LEVER CHARLES JAMES

CONFESSIONS OF CON CREGAN, THE IRISH GIL BLAS

Charles Lever

Confessions Of Con Cregan, the Irish Gil Blas

Lever C.

Confessions Of Con Cregan, the Irish Gil Blas / C. Lever — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

Charles James Lever
Confessions Of Con Cregan, the Irish Gil Blas

PREFACE

An eminent apothecary of my acquaintance once told me that at each increase to his family, he added ten per cent to the price of his drugs, and as his quiver was full of daughters, Blackdraught, when I knew him, was a more costly cordial than Curaçoa.

To apply this to my own case, I may mention that I had a daughter born to me about the time this story dates from, and not having at my command the same resource as my friend the chemist, I adopted the alternative of writing another story, to be published contemporaneously with that now appearing, – "The Daltons;" and not to incur the reproach so natural in criticism – of over-writing myself – I took care that the work should come out without a name.

I am not sure that I made any attempt to disguise my style; I was conscious of scores of blemishes – I decline to call them mannerisms – that would betray me: but I believe I trusted most of all to the fact that I was making my monthly appearance to the world in another story, and with another publisher, and I had my hope that my small duplicity would thus escape undetected.

I was aware that there was a certain amount of peril in running an opposition coach on the line I had made in some degree my own; not to say that it might be questionable policy to glut the public with a kind of writing more remarkable for peculiarity than perfection.

I remember that excellent Irishman Bianconi, not the less Irish that he was born at Lucca, – which was simply a "bull," – once telling me that to popularize a road on which few people were then travelling, and on which his daily two-horse car was accustomed to go its journey, with two or at most three passengers, the idea occurred to him that he would start an opposition conveyance, of course in perfect secrecy, and with every outward show of its being a genuine rival. He effected his object with such success that his own agents were completely taken in, and never wearied of reporting, for his gratification, all the shortcomings and disasters of the rival company.

At length, and when the struggle between the competitors was at its height, one of his drivers rushed frantically into his office one day, crying out, "Give a crown-piece to drink your honor's health for what I done to-day."

"What was it, Larry?"

"I killed the yallow mare of the opposition car; I passed her on the long hill, when she was blown, and I bruk her heart before she reached the top."

"After this I gave up the opposition," said my friend; "'mocking was catching,' as the old proverb says; and I thought that one might carry a joke a little too far."

I had this experience before me, and I will not say it did not impress me. My puzzle was, however, in this wise: I imagined I did not care on which horse I stood to win; in other words, I persuaded myself that it was a matter of perfect indifference to me which book took best with the public, and whether the reader thought better of "The Daltons" or "Con Cregan," that it could in no way concern me.

That I totally misunderstood myself, or misconceived the case before me, I am now quite ready to own. For one notice of "The Daltons" by the Press, there were at least three or four of "Con Cregan," and while the former was dismissed with a few polite and measured phrases, the latter was largely praised and freely quoted. Nor was this all. The critics discovered in "Con Cregan" a freshness and a vigor which were so sadly deficient in "The Daltons." It was, they averred, the work of a less practised writer, but of one whose humor was more subtle, and whose portraits, roughly sketched as they were, indicated a far higher power than the well-known author of "Harry Lorrequer."

The unknown – for there was no attempt to guess him – was pronounced not to be an imitator of Mr. Lever, though there were certain small points of resemblance; for he was clearly original in his conception of character, in his conduct of his story, and in his dialogues, and there were traits of knowledge of life in scenes and under conditions to which Mr. Lever could lay no claim. One critic, who had found out more features of resemblance between the two writers than his colleagues, uttered a friendly caution to Mr. Lever to look to his laurels, for there was a rival in the field possessing many of the characteristics by which he first won public favor, but a racy drollery in description and a quaintness in his humor all his own. It was the amusement of one of my children at the time to collect these sage comments and torment me with their judgments, and I remember a droll little note-book, in which they were pasted, and read aloud from time to time with no small amusement and laughter.

One or two of these I have even now before me: —

"Our new novelist has great stuff in him." —*Bath Gazette*.

"'Con Cregan' – author unknown – begins promisingly; his first number is a decided hit." —*Cambridge Chronicle*.

"The writer of 'Con Cregan' is a new hand, but we predict he will be a success"." —*Cambridge Advertiser*.

"A new tale, in a style with which Lever and his followers have made us acquainted." —*Hampshire Advertiser*.

"This tale is from the pen of an able Irish writer. The dialogue is very smartly written, so much so – and we cannot pay the writer a more genuine compliment – that it bespeaks the author to be an Irishman, &c." —*Somerset Gazette*.

"'Con Cregan ' – by an unnamed author – is a new candidate for popularity," &c. —*Northern Whig*, Belfast.

"The writer must be an Irishman." —*Nottingham Gazette*.

"A new bark, launched by an unknown builder." —*Cheltenham Chronicle*.

"That the author's name is not disclosed will not affect the popularity of this work, – one of the most attractive," &c. —*Oxford Journal*.

"This is a new tale by the pen of some able Irish writer, the first part of which is only published." —*Ten Town Messenger*.

"Another new candidate for popular fame, and 'Harry Lorrequer' had better look to his laurels. There is a poacher in the manor in the person of the writer of 'Con Cregan.'" —*Yorkshireman*.

"'Con Cregan' promises to become as great a fact as 'Harry Lorrequer.' " —*People's Journal*.

"The author of 'Con Cregan,' whoever he be, is no ordinary man."

"Another daring author has entered the lists, and with every promise of success." —*Exeter Post*.

It may sound very absurd to confess it, but I was excessively provoked at the superior success of the unacknowledged book, and felt the rivalry to the full as painfully as though I had never written a line of it. Was it that I thought well of one story and very meanly of the other, and in consequence was angry at the want of concurrence of my critics? I suspect not. I rather imagine I felt hurt at discovering how little hold I had, in my acknowledged name, on a public with whom I fancied myself on such good terms; and it pained me to see with what little difficulty a new and a nameless man could push for the place I had believed to be my own.

"The Daltons" I always wrote, after my habit, in the morning; I never turned to "Con Cregan" until nigh midnight; and I can still remember the widely different feelings with which I addressed myself to the task I liked, and to a story which, in the absurd fashion I have mentioned, was associated with wounded self-love.

It is scarcely necessary for me to say that there was no plan whatever in this book. My notion was, that "Con Cregan," once created, would not fail to find adventures. The vicissitudes of daily poverty would beget shifts and contrivances; with these successes would come ambition and daring. Meanwhile a growing knowledge of life would develop his character, and I should soon see whether he

would win the silver spoon or spoil the horn. I ask pardon in the most humble manner for presuming for a moment to associate my hero with the great original of Le Sage.

But I used the word “Irish” adjectively, and with the same amount of qualification that one employs to a diamond, and indeed, as I have read it in a London paper, to a “Lord.”

An American officer, of whom I saw much at the time, was my guide to the interior of Mexico; he had been originally in the Santa Fé expedition, was a man of most adventurous disposition, and a love of stirring incident and peril, that even broken-down health and a failing constitution could not subdue.

It was often very difficult for me to tear myself away from his Texan and Mexican experiences, his wild scenes of prairie life, or his sojourn amongst Indian tribes, and keep to the more commonplace events of my own story; nor could all my entreaties confine him to those descriptions of places and scenes which I needed for my own characters.

The saunter after tea-time, with this companion, generally along that little river that tumbles through the valley of the Bagno di Lucca, was the usual preparation for my night’s work; and I came to it as intensely possessed by Mexico – dress, manner, and landscape – as though I had been drawing on the recollection of a former journey.

So completely separated in my mind were the two tales by the different parts of the day in which I wrote them, that no character of “The Daltons” ever crossed my mind after nightfall, nor was there a trace of “Con Cregan” in my head at my breakfast next morning.

None of the characters of this story have been taken from life. The one bit of reality in the whole is in the sketch of “Anticosti,” where I myself suffered once a very small shipwreck, but of which I retain a very vivid recollection to this hour.

I have already owned that I bore a grudge to the story as I wrote it; nor have I outlived the memory of the chagrin it cost me, though it is many a year since I acknowledged that “Con Cregan” was by the author of “Harry Lorrequer.”

CHAPTER I. A PEEP AT MY FATHER

When we shall have become better acquainted, my worthy reader, there will be little necessity for my insisting upon a fact which at this early stage of our intimacy, I deem it requisite to mention; namely, that my native modesty and bashfulness are only second to my veracity, and that while the latter quality in a manner compels me to lay an occasional stress upon my own goodness of heart, generosity, candor, and so forth, I have, notwithstanding, never introduced the subject without a pang, – such a pang as only a sensitive and diffident nature can suffer or comprehend. There now, not another word of preface or apology!

