,” said Aunt Fanny.

“How absurd, aunt; the word is ‘law.’ I have it. See – here is the name – it is the conclusion of the note, and ran, doubtless, thus: ‘Your present friend, and future son-in-law, – R. C.’”

Mrs. Kennyfeck leaned forward, and kissed her daughter’s cheek with a degree of fervor she very rarely gave way to; and then, lying back in her chair, pressed her handkerchief to her face, while she, doubtless, revelled in a little excursion of fancy, not the less brilliant because tempered with anxiety.

If the moment was one of maternal ecstasy for Mrs. Kennyfeck, it was no less one of triumphant joy to her daughter. It was *she* who revealed the secret meaning; her skill and ingenuity had given light to the dark mystery, and consistency to its incoherence. What domination could be too great for such services? It was then, like a legitimate sovereign assuming the reins of government, she said, —

“I beg, Aunt Fanny, that you will not spoil the game this time, as most unquestionably you did before.”

“Let us see that there is one to be spoiled, my dear,” rejoined Aunt Fanny, snappishly.

“You are really too provoking, Fanny,” said Mrs. Kennyfeck, removing her handkerchief from two very red eyelids. “You never are satisfied when you see us happy. Cary has shown you enough to convince any one – ”

“Anyone disposed to conviction, mamma,” broke in Miss Kennyfeck, haughtily. “Hush, here’s Olivia.”

“Mr. Meek is reading the ‘Post,’ ma,” said the young lady, entering; “and he has got the other papers in his pocket, but he says there’s really nothing of any interest in them.”

“I think Livy should be told, mamma,” whispered Miss Kennyfeck to her mother.

“I quite agree with you, Cary,” said Mrs. Kennyfeck; “I never was a friend to any secrecy in families. Your father, indeed, I grieve to say, does not participate in my sentiments; but much may be excused in him, from the habits of his profession, and, I will also say, from the class in life he sprang from.” Here Mrs. Kennyfeck, who had spoken like one delivering an oracle, stopped to drop a tear over the sad *mésalliance* which had condemned her to become the wife of an attorney. “Olivia, my dear, circumstances have disclosed the nature of the interview which Mr. Kennyfeck would not confide to us. It is one in which you are deeply concerned, my dear. Have you any suspicion to what I allude?”

Olivia assumed her very sweetest look of innocence, but made no reply.

“Mamma wants you to be candid enough to say, if there is anything in the way of particular attention you may have received lately, which should corroborate the impressions we entertain.”

Miss Kennyfeck delivered these words so categorically, that her sister well knew how, in the event of refusal, a searching cross-examination was reserved for her.

Olivia looked down, and a very slight embarrassment might be detected in the quickened heaving of her chest.

“Tell us, my darling,” said Aunt Fanny, “if – if any one has, in a manner so to say – you understand – eh?”

“Keep the blushes, Livy, for another time; they look beautiful with orange flowers in the hair,” said her sister; “but be candid with us.”

“If you mean attentions, mamma – ”

“We mean attentions, ‘and something more,’ as Lord Lyndburst says,” interposed Miss Kennyfeck, who felt that she was the proper person to conduct the inquiry.

“I cannot positively say, mamma, that we are engaged, but I believe that if you and pa made no obstacles – if, in fact, you are satisfied that his rank and fortune are sufficient for your expectations, as I own they are for mine – ”

“What humility!” exclaimed Miss Kennyfeck, holding up her hands.

“Hush, Cary – go on, Livy,” said her mother.

“I have no more to say, mamma. Sir Harvey told me – ”

“Sir Harvey!” cried Mrs. Kennyfeck.

“Sir Harvey Upton!” echoed Miss Kennyfeck.

“The man with the hair all over his face!” exclaimed Aunt Fanny, whose western habits had not accustomed her to mustaches.

Olivia stared from one to the other in mingled fear and astonishment. She suddenly saw that she had been betrayed into a confession to which they did not possess the slightest clew; she also perceived that the tidings, for which she anticipated a most joyous welcome, were received with coldness and almost disdain.

“He is a baronet, mamma, with very great expectations,” said she, proudly; for really, it was a large “bird” to bag, in the beginning of the season, too!

“Very possibly,” said Mrs. Kennyfeck, looking to her elder daughter with that silent eloquence which the court occasionally bestows upon the crown counsel, meaning to say: “Have you anything to reply to that?”

“Mamma is aware that Sir Harvey is a baronet, and a captain of Hussars, and Jonas Upton of Somerton is his uncle, who may, or may not, leave him his large estates – a circumstance, most probably, mainly dependent on the alliance he may form in marriage.”

“Yes, indeed! my dear,” broke in Aunt Fanny; “and when the old man finds out that ‘tis only an attorney’s daughter – ”

“Fanny, do you mean to drive me distracted?” screamed Mrs. Kennyfeck; “are my children to be taught to be ashamed of their father?”

“‘T is a lesson they might know by heart, this time of day, my dear,” said the inexorable Fanny, who put up her spectacles, and smoothed down her apron, – unmistakable signs that she was preparing for battle.