I was born in a little cabin on the borders of Meath and King's County. It stood on a small triangular bit of ground, beside a cross-road; and although the place was surveyed every ten years or so, they were never able to say to which county we belonged; there being just the same number of arguments for one side as for the other, – a circumstance, many believed, that decided my father in his original choice of the residence; for while, under the "disputed boundary question," he paid no rates or county cess, he always made a point of voting at both county elections! This may seem to indicate that my parent was of a naturally acute habit; and indeed the way he became possessed of the bit of ground will confirm that impression.

There was nobody of the rank of gentry in the parish, nor even "squireen;" the richest being a farmer, a snug old fellow, one Henry M'Cabe, that had two sons, who were always fighting between themselves which was to have the old man's money, – Peter, the elder, doing everything to injure Mat, and Mat never backward in paying off the obligation. At last Mat, tired out in the struggle, resolved he would bear no more. He took leave of his father one night, and next day set off for Dublin, and 'listed in the "Buffs." Three weeks after, he sailed for India; and the old man, overwhelmed by grief, took to his bed, and never arose from it after.

Not that his death was any way sudden, for he lingered on for months long, – Peter always teasing him to make his will, and be revenged on "the dirty spalpeen" that disgraced the family, but old Harry as stoutly resisting, and declaring that whatever he owned should be fairly divided between them.

These disputes between them were well known in the neighborhood. Few of the country people passing the house at night but had overheard the old man's weak, reedy voice, and Peter's deep, hoarse one, in altercation. When at last – it was on a Sunday night – all was still and quiet in the house, – not a word, not a footstep, could be heard, no more than if it were uninhabited, – the neighbors looked knowingly at each other, and wondered if the old man was worse – if he was dead!

It was a little after midnight that a knock came to the door of our cabin. I heard it first, for I used to sleep in a little snug basket near the fire; but I did n't speak, for I was frightened. It was repeated still louder, and then came a cry, "Con Cregan! Con, I say, open the door! I want you." I knew the voice well; it was Peter M'Cabe's; but I pretended to be fast asleep, and snored loudly. At last my father unbolted the door, and I heard him say, "Oh, Mr. Peter, what's the matter? Is the ould man worse?"

"Faix that's what he is, for he 's dead!"

"Glory be his bed! when did it happen?"

"About an hour ago," said Peter, in a voice that even I from my corner could perceive was greatly agitated. "He died like an ould haythen, Con, and never made a will!"

"That's bad," says my father; for he was always a polite man, and said whatever was pleasing to the company.

"It is bad," said Peter; "but it would be worse if we could n't help it. Listen to me now, Corny, I want ye to help me in this business; and here's five guineas in goold, if ye do what I bid ye. You know that ye were always reckoned the image of my father, and before he took ill ye were mistaken for each other every day of the week."

"Anan!" said my father; for he was getting frightened at the notion, without well knowing why.

"Well, what I want is, for ye to come over to the house, and get into the bed."

"Not beside the corpse?" said my father, trembling.

"By no means, but by yourself; and you 're to pretend to be my father, and that ye want to make yer will before ye die; and then I 'll send for the neighbors, and Billy Scanlan the schoolmaster, and ye 'll tell him what to write, laving all the farm and everything to me, – ye understand. And as the neighbors will see ye, and hear yer voice, it will never be believed but that it was himself that did it."

"The room must be very dark," says my father.

"To be sure it will, but have no fear! Nobody will dare to come nigh the bed; and ye 'll only have to make a cross with yer pen under the name."

"And the priest?" said my father.

"My father quarrelled with him last week about the Easter dues, and Father Tom said he 'd not give him the 'rites,' and that's lucky now! Come along now, quick, for we 've no time to lose; it must be all finished before the day breaks."

My father did not lose much time at his toilet, for he just wrapped his big coat 'round him, and slipping on his brogues, left the house. I sat up in the basket and listened till they were gone some minutes; and then, in a costume as light as my parent's, set out after them, to watch the course of the adventure. I thought to take a short cut, and be before them; but by bad luck I fell into a bog-hole, and only escaped being drowned by a chance. As it was, when I reached the house, the performance had already begun.

I think I see the whole scene this instant before my eyes, as I sat on a little window with one pane, and that a broken one, and surveyed the proceeding. It was a large room, at one end of which was a bed, and beside it a table, with physic-bottles, and spoons, and teacups; a little farther off was another table, at which sat Billy Scanlan, with all manner of writing materials before him. The country people sat two, sometimes three, deep round the walls, all intently eager and anxious for the coming event. Peter himself went from place to place, trying to smother his grief, and occasionally helping the company to whiskey, which was supplied with more than accustomed liberality.

All my consciousness of the deceit and trickery could not deprive the scene of a certain solemnity. The misty distance of the half-lighted room; the highly wrought expression of the country people's faces, never more intensely excited than at some moment of this kind; the low, deep-drawn breathings, unbroken save by a sigh or a sob, – the tribute of affectionate sorrow to some lost friend, whose memory was thus forcibly brought back; these, I repeat it, were all so real that, as I looked, a thrilling sense of awe stole over me, and I actually shook with fear.

A low, faint cough, from the dark corner where the bed stood, seemed to cause even a deeper stillness; and then, in a silence where the buzzing of a fly would have been heard, my father said, "Where's Billy Scanlan? I want to make my will!"

"He's here, father!" said Peter, taking Billy by the hand and leading him to the bedside.

"Write what I bid ye, Billy, and be quick; for I hav'n't a long time afore me here. I die a good Catholic, though Father O'Rafferty won't give me the 'rites '!"

A general chorus of muttered "Oh! musha, musha!" was now heard through the room; but whether in grief over the sad fate of the dying man, or the unflinching severity of the priest, is hard to say.

"I die in peace with all my neighbors and all mankind!"

Another chorus of the company seemed to approve these charitable expressions.

"I bequeath unto my son Peter, – and never was there a better son, or a decenter boy! – have you that down? I bequeath unto my son Peter the whole of my two farms of Killimundoonery and Knocksheboora, with the fallow meadows behind Lynch's house; the forge, and the right of turf on the Dooran bog. I give him, and much good may it do him, Lanty Cassara's acre, and the Luary field, with the limekiln; and that reminds me that my mouth is just as dry; let me taste what ye have in the

jug." Here the dying man took a very hearty pull, and seemed considerably refreshed by it. "Where was I, Billy Scanlan?" says he; "oh, I remember, at the limekiln; I leave him – that's Peter, I mean – the two potato-gardens at Noonan's Well; and it is the elegant fine crops grows there."

"An't you gettin' wake, father, darlin'?" says Peter, who began to be afraid of my father's loquaciousness; for, to say the truth, the punch got into his head, and he was greatly disposed to talk.

"I am, Peter, my son," says he; "I am getting wake; just touch my lips again with the jug. Ah, Peter, Peter, you watered the drink!"

"No, indeed, father; but it's the taste is leavin' you," says Peter; and again a low chorus of compassionate pity murmured through the cabin.

"Well, I'm nearly done now," says my father; "there's only one little plot of ground remaining; and I put it on you, Peter, – as ye wish to live a good man, and die with the same easy heart I do now, – that ye mind my last words to ye here. Are ye listening? Are the neighbors listening? Is Billy Scanlan listening?"

"Yes, sir. Yes, father. We're all minding," chorused the audience.

"Well, then, it's my last will and testament, and may – Give me over the jug." Here he took a long drink. "And may that blessed liquor be poison to me if I 'm not as eager about this as every other part of my will. I say, then, I bequeath the little plot at the cross-roads to poor Con Cre-gan; for he has a heavy charge, and is as honest and as hard-working a man as ever I knew. Be a friend to him, Peter, dear; never let him want while ye have it yourself; think of me on my death-bed whenever he asks ye for any trifle. Is it down, Billy Scanlan? the two acres at the cross to Con Cregan and his heirs in *secla seclorum*. Ah, blessed be the saints! but I feel my heart lighter after that," says he; "a good work makes an easy conscience. And now I 'll drink all the company's good health, and many happy returns – "

What he was going to add, there 's no saying; but Peter, who was now terribly frightened at the lively tone the sick man was assuming, hurried all the people away into another room, to let his father die in peace.

When they were all gone Peter slipped back to my father, who was putting on his brogues in a corner. "Con," says he, "ye did it all well; but sure that was a joke about the two acres at the cross."

"Of course it was, Peter," says he; "sure it was all a joke, for the matter of that. Won't I make the neighbors laugh hearty to-morrow when I tell them all about it!"

"You wouldn't be mean enough to betray me?" says Peter, trembling with fright.

"Sure ye would n't be mean enough to go against yer father's dying words," says my father, – "the last sentence ever he spoke? And here he gave a low, wicked laugh, that made myself shake with fear.

"Very well, Con!" says Peter, holding out his hand; "a bargain's a bargain; yer a deep fellow, that's all!" And so it ended; and my father slipped quietly home over the bog, mighty well satisfied with the legacy he left himself.

And thus we became the owners of the little spot known to this day as Con's Acre; of which, more hereafter.

CHAPTER II. ANOTHER PEEP AT MY FATHER

My father's prosperity had the usual effect it has on similar cases

It lifted him into a different sphere of companionship and suggested new habits of life. No longer necessitated to labor daily for his bread, by a very slight exercise of industry he could cultivate his "potato-garden;" and every one who knows anything of Ireland well knows that the potato and its corollary, the pig, supply every want of an Irish cottier household.

Being thus at liberty to dispose of himself and his time, my parent was enabled to practise a long-desired and much-coveted mode of life; which was to frequent "sheebeens" and alehouses, and all similar places of resort, – not, indeed, for the gratification of any passion for drink, for my father only indulged when he was "treated," and never could bring himself to spend a farthing in liquor himself, but his great fondness for these places took its origin in his passion for talk. Never, indeed, lived there a man – from Lord Brougham himself downwards – who had a greater taste for gossip and loquaciousness than my father. It mattered little what the subject, he was always ready; and whether it were a crim. con. in the newspapers, a seizure for rent, a marriage in high life, or a pig in the pound, – there he was, explaining away all difficult terms of law and jurisprudence; and many a difficulty that Tom Cafferty, the postmaster, had attempted in vain to solve was, by a kind of "writ of error," removed to my father's court for explanation and decision.

That he soon became a kind of authority in the neighboring town of Kilbeggan need not excite any surprise. It is men of precisely his kind, and with talents of an order very similar to his, that wield influence in the great cities of the earth. It is your talking, pushing, forward men, seeming always confident in what they say, never acknowledging an error nor confessing a defeat, who take the lead in life. With average ability, and ten times the average assurance, they reach the goal that bashful merit never even so much as gets within sight of.

His chief resort, however, was the Court of Quarter Sessions, where he sat from the first opening case to the last judgment, watching with an intense interest all the vacillating changes of the law's uncertainty, which unquestionably were not in any way diminished by the singular individual who presided in that seat of justice. Simon Ball, or, as he was better known at the bar, Snow Ball, – an epithet he owed to his white head and eyebrows, – had qualified himself for the Bench by improving upon the proverbial attribute of justice. He was not only blind but deaf. For something like forty-five years he had walked the hall of the Four Courts with an empty bag, and a head scarcely more encumbered, when one morning – no one could guess why – the "Gazette" announced that the Lord Lieutenant had appointed him to the vacant chairmanship of Westmeath, – a promotion which had the effect of confounding all political animosity by its perfect unaccountableness.

It is a law of Nature that nothing ever goes to loss. Bad wine will make very tolerable vinegar; spoiled hay is converted into good manure; and so, a very middling lawyer often drops down into a very respectable judge. Had the gods but acknowledged Mr. Ball's abilities some years earlier, doubtless he had been an exception to the theory.

They waited, however, so long that both sight and hearing were in abeyance when the promotion came. It seemed to rally him, however, this act of recognition, although late. It was a kind of corroboration of the self-estimate of a long life, and he prepared to show the world that he was very different from what they took him for. No men have the bump of self-esteem like lawyers; they live, and grow old, and die, always fancying that Holts, and Hales, and Mansfields are hid within the unostentatious exterior of their dusty garments; and that the wit that dazzles, and the pathos that thrills, are all rusting inside, just for want of a little of that cheering encouragement by which

their contemporaries are clad in silk and walk in high places. Snow Ball was determined to show the world its error, and with a smart frock and green spectacles he took the field like a “fine old Irish barrister,” with many a dry joke or sly sarcasm curled up in the wrinkles beside his mouth. However cheap a man may be held by his fellows in the “Hall,” he is always sure of a compensation in the provinces. There the country gentlemen looked upon their chairman as a Blackstone, – not alone a storehouse of law, but a great appeal upon questions of general knowledge and information. I should scarcely have ventured upon what some of my readers may regard as a mere digression, if it were not that the gentleman and the peculiar nature of his infirmities had led to an intimate relation with my father. My parent’s fondness for law, and all appertaining to it, had attached him to the little inn where Mr. Ball usually put up at each season of his visit; and gradually, by tendering little services, as fetching an umbrella when it rained, hastening for a book of reference if called for, searching out an important witness, and probably by a most frequent and respectful use of the title “my lord,” instead of the humble “your worship,” he succeeded in so ingratiating himself with the judge that, without exactly occupying any precise station, or having any regular employment, he became in some sort a recognized appendage, a kind of “unpaid attaché to the court” of Kilbeggan.

My father was one of those persons who usually ask only a “lift” from Fortune, and do not require to be continually aided by her. From being the humble attendant on the judge, he soon succeeded to being his privy councillor; supplying a hundred little secret details of the neighborhood and its local failings, which usually gave Mr. Ball’s decisions on the bench an air approaching inspiration, so full were they of a knowledge of individual life. As confidence ripened, my father was employed in reading out to the judge of an evening the various depositions of witnesses, the informations laid, and the affidavits sworn, – opportunities from which he did not neglect to derive the full advantage; for while he usually accompanied the written document with a running commentary of his own to Mr. Ball, he also contrived to let the suitor feel how great was his knowledge of the case, and what a powerful influence behind the scenes he wielded over the fortunes of the cause; insomuch that it became soon well known that he who had Con Cregan on his side was better off than with the whole Bench of country magistrates disposed to favor him.

My father’s prudence did not desert him in these trying circumstances. Without any historical knowledge of the matter, he knew by a species of instinct that pride was the wreck of most men, and that, to wield real, substantial power, it is often necessary to assume a garb of apparent inefficiency and incapacity. To this end, the greater the influence he possessed, the humbler did he affect to be; disclaiming everything like power, he got credit for possessing a far greater share than he ever really enjoyed.

That the stream of justice did not run perfectly pure and clear, however, may not be a matter of surprise; for how many rocks, and shoals, and quicksands, are there in the channel! and certainly my father was a dangerous hand at the wheel. Litigation, it must be owned, lost much of its vacillation. The usual question about any case was, “What does Con say? Did Con Cregan tell ye ye ‘ll win?” That was decisive; none sceptical enough to ask for more!

At the feet of this Gamaliel I was brought up; nothing the more tenderly that a stepmother presided over the “home department.” As I was a stout boy, of some thirteen or fourteen at this period of my father’s life, and could read and write tolerably well, I was constantly employed in making copies of various papers used at the Sessions. Were I psychologically inclined, I might pause here to inquire how far these peculiar studies had their influence in biassing the whole tenor of my very eventful life; what latent stores of artifice did I lay up from all these curious subtleties; how did I habituate my mind to weigh and balance probabilities, as evidence inclined to this side or that; above all, how gratified was I with the discovery that there existed a legal right and wrong, perfectly distinct from the moral ones, – a fact which served at once to open the path of life far wider and more amply before me.

I must, however, leave this investigation to the reader's acuteness, if he think it worth following out; nor would I now allude to it save as it affords me the opportunity, once for all, of explaining modes of thinking and acting which might seem, without some such clue, as unfitting and unseemly in one reared and brought up as I was.

Whether the new dignity of his station had disposed him to it or not, I cannot say; but my father became far more stern in his manner and exacting in his requirements as he rose in life. The practice of the law seemed to impart some feature of its own peremptory character to himself, as he issued his orders in our humble household with all the impressive solemnity of a writ, – indeed, aiding the effect by phrases taken from the awful vocabulary of justice.

If my stepmother objected to anything the answer was, usually, she might "traverse in prox" at the next Sessions; while to myself every order was in the style of a "mandamus." Not satisfied with the mere terrors of the Bench, he became so enamoured of the pursuit as to borrow some features of prison discipline for the conduct of our household; thus, for the slightest infractions of his severe code I was "put" upon No. 3 Penitentiary diet, – only reading potatoes *vice* bread.