“You need n’t ‘beat to quarters,’ aunt, as Captain Luttrede says; there is no one going to fire into you,” said Miss Kennyfeck. “The question at present is, how is Olivia to free herself from an unhappy connection – ”

“An unhappy connection!” exclaimed Livy, in amazement.

“Listen to your sister, and don’t interrupt her,” said Mrs. Kennyfeck.

“I spoke advisedly, Livy,” resumed the elder, “when I called your connection with Sir Harvey Upton unhappy. We have just learned that far higher views are open to you, – that no less a person than Mr. Cashel – ”

“Impossible, mamma! he never notices me in the least. Our acquaintance is scarcely more than a cold act of recognition when we meet.”

“Though love is hot sometimes, soon it grows cold,” muttered Aunt Fanny, who believed she was quoting to the letter.

“There never was love in the case at all, aunt,” said Olivia.

“Attend to *me*, Livy,” said her sister, who seemed impatient at this digression. “It is sufficient – it ought, at least, to be sufficient – for you, that *we* know Mr. Roland Cashel’s intentions. It is for *you* to establish a coolness with Sir Harvey. There is no difficulty in the task. I could not presume to instruct *you* in any matter of this kind, nor will I.”

“Take a friend’s advice, Livy dear, and don’t throw out dirty water till you’re sure of clean.”

“What, aunt?” asked Olivia, who really was puzzled by the figurative eloquence of her relative.

“Pshaw!” said Miss Kennyfeck, equally angry at the counsel and the vulgarity of the expression it was couched in. “Livy, attend to *me*,” said she again. “Mr. Cashel has sent for papa this morning to make a formal – Hush! here is pa himself.” And Mr. Kennyfeck’s heavy tread was heard approaching the door.

Mr. Kennyfeck’s sudden entrance not only closed the discussion, but left the debaters in the difficulty of having no concerted line of conduct respecting the new arrival; and although Mrs. Kennyfeck’s eyebrows were worked with a telegraphic activity, and Miss Kennyfeck’s pantomimic replies as promptly returned, it was clear that neither comprehended the other. Kaunitz lays it down as an axiom that “when two wings of an army are in presence of an enemy, and without means of rapid and certain communication, it is always better to act on the defensive than to attack, without some evident weak point of the adversary encourages a forward movement.” It is more than probable that neither Mrs. Kennyfeck nor her fair daughter had studied the authority in question, yet, with a tact quite instinctive, they proceeded to act upon it.

“You are back early, Mr. Kennyfeck,” said his wife, with a tone of half indifference.

Mr. Kennyfeck looked at his watch, and said it wanted twenty minutes to twelve.

“Has Mr. Linton returned, pa?” asked Miss Kennyfeck.

“I believe not. I have not heard that he has.”

“It would be little loss if he never did!” said Aunt Fanny, as she bit the end of an obstinate thread that would not enter the eye of her needle.

“Oh, Aunt Fanny!” exclaimed Olivia, in a deprecating tone.

“Pon my word, my dear, them ‘s my sentiments – whatever yours is.”

“Mr. Cashel certainly thinks differently,” said Mrs. Kennyfeck, glad to introduce the name uppermost in all their thoughts.

“I think of late there has been something like a coldness between them – You see them very rarely together. Did Mr. Cashel mention his name to you this morning, Mr. Kennyfeck?” said his wife; and by this sudden question revealing that they knew, at least, where he had been.

“Mere passingly, incidentally,” said Mr. Kennyfeck, evidently amazed that his small mystery had been penetrated; then, after a slight pause, he added, very probably with a sly malice to pique curiosity, “Mr. Cashel is desirous of Mr. Linton’s counsel on a step he meditates taking.”

“Indeed, sir; and has he much confidence in Mr. Linton’s judgment?”

“In this instance, it is likely he will follow the dictates of his own, Mrs. Kennyfeck,” said the attorney, solemnly.

This fencing was too much for Mrs. Kennyfeck, in whom the Job-like element was always at zero. It was an insult, too, to her understanding, that Mr. Kennyfeck should skirmish in this fashion with *her*; and so, drawing herself proudly up, she said, —

“Mr. Kennyfeck, I would wish to ask you, if you have, even upon one single occasion, discovered that *my* knowledge of the world, *my* tact, or *my* intelligence, were inferior to your own?”

“Never, madam; I’m sure I never disputed the – ”

“No, sir, you never dared to contest the fact, though you may have endeavored to escape from its application. I believe, sir, the only instance of deficient judgment I can be accused of, *you*, at least, ought not to reproach me with. ‘My family’” – this was a word Mrs. Kennyfeck used to enunciate with an emphasis that always impressed her husband very little provocation might possibly have made her say, “our house” – “my family, indeed, may refuse to forgive me” – she stopped, wiped her eyes, and then, with what seemed an heroic victory over her feelings, went on – “but the welfare of my children, sir, may well be conceived dear to one, who would not league to them the unhappy descent she has herself suffered.”

Mrs. Kennyfeck paused again. It appeared as though, do what she would, there was no escaping from the theme of her *mésalliance* when once she had touched it. It was very birdlime in its adhesiveness.

“When, therefore, Mr. Kennyfeck, the occasion presents itself of resuming, through my children – for alas! it is lost to me in my own person – the station I have forfeited, I do think that I should at least be consulted, that my advice should be asked, and my guidance required. Don’t you think so too, sir?”