There would seem to be something uncongenial to obedience in any form in the life of an Irish peasant; something doubtless in the smell of the turf. He seems to imbibe a taste for freedom by the very architecture of his dwelling, and the easy, unbuttoned liberty of his corduroys. Young as I was, I suppose the Celt was strong within me; and the "Times" says, that will account for all delinquencies. I felt this powerfully; not the less, indeed, that my father almost invariably visited me with the penalty of the case then before the Court; so that while copying out at night the details of the prosecution, I had time to meditate over the coming sentence. It was, perhaps, fortunate for me that capital cases do not come under the jurisdiction of a "sitting barrister;" otherwise I verily believe I might have suffered the last penalty of the law from my parent's infatuation.

My sense of "equity" at last revolted. I perceived, that no matter who "sued," I was always "cast;" and I at length resolved on resistance. I remember well the night this resolution was formed; it was a cold and cheerless one of January. My father had given me a great mass of papers to copy, and a long article for the newspapers to write out, which the "Judge" was to embody in his address to the Bench. I never put pen to either, but sat with my head between my hands for twelve mortal hours, revolving every possible wickedness, and wondering whether in my ingenuity I could not invent some offences that no indictment could comprise. Day broke, and found me still unoccupied. I was just meditating whether I should avow my rebellion openly, and "plead" in mitigation, when my father came in.

My reader must excuse me if I do not dwell on what followed. It is enough to say that the nature of my injuries are unknown to the criminal statute, and that although my wounds and bruises are familiar to the prize-ring, they are ignored by all jurisprudence out of the slave states. Even my stepmother confessed that I was not fit to "pick out of the gutter;" and she proved her words by leaving me where I lay.

Revenge must be a very "human" passion; my taste for it came quite naturally. I had never read "Othello" nor "Zanga;" but I conceived a very clear and precise notion that I had a debt to pay, and pay it I would. Had the obligation been of a pecuniary character, and some "bankrupt commission" been in jurisdiction over it, I had doubtless been called upon to discharge it in a series of instalments proportional to my means of life; being a moral debt, however, I enjoyed the privilege of paying it at once, and in full; which I did thus: I had often remarked that my father arose at night and left the cabin, crossing a little garden behind the house to a little shed, where our pig and an ass lived in harmony together; and here, by dint of patient observation, I discovered that his occupation lay in the thatch of the aforesaid shed, in which he seemed to conceal some object of value.

Thither I now repaired, some secret prompting suggesting that it might afford me the wished-for means of vengeance. My disappointment was indeed great that no compact roll of bank-notes, no thick woollen stocking close packed with guineas, or even crown-pieces, met my hand. A heavy bundle of papers and parchment was all I could find; and these bore such an unhappy family

resemblance to the cause of all my misfortunes that I was ready to tear them to pieces in very spite. A mere second's reflection suggested a better course. There was a certain attorney in Kilbeggan, one Morissy, my father's bitterest enemy; indeed, my parent's influence in the Session court had almost ruined and left him without a client. The man of law and precedents in vain struggled against decisions which a secret and irresponsible adviser contrived beforehand, and Morissy's knowledge and experience were soon discovered to be valueless. It was a game in which skill went for nothing.

This gentleman's character at once pointed him out as the fitting agent of vengeance on my father, and by an hour after daybreak did I present myself before him in all the consciousness of my injured state.

Mr. Morissy's reception of me was not over gracious.

"Well, ye spawn of the devil," said he, as he turned about from a small fragment of looking-glass, before which he was shaving, "what brings ye here? Bad luck to ye; the sight of ye's made me cut myself."

"I'm come, sir, for a bit of advice, sir," said I, putting my hand to my hat in salutation.

"Assault and battery!" said he, with a grin on the side of his mouth where the soap had been shaved away.

"Yes, sir; an aggravated case," said I, using the phrase of the Sessions.

"Why don't ye apply to yer father? He's Crown lawyer and Attorney-General; faith, he 's more besides, – he 's judge and jury too."

"And more than that in the present suit, sir," says I, following up his illustration; "he's the defendant here."

"What! is that his doing?"

"Yes, sir; his own hand and mark," said I, laughing.

"That's an ugly cut, and mighty near the eye! But sure, after all, you 're his child."

"Very true, sir; it's only paternal correction; but I have something else!"

"What's that, Con my boy?" said he; for we were now grown very familiar.

"It is this, sir," said I; "this roll of papers that I found hid in the thatch, – a safe place my father used to make his strong-box."

"Let us see!" said Morissy, sitting down and opening the package. Many were old summonses discharged, notices to quit withdrawn, and so on; but at last he came to two papers pinned together, at sight of which he almost jumped from his chair. "Con," says he, "describe the place you found them in."

I went over all the discovery again.

"Did ye yourself see your father put in papers there?"

"I did, sir."

"On more than one occasion?"

"At least a dozen times, sir."

"Did ye ever remark any one else putting papers there?"

"Never, sir! none of the neighbors ever come through the garden."

"And it was always at night, and in secret, he used to repair there?"

"Always at night"

"That'll do, Con; that 'll do, my son. You'll soon turn the tables on the old boy. You may go down to the kitchen and get your breakfast; be sure, however, that you don't leave the house to-day. Your father mustn't know where ye are till we're ready for him."

"Is it a strong case, sir?" said I.

"A very strong case – never a flaw in it."

"Is it more than a larceny, sir?" said I.

"It is better than that."

"I'd rather it didn't go too far," said I, for I was beginning to feel afraid of what I had done.

"Leave that to me, Con," said Mr. Morissy, "and go down to yer breakfast."

I did as I was bid, and never stirred out of the house the whole day, nor for eight days after; when one morning Morissy bid me clean myself, and brush my hair, to come with him to the Court-house.

I guessed at once what was going to happen; and now, as my head was healed, and all my bruises cured, I'd very gladly have forgiven all the affair, and gone home again with my father; but it was too late. As Mr. Morissy said, with a grin, "The law is an elegant contrivance; a child's finger can set it in motion, but a steam engine could not hold it back afterwards!"

The Court was very full that morning; there were five magistrates on the bench, and Mr. Ball in the middle of them. There were a great many farmers, too, for it was market-day; and numbers of the townspeople, who all knew my father, and were not sorry to see him "up." Cregan versus Cregan stood third on the list of cases; and very little interest attached to the two that preceded it. At last it was called; and there I stood before the Bench, with five hundred pair of eyes all bent upon me; and two of them actually looking through my very brain, – for they were my father's, as he stood at the opposite side of the table below the Bench.

The case was called an assault, and very soon terminated; for, by my own admission, it was clear that I deserved punishment; though probably not so severely as it had been inflicted. The judge delivered a very impressive lesson to my father and myself, about our respective duties, and dismissed the case with a reproof, the greater share of which fell to me. "You may go now, sir," said he, winding up a line peroration; "fear God and honor the king; respect your parents, and make your capitals smaller."

"Before your worship dismisses the witness," said Morissy, "I wish to put a few questions to him."

"The case is disposed of: call the next," said the judge, angrily.

"I have a most important fact to disclose to your worship, – one which is of the highest importance to the due administration of justice, – one which, if suffered to lie in obscurity, will be a disgrace to the law, and a reproach to the learned Bench."

"Call the next case, crier," said the judge. "Sit down, Mr. Morissy."

"Your worshipw may commit me; but I will be heard – "

"Tipstaff! take that man into – " "When you hear of a mandamus from the King's Bench – when you know that a case of compounding a felony – "

"Come away, Mr. Morissy; come quiet, sir!" said the police-sergeant.

"What were ye saying of a mandamus?" said the judge, getting frightened at the dreaded word.

"I was saying this, sir," said Morissy, turning fiercely round; "that I am possessed of information which you refused to hear, and which will make the voice of the Chief Justice heard in this court, which now denies its ear to truth."

"Conduct yourself more becomingly, sir," said one of the county magistrates, "and open your case."