Now, of all men living, never was there one more inept to read riddles than poor Mr. Kennyfeck, and while he averred that he perfectly concurred in his wife’s opinion, he had not the faintest glimmering of a notion what that opinion implied.

“Don’t you think, sir, also it would be better to use a little candor with your family?”

“Yes, pa, we know all about it,” said Miss Kennyfeck, nodding significantly.

“Ay, indeed, we had it in black and white – that is, if we can call a bit of burnt – ”

“Aunt Fanny, what are you about?” cried Miss Kennyfeck, in a voice of real terror, for she was shocked at the meanness she did not scruple to stoop to.

“Yes, Mr. Kennyfeck,” reiterated his wife, “we know all! If, however, you still persist in maintaining that mysterious aspect you have assumed with your family, I must say, sir, it is perfectly absurd.”

“It is unnecessary, too, papa,” cried Miss Kennyfeck.

“And it’s unfair to that young creature,” chimed in Aunt Fanny, with a gesture towards Olivia, who sat, *en tableau* for injured innocence, next a window.

Possibly, if any could have read Mr. Kennyfeck’s sentiments at that instant, they would have recognized the sufferings of a true martyr. To his own heart he muttered, —

“This is very hard; it is being called upon to reply to a case without a copy of the affidavits.”

At length, with a courage that he did not believe he was capable of, he said, —

“I am confused, Mrs. Kennyfeck; I am overwhelmed; I may submit a plea of surprise – that is, I would move the court, I mean – in fact, I must beg you will permit me to adjourn this case.”

And with these words, and in an agitation very unusual with him, he hastened from the room. Scarcely had the door closed after him, than he reopened it, and putting in his head, said, —

“I should have told you, Mrs. Kennyfeck, that Mr. Cashel intends to pay a visit here to-day.”

And so saying, he shut the door and departed.

“At last, sir!” exclaimed Mrs. Kennyfeck, in a voice of exultation, “you have been obliged to confess so much at least; but, rely on it, girls, your father is acting under Cashel’s dictation, or he never would dare to tamper in this manner with *me*.”

CHAPTER X. A STARTLING INTRUSION

Say what you will, good friend, I do persist,
I had him “covered” when you shook my wrist.

The Duel.

In a handsome drawing-room, where the light was judiciously tempered by the slight folds of rose-colored curtains, while the air breathed the faint delicious perfume of some hot-house flowers, sat Olivia Kennyfeck alone. She was most simply but becomingly dressed, and in her hair, worn in smooth bands on either cheek, a little sprig of Greek myrtle, with its bright red berries, was interwoven, which served to show to even greater advantage the delicate fairness of a skin tinged with the very faintest blush. There was a soft pensive character in her beauty which seemed to harmonize perfectly with the silent room and its scattered objects of art. The very exclusion of all view appeared to add to the effect; as though suggesting how much of in-door happiness was contained within those four walls\ neither asking for, nor wanting, the “wide cold world” without. She was reading – at least she held a book in her hand – a gorgeously bound little volume it was – nor did the dark ribbon of velvet fringed with gold that marked her place fail to contrast well with the snowy whiteness of the wrist it fell upon.

Her attitude, as she lay, rather than sat, in a deep armchair, was faultless in its grace; and even the tiny foot, which rested on a little Blenheim spaniel as he lay sleeping on the hearth-rug, had a certain air of homelike ease that made the scene a picture, and to a suggestive mind might have given it a story. And yet, for all the sleepy softness of those half-drooped lids, for all that voluptuous ease of every lineament and limb, the heart within was watchful and waking. Not a sound upon the stairs, not a voice, not a footstep, that did not make its pulses beat faster and fuller.

Two o’clock struck, and the great bell rang out which called the guests to luncheon, a meal at which Cashel never appeared; and now Olivia listened to the sounds of merry laughter that floated along the corridors, and faded away in the distance, as group after group passed downstairs, and at last, all was silent again. Where was he? Why did he not come? she asked herself again and again. Her mamma and sister had purposely stayed away from luncheon to receive him; for so it was arranged, that she herself should first see Cashel alone, and afterwards be joined by the others – and yet he came not!

The half-hour chimed, and Olivia looked up at the French clock upon the mantelpiece with amazement. Surely there had been more than thirty minutes since she heard it last; and the little Cupid on the top, who, with full-stretched bow and fixed eye, seemed bent on mischief – silly fool! like herself, there was no mark to shoot at! She sighed; it was not a deep sigh, nor a sad one; nor was it the wearisome expression of listlessness; nor was it the tribute paid to some half-called up memory. It was none of these; though perhaps each entered into it as an ingredient. But what right have we to analyze its meaning, or ask how much of hope or fear it contained? – what portion of regret for one she was about to desert? – what shame for the faithlessness? Ay, what shame!

Coquetry is no virtue; but most certainly it is not the wholesale corrupter some moralists would make it. Miss Olivia Kennyfeck had been taught it from her earliest years, – from those pleasant days, when, dressed like some fairy queen, she descended from the nursery to stand beside pa’s chair on company days, at dessert, and be stared at, and kissed, and “dear-loved” by some scores of people, whose enthusiasm for childish beauty had all the warmth that springs from turtle and truffles, iced punch and Lafitte. She had been taught it by the French governess, who told her to be *aimable*. The very dancing-master cried out, “Grace, – more grace, if you please, Miss Olivia,” at every step of

her minuet; and the riding-master's eternal exhortation was, "Sit as if the whole world was watching you, miss."

These teachings go further and deeper into the heart than we suspect. "The wish to please" – pure and amiable as the feeling can be – lies on the frontier of a dangerous land, – the "wish to conquer." That passion once engendered in the heart, no room remains for any other.

To return to Miss Olivia Kennyfeck, – for most ungallantly we are forgetting she is alone all this while. Her education had but one end and object, – to obtain a good position by marriage. The precept had been instilled into her mind in a thousand different ways, and not only self-interest, but pride, emulation, and vanity had been enlisted in its support. So constantly was the theme presented to her, such day-by-day discussion of the prizes and blanks drawn by others in the wheel connubial, that she really felt little or no interest in any other topic.

And yet, with all that misdirection of mind, that perverse insistence on wrong, there was still in her heart a void, a want, that neither vanity nor selfishness could fill. It might be, perhaps, to be found out by one who should make it the storehouse of high and generous impulses, of ennobling duties and tender affections; or, just as likely, lie like some fruitful but unknown tract, – barren, waste, and profitless!

Three o'clock came! And now the house resounded with the buzz of voices and the hurried movement of feet. Carriages and horses, too, assembled before the door, and all the pleasant bustle of those bent on pleasure filled the air. Olivia arose, and, screened by the curtain, watched the scene beneath. For the first time she perceived that Lady Kilgoff was in a riding-dress. She stood in the midst of a group before the door, amid which Olivia's eyes peered with restless activity.

No, Cashel was not there! She almost said the comforting words aloud, but at the same instant a cry of, "Here he is, – here he comes!" broke from those beneath, and every head was turned towards the road to the stables, along which Cashel was seen cantering a snow-white Arab of great beauty. As he came nearer it could be seen that he was seated on a side-saddle, while he managed the well-trained creature with the most graceful address.

"Are you quite certain I may venture, Mr. Cashel?" said Lady Kilgoff, as he pulled up in front of her; "remember, that I am neither so fearless nor so skilful as our fair queen beside me, who, I must own, is far more worthy of 'Hassan Bey' than I am."

"I'll pledge my life on his good conduct," said Roland, springing from his back; "I've ridden him for an hour, and he is gentleness itself."

"He's over-trained for my fancy," said Miss Meek. "He's like one of the creatures you see in Franconi's, walking up a ladder to catch a handkerchief."

Lady Janet whispered something in her ear, at which she started and smiled, but evidently in ignorance of its meaning.

"What is that very wicked thing that Lady Janet has just told you?" said Lady Kilgoff, as she advanced to mount her horse.

"It was *à propos* of the handkerchief. She said 'Probably you were going to throw yours at Mr. Cashel,' – I'm sure I don't know why."

Fortunately none but Lady Kilgoff and Cashel heard this speech, but both blushed deeply.

While this was enacting below, Olivia, who marked every gesture and every look eagerly, could not hear what passed. She could only see the respectful attention bestowed by Cashel on every wish of his fair guest; how, having seated her, he draped in graceful folds the long velvet habit, in which, and with a white hat and drooping feather, she resembled one of the court of Louis Quinze.

At last she turned her horse's head, and rode him slowly along before the house, evidently timid and afraid of the high-mettled animal. Cashel, however, walked at his head, and so they stood, while he arranged the curb-chain, exactly beneath the window where Olivia was standing.

She opened the sash noiselessly, and, bending down, listened.

“I assure you,” said Lady Kilgoff, “I ‘ll not continue my ride if you don’t come. I have no confidence in these fine gentlemen cavaliers; and as for Miss Meek, she ‘d risk her life to see me run away with.”

“I pledge myself to follow in ten minutes, – nay, in five, if possible. I told Mr. Kennyfeck I should make my obeisances to the ladies to-day.”

“Would to-morrow not serve?” said she, smiling.

“I believe it might – but a promise! Besides, I have been sadly deficient in attentions there.”

“Sir Harvey and his brother hussar have made the *amende* for your shortcomings, but go, make haste and overtake us. I see ‘my Lord’ trying to understand Lady Janet, and I must not delay longer.”

“Ride slowly,” cried Roland, “and don’t get run away with till I ‘m of the party.”

She nodded archly in reply to this speech, and joining the group, who were all awaiting her, rode off, while Cashel entered the house, and soon was heard ascending the stairs at a hurried pace.

Olivia could only close the window and resume her place, when a tap was given at the door, and the same instant Cashel entered the room. He stopped suddenly, and looked around, for at first he did not perceive Olivia, who, deep in her book, affected not to hear the noise of his approach.

The rich coronet of brown hair, on which an evening sun was throwing one brilliant gleam, caught his eye, and he advanced near enough to see and be struck by that graceful attitude of which we gave our reader a glimpse at the opening of this chapter.