Morissy, who was far more submissive to the gentry than to the chairman, at once replied in his blandest tone: —

"Your worship, it is now more than a month since I appeared before you in the case of Noonan versus M'Quade and others, – an aggravated case of homicide; I might go further, and apply to it the most awful term the vocabulary of justice contains! Your worship will remember that on that very interesting and important case a document was missing, of such a character that the main feature of the case seemed actually to hang upon it. This was no less than the deathbed confession of Noonan, formally taken before a justice of the peace, Mr. Styles, and written with all the accurate regard to circumstances the law exacts. Mr. Styles, the magistrate who took the deposition, was killed by a fall from his horse the following week; his clerk being ill, the individual who wrote the case was Con Cregan. Your worship may bear in mind that this man, when called to the witness box, denied all knowledge of this dying confession; asserted that what he took down in writing were simply some

brief and unsatisfactory notes of the affray, all to the advantage of the M'Quades, and swore that Mr. Styles, who often alluded to the document as a confession, was entirely in error, the whole substance of it being unimportant and vague; some very illegible and-ill-written notes corroborating which were produced in court as the papers in question.

"Noonan being dead, and Mr. Styles also, the whole case rested on the evidence of Cregan; and although, your worship, the man's character for veracity was not of that nature among the persons of his own neighborhood to – "

"Confine yourself to the case, sir," said the judge, "without introducing matter of mere common report."

"I am in a position to prove my assertion," said Morissy, triumphantly. "I hold here in my hand the abstracted documents, signed and sealed by Mr. Styles, and engrossed with every item of regularity. I have more: a memorandum purporting to be a copy of a receipt for eighteen pounds ten shillings, received by Cregan from Jos. M'Quade, the wages of this crime; and, if more were necessary, a promissory note from M'Quade for an additional sum of seven pounds, at six months' date. These are the papers which I am prepared to prove in court; this the evidence which a few minutes back I tendered in vain before you; and there," said he, turning with a vindictive solemnity to where my father was standing, pale, but collected, "there's the man who, distinguished by your worship's confidence, I now arraign for the suppression of this evidence, and the composition of a felony!"

If Mr. Morissy was not perfectly correct in his law, there was still quite enough to establish a charge of misdemeanor against my father; and he was accordingly committed for trial at the approaching assizes, while I was delivered over to the charge of a police-sergeant, to be in readiness when my testimony should be required.

The downfall of a dynasty is sure to evoke severe recrimination against the late ruler; and now my parent, who but a few days past could have tilted the beam of justice at his mere pleasure, was overwhelmed with not merely abuse and attack, but several weighty accusations of crime were alleged against him. Not only was it discovered that he interfered with the due course of justice, but that he was a prime actor in, and contriver of, many of the scenes of insurrectionary disturbance which for years back had filled the country with alarm and the jails with criminals.

For one of these cases, a night attack for arms, the evidence was so complete and unquestionable that the Crown prosecutor, disliking the exhibition of a son giving evidence against his parent, dispensed with my attendance altogether, and prosecuting the graver charge obtained a verdict of guilty.

The sentence was transportation for life, with a confiscation of all property to the Crown. Thus my first step in life was to exile my father, and leave myself a beggar, – a promising beginning, it must be owned!

CHAPTER III. A FIRST STEP ON LIFE'S LADDER

It is among the strange and singular anomalies of our nature that however pleased men may be at the conviction of a noted offender, few of those instrumental to his punishment are held in honor and esteem. If all Kilbeggan rejoiced, as they did, at my father's downfall, a very considerable share of obloquy rested on me, – a species of judgment, I honestly confess, that I was not the least prepared for.

"There goes the little informer," said they, as I passed; "what did ye get for hanging – " a very admirable piece of Irish exaggeration – "for hanging yer father, Con?" said one.

"Could n't ye help yer stepmother to a say voyage?" shouted another.

"And then we 'd be rid of yez all," chimed in a third.

"He's rich now," whined out an old beggar-man that often had eaten his potatoes at our fireside. "He's rich now, the chap is; he 'll marry a lady!"

This was the hardest to bear of all the slights, for not alone had I lost all pretension to my father's property, but the raggedness of my clothes and the general misery of my appearance might have saved me from the reproach of what is so forcibly termed "blood-money."

"Come over to me this evening," said Father Rush; and they were the only words of comfort I heard from any side. "Come over to me about six o'clock, Con, for I want to speak to you."

They were long hours that intervened between that and six. I could not stay in the town, where every one I met had some sneer or scoff against me; I could not go home, I had none! and so I wandered out into the open country, taking my course towards a bleak common, about two miles off, where few, if any one, was like to be but myself.

This wild and dreary tract lay alongside of the main road to Athlone, and was traversed by several footpaths, by which the country people were accustomed to make "short cuts" to market, from one part of the road to another; for the way, passing through a bog, took many a winding turn as the ground necessitated.

There is a feeling of lonely desolation in wide far-stretching wastes that accords well with the purposeless vacuity of hopelessness; but, somehow or other, the very similitude between the scene without and the sense of desolation within, establishes a kind of companionship. Lear was speaking like a true philosopher when he uttered the words, "I like this rocking of the battlements."

I had wandered some hours "here and there" upon the common; and it was now the decline of day when I saw at a little distance from me the figure of a young man whose dress and appearance bespoke condition, running along at a brisk pace, but evidently laboring under great fatigue.

The instant he saw me he halted, and cried out, "I say, my boy, is that Kilbeggan yonder, where I see the spire?"

"Yes, sir."

"And where is the high-road to Athlone?"

"Yonder, sir, where the two trees are standing."

"Have you seen the coach pass, – the mail for Athlone?"

"Yes, sir, she went through the town about half an hour ago."

"Are ye certain, boy? are ye quite sure of this?" cried he, in a voice of great agitation.

"I am quite sure, sir; they always change horses at Moone's public-house; and I saw them 'draw up' there more than half an hour since."

"Is there no other coach passes this road for Dublin?"

"The night mail, sir, but she does not go to-night; this is Saturday."

"What is to be done?" said the youth, in deep sorrow; and he seated himself on a stone as he spoke, and hid his face between his hands.

As he sat thus, I had time to mark him well, and scan every detail of his appearance.

Although tall and stoutly knit, he could not have been above sixteen, or at most seventeen, years of age; his dress, a kind of shooting-jacket, was made in a cut that affected fashion; and I observed on one finger of his very white hand a ring which, even to my uneducated eyes, bespoke considerable value.

He looked up at last, and his eyes were very red, and a certain trembling of the lips showed that he was much affected. "I suppose, my lad, I can find a chaise or a carriage of some kind in Kilbeggan?" said he; "for I have lost the mail. I had got out for a walk, and by the advice of a countryman taken this path over the bog, expecting, as he told me, it would cut off several miles of way. I suppose I must have mistaken him, for I have been running for above an hour, and am too late after all; but still, if I can find a chaise, I shall be in time yet."

"They 're all gone, sir," said I; "and sorry am I to have such tidings to tell. The Sessions broke up to-day, and they're away with the lawyers to Kinnegad."

"And how far is that from us?"

"Sixteen miles or more, by the road."

"And how am I to get there?"

"Unless ye walk it – "

"Walk! impossible. I am dead beat already; besides, the time it would take would lose me all chance of reaching Dublin as I want."

"Andy Smith has a horse, if he'd lend it; and there's a short road by Hogan's boreen."

"Where does this Smith live?" said he, stopping me impatiently.

"Not a half mile from here; you can see the house from this."

"Come along, then, and show me the way, my boy," said he; and the gleam of hope seemed to lend alacrity to his movements.

Away we set together, and as we went, it was arranged between us that if Andy would hire out his mare, I should accompany the rider as guide, and bring back the animal to its owner, while the traveller proceeded on his journey to town.

The negotiation was tedious enough; for, at first, Andy would n't appear at all; he thought it was a process-server was after him, – a suspicion probably suggested by my presence, as it was generally believed that a rag of my father's mantle had descended to me. It was only after a very cautious and careful scrutiny of the young traveller through a small glass eye – it wasn't a window – in the mud wall that he would consent to come out. When he did so, he treated the proposal most indignantly. "Is it he hire out his baste? as if she was a dirty garraun of Betty Nowlan's of the head inn; he wondered who 'd ask the like!" and so on.

The youth, deterred by this reception, would have abandoned the scheme at once; but I, better acquainted with such characters as Andy, and knowing that his difficulties were only items in the intended charge, higgled, and bargained, and bullied, and blarneyed by turns; and, after some five and forty minutes of alternate joking and abusing each other, it was at last agreed on that the "baste" was to be ceded for the sum of fifteen shillings, – "two and sixpence more if his honor was pleased with the way she carried him;" the turnpike and a feed of oats being also at the charge of the rider, as well as all repairs of shoes incurred by loss or otherwise. Then there came a supplemental clause as to the peculiar care of the animal. How "she was n't to be let drink too much at once, for she 'd get the colic;" and if she needed shoeing, she was to have a "twitch" on her nose, or she'd kick the forge to "smithereens." The same precaution to be taken if the saddle required fresh girthing; a hint was given, besides, not to touch her with the left heel, or she 'd certainly kick the rider with the hind leg of the same side; and, as a last caution given, to be on our guard at the cross-roads at Toomes-bridge, or she'd run away towards Croghan, where she once was turned out in foal. "Barring" these peculiarities, and certain smaller difficulties about mounting, "she was a lamb, and the sweetest-tempered crayture ever was haltered."