She was reading some old English ballad; and, as she closed the volume, murmured, half aloud, the lines of the concluding verse: —

“And ye variété, bounde upon a carte, Was draggede to ye gallows high, While ye knighte that stole ye ladye’s hearte (And was not his ye gravere parte!) Rode onte to see him die.”

“A sad moral indeed,” said Cashel, in a low, soft voice.

“Oh, dear! oh, Mr. Cashel!” cried she, starting, and letting fall the book, “how you have terrified me!”

“Pray forgive me,” said he, drawing his chair near, “but when I entered the room I saw no one. I had come thus far ere I discovered that I was so fortunate.”

“Shall I ring for mamma and Cary? they are dressing, I know, but will be quite annoyed if you go before they come down.”

“You must not inconvenience them on my account,” said Roland, eagerly. “I’m certain,” added he, smiling, “you are not afraid to receive me alone.”

She hung down her head, and partly averting it, murmured a scarcely audible “No.”

Cashel, who had evidently never calculated on his careless remark being taken thus seriously, looked silly and uncomfortable for a few seconds. There is a terrible perversity sometimes in our natures; we are disposed to laugh occasionally at times when nothing could be more ill-timed or unsuitable; and so, at moments when we would give anything in the world for some commonplace theme to hang phrases on, we cannot, for the life of us, originate one.

“You’ve not ridden out, I think, since we came?” said Roland, at last, but with an air of sudden despair at his own stupidity.

“No. We have driven out once or twice; but – but – ”

“Pray finish,” said he, with a persuasive look as he spoke.

“I was going to say that your horses are so spirited, that I was really afraid to trust myself, and the more so as Miss Meek is so wild and so reckless.”

“Never think of riding with *her*, Let me be your *chaperon*, – shall we say to-morrow? I ‘ve got the gentlest creature that was ever mounted.”

“Oh, I know her; that sweet white Arab I saw the groom exercising yesterday?”

“No; not she,” said Roland, blushing and confused, “a spotted barb, fully as handsome – some say handsomer. Will you do me the favor to ride her to-morrow, and, if she be fortunate enough to please you, to accept her?”

Olivia hung down her head for a second, and a deep scarlet covered her cheek, and rose even to her temples, and it was with a voice broken and interrupted she said, "Oh, I cannot – I must not." Then, turning on him a look, where the tearful eyes, swimming in a softened lustre, conveyed a whole story of deep suffering, she said rapidly, "You are too kind and too good ever to give pain; you are too generous to believe others capable of it; but were I to accept your beautiful gift – were I even to ride out with you *alone* – there is nothing that would not be said of me."

It was Cashel's turn for a slight blush now; and, to do him justice, he felt the sensation a most disagreeable one. It had not indeed occurred to him to make the proposal as the young lady took it, but he was far too long schooled in gallantry to undecieve her, and so he said, "I really cannot see this in the light you do. It is a very natural wish on my part, that I should show my guests whatever my poor grounds afford of the picturesque; and remember, we are not friends of yesterday." This he said in his very kindest tone.

"I *do* remember it," said she, with a slow but most meaning sigh.

"That memory is, I trust, not so associated with sorrow," added he, leaning down, and speaking in a deep, earnest voice, "that you recall it with a sigh?"

"Oh, no; but I was thinking – I must not say of what I was thinking."

"Nay, but you must," said he, gently, and drawing his chair closer.

"I dare not – I cannot – besides, you – – and there was on the pronoun the very softest of all-dwelling intonation – "*you* might be angry – might never forgive me."

"Now I must insist on your telling me," said Roland, passionately, "if but to show how unfairly you judge me."

"Well," said she, drawing a long breath – "but shall I trust you?"

There was a most winning archness in the way she said this, that thrilled through Cashel as he listened. "No, I will not," added she, suddenly, and as if carried away by a passionate impulse; "you are too – "

"Too what?" cried he, impatiently.

"Too fickle," said she; and then, as if terrified at her own boldness, she added, in a tremulous voice, "Oh, do forgive me!"

"There is really nothing to forgive," said Roland, "unless you persist in keeping from me an avowal that I almost fancy I have a right to ask for. And now, of what were you thinking?"

"I 'll tell you," said she, in a low, earnest accent, "though it may lose me your esteem. I was thinking" – her voice here fell so low that Cashel, to hear her words, was obliged to draw his chair closer, and bend down his head till it actually brushed against the leaves she wore in her hair – "I was thinking that, when we knew you first, before you had made acquaintance with others, when you sat and read to us, when we walked and rode together, – when, in short, the day was one bright dream of pleasure to us, who had never known a brother – "

Pardon us, dear reader, if, at so critical a moment, we occupy the pause which here ensued – and there was a pause – by referring to our Aunt Fanny, only premising that we do so advisedly. It was one of that excellent lady's firmest convictions that every one in the world required some discreet friend, who should, at eventful passages in life, be ready to aid, by presence of mind, a wavering resolve, or confirm a half-formed determination. Now, she had waited for two mortal hours on that day for Cashel's coming, in a state of impatience little short of fever. She opened and shut her window, looked up one avenue and down another; she had watched on the landing, and stood sentinel on the stairs; she had seen Mrs. Kenny-feck and her elder daughter pass out into the garden, weary of long waiting; when, at last, she heard Roland's hasty step as he traversed the hall, and, hurrying upstairs, entered the drawing-room.