In the very midst of this panegyric upon the animal's good and noble qualities he flung open the door of a little shed, and exhibited her to our view. I verily believe, whatever the urgency of the youth's reason for proceeding, that his heart failed him at the sight of the steed; a second's reconsideration seemed to rally his courage, and he said, "No matter, it can't be helped; saddle her at once, and let us be off."

"That's easier said nor done," muttered Andy to himself, as he stood at the door, without venturing a step farther. "Con," said he, at last, in a species of coaxing tone I well knew boded peril, "Con, a cushla! get a hould of her by the head, that's a fine chap; make a spring at the forelock."

"Maybe she 'd kick – "

"Sorra kick! get up there, now, and I'll be talking to you all the while."

This proposition, though doubtless meant as most encouraging, by no means reassured me.

"Come, come! I'll bridle the infernal beast," said the youth, losing all patience with both of us, and he sprung forward into the stable; but barely had he time to jump back, as the animal let fly with both hind legs together. Andy, well aware of what was coming, pulled us both back and shut to the door, against which the hoofs kept up one rattling din of kicks that shook the crazy edifice from roof to ground.

"Ye see what comes of startlin' her; the crayture's timid as a kid," said Andy, whose blanched cheek badly corroborated his assumed composure. "Ye may do what ye plaze, barrin' putting a bridle on her; she never took kindly to that!"

"But do ye intend me to ride her without one?" said the youth.

"By no manner of means, sir," said Andy, with a plausible slowness on each word that gave him time to think of an expedient. "I would n't be guilty of the like; none that knows me would ever say it to me: I 'm a poor man – "

"You're a devilish tiresome one," broke in the youth, suddenly; "here we have been above half an hour standing at the door, and none the nearer our departure than when we arrived."

"Christy Moore could bridle her, if he was here," said Andy; "but he's gone to Moate, and won't be back till evening; may be that would do?"

A very impatient, and not very pious exclamation consigned Christy to an untimely fate. "Well, don't be angry, anyhow, sir," said Andy; "there's many a thing a body might think of, if they were n't startled. See, now, I have a way this minute; an elegant fine way, too."

"Well, what is it? Confound your long-winded speeches!"

"There, now, you're angry again! sure it's enough to give one quite a through-otherness, and not leave them time to reflect."

"Your plan, your plan!" said the young man, his lips trembling with anger and impatience.

"Here it is, then; let the 'gossoon,'" meaning me, "get up on the roof and take off two or three of the scraws, the sods of grass, till he can get through, and then steal down on the mare's back; when he 's once on her, she 'll never stir head nor foot, and he can slip the bridle over her quite asy."

"The boy might be killed; no, no, I 'll not suffer that – "

"Wait, sir," cried I, interrupting, "it's not so hard, after all; once on her back, I defy her to throw me."

"Sure I know that well; sorra better rider in the Meath hunt than little Con," broke in Andy; backing me with a ready flattery he thought would deceive me.

It was not without reluctance that the youth consented to this forlorn hope, but he yielded at last; and so, with a bridle fastened round me like a scarf, I was hoisted on the roof by Andy, and, under a volley of encouraging expressions, exhorted to "go in and win."

"There! there, a cushla!" cried Andy, as he saw me performing the first act of the piece with a vigor he had never calculated on; "'tis n't a coach and six ye want to drive through. Tear and ages! ye'll take the whole roof off." The truth was, I worked away with a malicious pleasure in the destruction of the old miser's roof; nor is it quite certain how far my zeal might have carried me, when suddenly

one of the rafters – mere light poles of ash – gave way, and down I went, at first slowly, and then quicker, into a kind of funnel formed by the smashed timbers and the earthen sods. The crash, the din, and the dust appeared to have terrified the wicked beast below, for she stood trembling in one corner of the stable, and never moved a limb as I walked boldly up and passed the bridle over her head. This done, I had barely time to spring on her back, when the door was forced open by the young gentleman, whose fears for my fate had absorbed every other thought.

"Are you safe, my boy, quite safe?" he cried, making his way over the fallen rubbish.

"Oh! the devil fear him," cried Andy, in a perfect rage of passion; "I wish it was his bones was smashed, instead of the roof-sticks – see! – Och, murther, only look at this." And Andy stood amid the ruins, a most comical picture of affliction, in part real and in part assumed. Meanwhile the youth had advanced to my side, and, with many a kind and encouraging word, more than repaid me for all my danger.

"'T is n't five pound will pay the damage," cried Andy, running up on his fingers a sum of imaginary arithmetic.

"Where's the saddle, you old – " What the young man was about to add, I know not; but at a look from me he stopped short.

"Is it abusin' me you're for now, afther wrecking my house and destroying my premises?" cried Andy, whose temper was far from sweetened by the late catastrophe. "Sure what marcy my poor beast would get from the likes of ye! sorry step she 'll go in yer company; pay the damages ye done, and be off."

Here was a new turn of affairs, and, judging from the irascibility of both parties, a most disastrous one; it demanded, indeed, all my skill, – all the practised dexterity of a mind trained, as mine had been been by many a subtlety, to effect a compromise, which I did thus: my patron being cast in the costs of all the damages to the amount of twenty shillings, and the original contract to be maintained in all its integrity.

The young man paid the money without speaking; but I had time to mark that the purse from which he drew it was far from weighty. "Are we free to go at last?" cried he, in a voice of suppressed wrath.

"Yes, yer honor; all's right," answered Andy, whose heart was mollified at the sight of money. "A pleasant journey, and safe to ye; take good care of the beast, don't ride her over the stones, and – "

The remainder of the exhortation was lost to us, as we set forth in a short jog-trot, I running alongside.

"When we are once below the hill, yonder," said I to my companion, "give her the whip, and make up for lose time."

"And how are you to keep up, my lad?" asked he, in some surprise.

I could scarcely avoid a laugh at the simplicity of the question; as if an Irish gossoon, with his foot on his native bog, would n't be an overmatch in a day's journey for the best hack that ever ambled! Away we went, sometimes joking over, sometimes abusing, the old miser Andy, of whom, for my fellow-traveller's amusement, I told various little traits and stories, at which he laughed with a zest quite new to me to witness. My desire to be entertaining then led me on to speak of my father and his many curious adventures, – the skill with which he could foment litigation, and the wily stratagems by which he sustained it afterwards. All the cunning devices of the process-server I narrated with a gusto that smacked of my early training: how, sometimes, my crafty parent would append a summons to the collar of a dog, and lie in wait till he saw the owner take it off and read it, and then, emerging from his concealment, cry out "sarved," and take to his heels; and again how he once succeeded in "serving" old Andy himself, by appearing as a beggar woman, and begging him to light a bit of paper to kindle her pipe. The moment, however, he took the bit of twisted paper, the assumed beggar-woman screamed out, "Andy, yer sarved: that's a process, my man!" The shock almost took Andy's life; and there's not a beggar in the barony dares to come near him since.

"Your father must be well off, then, I suppose," said my companion.

"He was a few weeks ago, sir; but misfortune has come on us since that." I was ashamed to go on, and yet I felt that strange impulse so strong in the Irish peasant to narrate anything of a character which can interest by harrowing and exciting the feelings.

Very little pressing was needed to make me recount the whole story, down to the departure of my father with the other prisoners sentenced to transportation.

"And whither were you going when I met you this morning on the common?" said my fellow-traveller, in a voice of some interest.

"To seek my fortune, sir," was my brief answer; and either the words or the way they were uttered seemed to strike my companion, for he drew up short, and stared at me, repeating the phrase, "Seek your fortune!" "Just so," said I, warmed by an enthusiasm which then was beginning to kindle within me, and which for many a long year since, and in many a trying emergency, has cheered and sustained me. "Just so; the world is wide, and there 's a path for every one, if they 'd only look for it."

"But you saw what came of *my* taking a short cut, this morning," said my companion, laughing.

"And you'd have been time enough too, if you had been always thinking of what you were about, sir; but as you told me, you began a thinking and a dreaming of twenty things far away. Besides, who knows what good turn luck may take, just at the very moment when we seem to have least of it?"

"You 're quite a philosopher, Con," said he, smiling.

"So Father Mahon used to say, sir," said I, proudly, and in reality highly flattered at the reiteration of the epithet.

Thus chatting, we journeyed along, lightening the way with talk, and making the hours seem to me the very pleasantest I had ever passed. At last we came in sight of the steeple of Kinnegad, which lay in the plain before us, about a mile distant.

The little town of Kinnegad was all astir as we entered it The "up mail" had just come down, in the main street, sending all its passengers flying in various directions, – through shop-windows; into cow-houses and piggeries; some being proudly perched on the roof of a cabin, and others most ignobly seated on a dunghill; the most lamentable figure of all being an elderly gentleman, who, having cut a summerset through an apothecary's window, came forth cut by a hundred small vials, and bearing on his person unmistakable evidence of every odor, from tar-water to assafotida. The conveyance itself lay, like the Ark after the Deluge, quietly reposing on one side; while animals male and female, "after their kind," issued from within. Limping and disconsolate figures were being assisted into the inn; and black eyes and smashed faces were as rife as in a country fair.

I was not slow in appropriating the calamity to a good purpose. "See, sir," I whispered to my companion, "you said, a while ago, that nobody had such bad luck as yourself; think what might have happened you, now, if you had n't missed the coach."

"True enough, Con," said he, "there is such a thing as being too late for bad as well as for good fortune; and I experience it now. But the next question is, how to get forward; for, of course, with a broken axle, the mail cannot proceed further."

The difficulty was soon got over. The halt and the maimed passengers, after loudly inveighing against all coach-proprietors, – the man that made, and the man that horsed, he that drove, and he that greased the wheels of all public conveyances, – demanded loudly to be forwarded to the end of their journey by various chaises and other vehicles of the town; I at the same time making use of my legal knowledge to suggest that while doing so, they acted under protest; that it was "without prejudice" to any future proceedings they might deem fit to adopt for compensatory damages. If some laughed heartily at the source from which the hint came, others said I was a "devilish shrewd chap," and insinuated something about a joint-stock subscription of sixpences for my benefit; but the motion was apparently unseconded, and so, like many benefactors of my species, I had to apply to my conscience for my reward; or, safer still, had to wait till I could pay myself.

My young companion, who now, in a few words, told me that he was a student at Trinity College and a "reader for honors," pulled out his purse to pay me. "Remember, my boy, the name of Henry Lyndsay; I 'm easily found, if you chance to come to Dublin, – not that I can be of much service to any one, but I shall not forget the service you rendered me this day. Here, take this, pay for the mare's feeding, and when she has rested – "

I would not suffer him to proceed further, but broke in:

"I'm not going back, sir! I'll never turn my footsteps that way again! Leave the mare in the inn; Andy comes every Saturday here for the market, and will find her safe. As for me, I must 'seek my fortune;' and when one has to search for anything, there's nothing like beginning early."

"You 're a strange fellow, Con," said he, looking at me; and I was shrewd enough to see that his features exhibited no small astonishment at my words. "And where do you intend to look for this same fortune you speak of?"

"No one place in particular, sir! I read in an old book once, that good luck is like sunshine, and is not found in all climates at the same time; so I intend to ramble about; and when I breakfast on the sunny side of the apple, never stay to dine off the green one."

"And you are the kind of fellow to succeed!" said he, half to himself, and rather as though reflecting on my words than addressing me.

"So I intend, sir," replied I, confidently.

"Have you ever read 'Gil Blas,' Con?"

"I have it almost by heart, sir."

"That's it!" said he, laughing; "I see whence you've got your taste for adventure. But remember, Con, Gil Blas lived in different times from ours, and in a very different land. He was, besides, a well-educated fellow, with no small share of good looks and good manners."

"As for age and country, sir," said I, boldly, "men and women are pretty much alike at all times, and in all places; in the old book I told you of a while ago, I read that human passions, like the features of the face, are only infinite varieties of the same few ingredients. Then, as to education and the rest, – what one man can pick up, so can another. The will is the great thing, and I feel it very strong in me. And now, to give a proof of it, I am determined to go up to Dublin, and with your honor too, and you'll see if I won't have my way."

"So you shall, Con!" replied he, laughing; "I'll take you on the top of the chaise; and although I cannot afford to keep a servant, you shall stay with me in College until chance, in which you have such implicit faith, shall provide better for you. Come, now, lead the mare into the stable, for I see my companions are packing up to be gone."

I was not slow in obeying the orders, and soon returned to assist my new master with his luggage. All was quickly settled; and a few minutes after saw me seated on a portmanteau on the roof on my way to Dublin.

CHAPTER IV. HOW I ENTERED COLLEGE, AND HOW I LEFT IT

It was still dark, on a drizzling morning in January, as we reached the Capital; the lamps shone faintly through the foggy, wet atmosphere; and the gloom was deepened as we entered the narrow streets at the west of the city. A few glimmering lights from five-stories high, showed where some early riser was awaking to his daily toil; while here and there, some rough-coated policeman stood at the corner of a street to be rained on; except these, no sign of living thing appeared; and I own the whole aspect was a sad damper to the ardor of that enthusiasm which had often pictured the great metropolis as some gorgeous fairy-land.

The carriage stopped twice, to set down two of the travellers, in obscure dingy streets, and then I heard Mr. Lyndsay say, "To the College;" and on we went through a long labyrinth of narrow lanes and thoroughfares, which gradually widened out into more spacious streets, and at length arrived at a great building, whose massive gates slowly opened to receive, and then solemnly closed after us. We now stood in a spacious quadrangle, silent and noiseless as a church at midnight.

Mr. Lyndsay hastily descended, and ordering me to carry in some of the baggage, I followed him into a large scantily furnished room, beyond which was a bedchamber, of like accommodation. "This is my home, Con," said he, with a melancholy attempt at a smile; "and here," said he, leading me to a small one-windowed room on the opposite side, "here is yours." A bed, of that humble kind called a stretcher, placed against one wall, and a large chest for holding coals against the other, a bottomless chair, and a shoe-brush with very scanty bristles, constituted the entire furniture.

It was some time after all the luggage was removed before Mr. Lyndsay could get rid of the postilion; like all poor men in a like predicament, he had to bargain and reason and remonstrate, submitting to many a mortification, and enduring many a sore pang, at the pitiless ribaldry which knows nothing so contemptible as poverty; at last, after various reflections on the presumption of people who travel and cannot afford it, on their vanity, self-conceit, and so forth, the fellow departed, with what my ears assured me was no contemptible share of my poor master's purse.

I was sitting alone in my den during this scene, not wishing by my presence to add anything to his mortification; and, now all was still and noiseless, I waited for some time expecting to be called, – to be told of some trifling service to execute, or, at least, to be spoken to; but no, not a sound, not a murmur, was to be heard.

My own thoughts were none of the brightest: the ceaseless rain that streamed against the little window, and shut out all prospect of what was without; the cold and cheerless chamber and the death-like silence were like lead upon my heart.

I had often, in my reveries at home, fancied that all who were lifted above the cottier in life must have neither care nor sorrow; that real want was unknown, save in their class; and that all afflictions of those more highly placed were of a character too trifling to be deemed serious; and now suddenly there came to me the thought, What if every one had his share of grief? I vow, the very suspicion thrilled through me, and I sat still, dwelling on the sad theme with deep intensity.

As I sat thus, a sigh, low, but distinct, came from the adjoining chamber. I suddenly remembered my young master, and crept noiselessly to the door; it stood ajar, and I could see in, and mark everything well. He was sitting at a table covered with books and writing materials; a single candle threw its yellow glare over the whole, and lit up with a sickly tint the travel-worn and tired features of the youth.

As I looked, he leaned his forehead down upon his arm, and seemed either overcome by sorrow or fatigue; when suddenly a deep-booming bell sent forth a solemn peal, and made the very chamber vibrate with its din. Lyndsay started at the sound; a kind of shudder, like a convulsive throe, shook his

limbs; and sitting up on his seat, he pushed back the falling hair from his eyes, and again addressed himself to his book. The heavy tolling sounds seemed now no longer to distract, but rather to nerve him to greater efforts, for he read on with an intense persistence; turning from volume to volume, and repeatedly noting down on the paper as he read.

Of a sudden the bell ceased, and Lyndsay arose from the table and passed into the bedroom, from which he almost instantaneously reappeared, dressed in his cap and gown, – a new and curious costume in my eyes, but which at the time was invested with a deep, mysterious interest to me.