Drawn by an attraction there is no explaining, she left her room, and took up her position in a small boudoir which adjoined the drawing-room. Here she sat, persuading herself she was at her work;

but, in reality, in a state of suspense not very inferior to some prisoner while a jury is deliberating on his fate.

The conversation, at first conducted in an ordinary tone, had gradually subsided, till it dropped into the low, undistinguishable manner we have mentioned.

Aunt Fanny's inventive mind had suggested every step of the interview. She kept muttering to herself: "He is explaining himself – she is incredulous – and he tries to reassure her – she believes that his heart was given to another – he vows and swears it was always hers – she cannot credit the happiness – she is too unworthy."

It was just as our aunt had got thus far in her running commentary that both voices ceased, and a stillness, unbroken by a murmur, succeeded. "What could it mean?" was the sudden question that flashed across her mind; and Napoleon's own dread anxiety, as he gazed on the wood, and hesitated whether the dark masses emerging from the shade were his own legions or the Prussians, was not much more intense than hers. At last – we are sorry to record it – but, alas! Aunt Fanny was only mortal, and an old maid to boot – she approached the door and peeped through the keyhole. The sight which met her eyes needed no second glance; she saw both heads bent down together, the dark waving hair of Cashel close to the nut-brown silky braids of Olivia. Neither spoke. "It was then concluded."

This was the moment in which mutual avowals, meeting like two rivers, form one broad and sweeping flood; it was the moment, too, in which, according to her theory; a friend was all essential. According to her phrase, the "nail should be clinched."

Now, Aunt Fanny had been cruelly handled by the family for all the blunders she had committed. Her skill had been impugned; her shrewdness sneered at; her prognostications derided. Here was an opportunity to refute all at once; and, in the language of the conqueror, "to cover herself with glory."

Gently opening the door she entered the room, and stealing tiptoe over, till she stood behind their chairs, she placed, with all the solemnity of an archbishop, a hand on either head, and, in a voice of touching fervor, said, —

"Bless ye both, my darlings; may ye be as happy as —"

As what? The history is unable to record; for a shrill cry from her niece, and an exclamation nearly as loud, and we fear far less polite, from Roland, cut short the speech.

Shriek followed shriek from Olivia, who, partly from the shock, and still more from shame, was thrown into an attack of hysterics.

"What the —" he was very nigh saying something else — "what have you done, madam?" said Roland, in a state of mingled anger and terror.

"It's only your Aunt Fanny; it's me, my pet. Livy, darling, don't be frightened; and here, too, is Mr. Cashel."

In this, however, the good lady was mistaken; for Roland had hastened upstairs to Mrs. Kennyfeck's room, which finding locked, he flew down to the great drawing-room, thence to the library, and was making for the garden, when he saw that lady and her daughter crossing the hall.

"I 'm afraid, madam," said he, with all the composure he could summon, "Miss Olivia Kennyfeck is not well; nothing serious, I trust; but a sudden fright — a shock — Miss O'Hara somewhat imprudently —"

"Oh, Fanny again!" screamed Mrs. Kennyfeck; and without waiting for more, rushed upstairs, followed by her daughter, while Roland, in a state of mind we dare not dwell upon, hastened from the house, and mounting his horse, galloped off into the wood.

There were times when Cashel would have laughed, and laughed heartily, at the absurdity of this adventure. He would have even treasured up the "tableau" as a thing for future ridicule among his friends; but his better feelings, born of a more manly pride, rejected this now; he was sorry, deeply, sincerely sorry that one with so much to fascinate and charm about her, could lend herself to a mere game like this. "Where are these deceptions to end?" said he, in passionate warmth. "Have candor,

good faith, and honesty fled the world? or, are they only to be found among those whose vices make the foil to such humble virtues?”

Nor were these his only painful reflections. He was obliged to see himself – the thing of all others he despised – “a dupe;” the mark for every mean artifice and every ignoble scheme. The gambler, the flirt, the adventurer in every walk, regarded him as a prey. Wealth had done this for him – and it had done no more! None cared for him as a friend or companion. Even as a lover, his addresses were heralded by his gold, not enhanced by qualities of his own. What humiliation!

Mary Leicester alone seemed unimpressed by his great fortune, and regardless of his wealth; she alone had never evinced towards him any show of preference above others less endowed by Fate. Nay, he fancied he could trace something of reserve in her manner whenever he stepped by chance out of his character of careless, buoyant youth, and dwelt upon the plans mere money accomplishes. In these she showed no interest, and took no pleasure; while, to the adventures of his former life, she listened with eager attention. It was easy to see she thought more of the *caballero* than the *millionnaire*.

What a happiness had it been to have befriended her grandfather and herself; how different had been his reflections at this hour; what lessons in the true wisdom of life might he not have learned from one who had seen the world, not as the play-table for the rolling dice of fortune, but as the battle-ground where good and evil strive for victory, where a higher philosophy is taught than the lifeless, soulless dictates of mere fashionable existence!

CHAPTER XI. SCANDAL, AND GENERAL ILL-HUMOR

But where are they alle, I do not see,
One half of our goodlie companie!

Hone.

That day was destined to be one of contrarities to the household of Tubbermore. Of the Kennyfeck family, none appeared at dinner. Lady Kilgoff, angry at Roland's breach of engagement, – for, although he rode at top speed in every direction, he never overtook her, – also kept her room. The carriage sent for Miss Leicester had returned without her, a somewhat formal note of apology stating that Mr. Corrigan was indisposed, and his granddaughter unwilling to leave him; while Linton, usually a main feature in all the social success of a dinner, was still absent.

Of the assembled guests, too, few were in their wonted spirits. Sir Andrew and Lady Janet had quarrelled in the morning about the mode of preparing dandelion tea, and kept up the dispute all the day; Upton was sulky, dark, and reserved; Meek more than usually lachrymose; Fro-bisher's best mare had been staked in taking a leap, and Miss Meek had never discovered it till half an hour after, so that the lameness was greatly aggravated; Mrs. White had had a "tiff" with the author, for his not believing the Irish to be of Phoenician origin, and would n't speak to him at dinner; so that Cashel himself, constrained, absent, and ill at ease, found his company anything rather than a relief to his own distracted thoughts.

Among his other guests he found the same reserve and coldness of manner, so that no sooner had they assembled in the drawing-room, after dinner, than he left the house and set off to inquire for Mr. Corrigan at the cottage.

"We had nine vacant places to-day at table," said Lady Janet, as soon as she had arranged her special table next the fire, with a shade in front and a screen behind her, and was quite satisfied that, in regard to cushions and footstools, she had monopolized the most comfortable in the room.

"I thought – aw – that we – aw – were somewhat slow," said Captain Jennings, with his habitually tiresome, pompous intonation.

"What's the matter with Upton?" said a junior officer of his regiment, in a whisper; "he looks so confoundedly put out."

"I'm sure I don't know," yawned out Lord Charles; "he has a very safe book on the Oaks."

"He's backing Dido at very long odds," interposed Miss Meek, "and she's weak before, they say."

"Not staked, I hope," said Frobisher, looking maliciously at her.

"I don't care what you say, Charley," rejoined she; "I defy any one to know whether a horse goes tender, while galloping in deep ground. You are always unjust." And she moved away in anger.

"She *is* so careless," said Frobisher, listlessly.

"Tell me about these Kennyfecks. What is it all about?" said Mrs. White, bustling up, as if she was resolved on a long confidence.

"They hedged against themselves, I hear," said Frobisher.

"Indeed! poor things; and are they much hurt?"

"Not seriously, I fancy," drawled he. "Lady Janet knows it all."

Mrs. White did not neglect the suggestion, but at once repaired to that part of the room where Lady Janet was sitting, surrounded by a select circle, eagerly discussing the very question she had asked to be informed upon.

“I had it from Verthinia,” said Mrs. Malone, with her peculiar, thick enunciation, “Lady Kilgoff’s maid. She said that not a day passes without some such scene between the mother and daughters. Mrs. Kennyfeck had, it seems, forbithen Cashel to call there in her abthence.”

“I must most respectfully interrupt you, madam,” said a large old lady, with blond false hair, and a great deal of rouge, “but the affair was quite different. Miss Olivia, that is the second girl, was detected by her aunt, Miss O’Hara, packing up for an elopement.”

“Fudge!” said Lady Janet; “she’d have helped her, if that were the case! I believe the true version of the matter is yet to come out. My woman, Stubbs, saw the apothecary coming downstairs, after bleeding Livy, and called him into her room; not, indeed, to speak of this matter” – here Lady Janet caused her voice to be heard by Sir Andrew, who sat, in moody sulk, right opposite – “it was to ask, if there should not be two pods of capsicum in every pint of dandelion tea.”

“There may be twa horns o’ the de’il in it,” ejaculated Sir Andrew, “but I ‘ll na pit it to my mouth agen. I hae a throat like the fiery furnace that roasted the three chaps in the Bible.”

“It suits your tongue all the better,” muttered Lady Janet, and turned round to the others. “Stubbs, as I was saying, called the man in, and after some conversation about the dandelion, asked, in a cursory way, you know, ‘How the lady was, upstairs?’ He shook his head, and said nothing.

“It will not be tedious, I hope?” said Stubbs.

“These are most uncertain cases,” said he; “sometimes they last a day, sometimes eight or nine.”

“I think you ‘re very mysterious, doctor,” said Stubbs.

“He muttered something about honor, and, seizing his hat went off, as Stubbs says, ‘as if he was shot!’”

“Honor!” cried one of the hearers.

“Honor!” ejaculated another, with an expression of pure horror.

“Did n’t he say, madam,” said the blond old lady, “that it wasn’t his branch of the profession?”

“Oh! oh!” broke in the company together, while the younger ladies held up their fans and giggled behind them.

“I ‘m thorry for the poor mother!” sighed Mrs. Malone, who had seven daughters, each uglier than the other.

“I pity the elder girl,” said Lady Janet; “she had a far better tone about her than the rest.”

“And that dear, kind old creature, the aunt. It is said that but for her care this would have happened long ago,” said Mrs. Malone.

“She was, to my thinking, the best of them,” echoed the blond lady; “so discreet, so quiet, and so unobtrusive.”

“What could come of their pretension?” said a colonel’s widow, with a very large nose and a very small pension; “they attempted a style of living quite unsuited to them! The house always full of young men, too.”

“You would n’t have had them invite old ones, madam,” said Lady Janet, with the air of rebuke the wife of a commander-in-chief can assume to the colonel’s relict.

“It’s a very sad affair, indeed,” summed up Mrs. White, who, if she had n’t quarrelled with Mr. Howie, would have given him the whole narrative for the “Satanist.”

“What a house to be sure! There’s Lady Kilgoff on one side – ”

“What of her, my Lady?” said the blonde.

“You did n’t hear of Lord Kilgoff overtaking her to-day in the wood with Sir Harvey Upton? – hush! or he ‘ll hear us. The poor old man – you know his state of mind – snatched the whip from the coachman, and struck Sir Harvey across the face. They say there’s a great welt over the cheek!”

Mrs. White immediately arose, and, under pretence of looking for a book, made a circuit of the room in that part where Sir Harvey Upton was lounging, with his head on his hand.

“Quite true,” said she, returning to the party. “It is so painful, he can’t keep his hand from the spot.”

“Has any one discovered who the strange-looking man was that was received by Mr. Cashel this morning in his own study?” asked the blonde. “My maid said he was for all the world like a sheriff’s officer. It seems, too, he was very violent in his language; and but for Mr. Kennyfeck, he would not have left the house.”

“Too true, I fear, ma’am,” said Mrs. Malone; “my husband, the Thief,” – this was Mrs. Malone’s mode of abbreviating and pronouncing the words Chief Justice, – “told me it was impothible for Mr. Cashel to continue his extravaganth much longer.”

“It’s shameful – it’s disgraceful,” said Lady Janet; “the kitchen is a scene of waste and recklessness, such as no fortune could stand.”

“Indeed, so the ‘Thief’ said,” resumed Mrs. Malone; “he said that robbery went on, on every thide, and that Mr. Phillith, I think his name is, was the worst of all.”

“Your husband was quite correct, ma’am,” said Lady Janet; “no one should know it better.” And then she whispered in her neighbor’s ear, “If the adage be true, ‘Set a thief to catch a thief.’”

The party intrusted with this could not restrain her laughter, and for a space, a species of distrust seemed to pervade the circle.

We are certain that no apology will be required, if we ask of our reader to quit this amiable society, – although seated at a comfortable fire, in the very easiest of chairs, with the softest carpet beneath his feet, – and accompany Roland Cashel, who now, with hasty step, trod the little path that led to Tubber-beg Cottage.

However inhospitable the confession, we are bound to acknowledge Cashel was growing marvellously weary of his character as a host. The hundred little contrarities which daily arose, and which he knew not how to smooth down or conciliate, made him appear, in his own estimation at least, deficient in worldly tact, and left him open to the belief that others would judge him even less mercifully. The unbridled freedom of his household, besides, stimulated all the selfishness of those who, in a better arranged establishment, had kept “watch and ward” over their egotism; and thus, instead of presenting the features of a society where the elements of agreeability were not deficient, they resembled rather the company in a packet-ship, each bent upon securing his own comfort, and only intent how to make his neighbor subsidiary to himself.

Prosperity, too, was teaching him one of its least gracious lessons, – “Distrust.” The mean and selfish natures by which he was surrounded were gradually unfolding themselves to his view, and he was ever on the verge of that dangerous frontier where scepticism holds sway. One conclusion – and it was not the least wise – he formed was, that he was ill suited to such companionship, and that he had been happier, far happier, on some humble fortune, than as the rich proprietor of a great estate.

It was while thus ruminating, Cashel found himself at the little space which intervined between one front of the cottage and the lake, and was struck by the rapid movement of lights that glanced from window to window, appearing and disappearing at every instant.

The dread that the old man was taken seriously ill at once came over him, and he hastened forward in eager anxiety to learn the tidings. Then, suddenly checking himself, he felt reluctant, almost stranger that he was, to obtrude at such a moment. Fearing to advance, and unwilling to retire, he stood uncertain and hesitating.

As he remained thus, the door of the drawing-room that opened upon the lawn was flung wide, and Tiernay passed hastily out, saying in a loud and excited voice, “I will have my own way. I ‘ll see Cashel at once.” And with these words he issued forth in haste. Scarcely, however, had he gone a dozen paces, than he stopped short, and, clasping his hands firmly together, muttered aloud, “To what end should I seek him? What claim can I pretend, – by what right appeal to him?”

“Every claim and every right,” cried Roland, advancing towards him, “if I can only be of any service to you.”

“What! actually here at this moment!” exclaimed Tiernay. “Come this way with me, sir; we must not go into the house just yet.” And so saying, he passed his arm within Roland’s, and led him onward towards the lake.

“Is he ill?” said Cashel, – “is Mr. Corrigan taken ill?” But although the question was asked eagerly, Tiernay was too deeply sunk in his own thoughts to hear it; while he continued to mutter hurriedly to himself.

“What *is* the matter?” said Roland at last, losing patience at a preoccupation that could not be broken in upon. “Is Mr. Corrigan ill?”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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