I retired silently now to my room, and saw him pass out into the wide court. I hastened to look out. Already some hundred others in similar costume were assembled there, and the buzz of voices and the sound of many feet were a pleasant relief to the desert-like silence of the court as I had seen it before. The change was, however, of a very brief duration; in less than a minute the whole assemblage moved off and entered a great building, whose heavy door closed on them with a deep bang, and all was still once more.

I now set myself to think by what small services I could render myself acceptable to my young master. I arranged the scanty furniture into a resemblance, faint enough, certainly, to comfort, and made a cheerful fire with the remnant of the roomy coal-box. This done, I proceeded to put his clothes in order, and actually astonished myself with the skill I seemed to possess in my new walk. An intense curiosity to know what was going on without led me frequently to the door which led into the court; but I profited little by this step. The only figures which met my eye were now and then some elderly personage clad in his academic robes, gravely wending towards the "Hall," and the far less imposing cries of some "college women," as the hags are called who officiate as the University housemaids.

It was at one of these visits that suddenly I heard the great door of the "Hall" burst open with a crash, and immediately down the steps poured the black tide of figures, talking and laughing in one multifarious din that seemed to fill the very air. Cautiously withdrawing, I closed the door, and retired; but scarcely had I reached my room, when young Lyndsay passed through to his own chamber: his cheek was flushed, and his eyes sparkled with animation, and his whole air and gesture indicated great excitement.

Having removed his cravat, and bathed his temples with cold water, he once more sat down before his books, and was soon so immersed in study as not to hear my footsteps as I entered.

I stood uncertain, and did not dare to interrupt him for some minutes; the very intensity of his application awed me. Indeed, I believe I should have retired without a word, had he not accidentally looked up and beheld me. "Eh! – what! – how is this?" cried he, endeavoring to recall his mind from the themes before him; "I had forgotten you, my poor boy, and you have had no breakfast."

"And you, sir?" said I, in reality more interested for him than myself.

"Take this, Con," said he, not heeding my remark, and giving me a piece of silver from his purse; "get yourself something to eat: to-morrow, or next day, we shall arrange these things better; for at this moment my head has its load of other cares."

"But will *you* not eat something?" said I; "*you* have not tasted food since we met."

"We are expected to breakfast with our tutor on the examination mornings, Con," said he; and then, not seeming to feel the inconsistency of his acts with his words, he again bent his head over the table, and lost all remembrance of either me or our conversation. I stole noiselessly away, and sallied forth to seek my breakfast where I could.

There were few loiterers in the court; a stray student hurrying past, or an old slipshod hag of hideous aspect and squalid misery, were all I beheld; but both classes' bestowed most unequivocal signs of surprise at my country air and appearance, and to my question, where I could buy some bread and milk, answers the most cynical or evasive were returned. While I was yet endeavoring to obtain from one of the ancient maidens alluded to some information on the point, two young men, with velvet caps and velvet capes on their gowns, stopped to listen.

"I say, friend," cried one, seemingly the younger of the two, "when did *you* enter?"

"This morning," said I, taking the question literally.

"Do you hear that, Ward?" continued he to his companion. "What place did you take?"

"I was on the roof," replied I, supposing the quaere bore allusion to the mode of my coming.

"Quite classical," said the elder, a tall, good-looking youth; "you came as did Caesar into Gaul, '*summâ diligentiâ,*' on the top of the Diligence."

They both laughed heartily at a very threadbare college joke, and were about to move away, when the younger, turning round, said, "Have you matriculated?"

"No, sir, – what's that?"

"It's a little ceremony," interposed the elder, "necessary, and indeed indispensable, to every one coming to reside within these walls. You've heard of Napoleon, I dare say?"

"Bony, is it?" asked I, giving the more familiar title by which he was better known to my circle of acquaintance.

"Exactly," said he, "Bony. Now Bony used to call a first battle the baptism of Glory; so may we style, in a like way, Matriculation to be the baptism of Knowledge. You understand me, eh?"

"Not all out," said I, "but partly."

"We 'll illustrate by a diagram, then."

"I say, Bob," whispered the younger, "let us find out with whom he is;" then, turning to me, said, "Where do you live here?"

"Yonder," said I, "where that lamp is."

"Mr. Lyndsay's chambers?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right," cried the younger; "we'll show you the secret of matriculation."

"Come along, my young friend," said the elder, in the same pompous tone he had used at first, "let us teach you to drink of that Pierian spring which 'Labitur et labetur in omne volubile oevum.'"

I believe it was the fluent use of the unknown tongue which at once allayed any mistrust I might have felt of my new acquaintances; however that may be, there was something so imposing in the high-sounding syllables that I yielded at once, and followed them into another and more remote quadrangle.

Here they stopped under a window, while one gave a loud whistle with his fingers to his lips; the sash was immediately thrown up, and a handsome, merry-looking face protruded. "Eh! – what! – Taylor and Ward," cried he, "what's going on?"

"Come down, Burton; here's a youth for matriculation," cried the younger.

"All right," cried the other. "There are eight of us here at breakfast;" and disappearing from the window, he speedily descended to the court, followed by a number of others, who gravely saluted me with a deep bow, and solemnly welcomed me within the classic precincts of old Trinity.

"Domine – what's his name?" said the young gentleman called Burton.

"Cregan, sir," replied I, already flattered by the attentions I was receiving, – "Con Cregan, sir."

"Well, Domine Cregan, come along with us, and never put faith in a junior sophister. You know what a junior sophister is, I trust?"

"No, sir."

"Tell him, Ward."

"A junior sophister, Mr. Cregan, is one who, being in 'Locke' all day, is very often locked out all night, and who observes the two rubrics of the statute '*de vigilantibus et lucentibus*,' by extinguishing both lamps and watchmen."

"Confound your pedantry!" broke in Burton; "a junior soph, is a man in his ninth examination."

"The terror of the porters," cried one.

"The Dean's milch cow," added another.

"A credit to his parents, but a debtor to his tailor," broke in a third.

"Seldom at Greek lecture, but no fellow commoner at the Currah," lisped out Taylor; and by this time we had reached a narrow lane, flanked on one side by a tall building of gloomy exterior, and on the other by an angle of the square.

"Here we are, Mr. Cregan; as the poet says, 'this is the place, the centre of the wood.'"

"Gentlemen sponsors, to your functions!" Scarce were the words out, when I was seized by above half a dozen pair of strong hands; my legs were suddenly jerked upwards, and, notwithstanding my attempts to resist, I was borne along for some yards at a brisk pace. I was already about to forbear my struggles, and suffer them to play their – as I deemed it – harmless joke in quiet, when straight in front of me I saw an enormous pump, at which, and by a double handle, Burton and another were working away like sailors on a wreck; throwing forth above a yard off, a jet of water almost enough to turn a mill.

The whole plot now revealed itself to me at once, and I commenced a series of kickings and plungings that almost left me free. My enemies, however, were too many and too powerful; on they bore me, and in a perfect storm of blows, lunges, writhings, and boundings, they held me fast under the stream, which played away in a frothy current over my head, face, chest, and legs, – for, with a most laudable impartiality, they moved me from side to side till not a dry spot remained on my whole body.

I shouted, I yelled, I swore, and screamed for aid, but all in vain; and my diabolical tormentors seemed to feel no touch of weariness in their inhuman pastime; while I, exhausted by my struggles and the continual rush of the falling water, almost ceased to resist; when suddenly a cry of "The Dean! the Dean!" was heard; my bearers let go their hold, – down I tumbled upon the flags, with barely consciousness enough to see the scampering crew flying in all directions, while a host of porters followed them in hot pursuit.

"Who are you, sir? What brought you here?" said a tall old gentleman I at once surmised to be the Dean.

"The devil himself, I believe!" replied I, rising with difficulty under the weight of my soaked garments.

"Turn him outside the gates, Hawkins!" said the Dean to a porter behind him. "Take care, too, he never reenters them."

"I 'll take good care of it, sir," said the fellow, as with one strong hand on my collar, and the closed fingers of the other administering gentle admonitions to the back of my head, he proceeded to march me before him through the square; revolving as I went thoughts which, certes, evinced not one sentiment of gratitude to the learned university.

My college career was, therefore, more brief than brilliant, for I was "expelled" on the very same day that I "entered."

With the "world before me where to choose," I stepped out into the classic precincts of College Green, fully assured of one fact, that "Town" could scarcely treat me more harshly than "Gown." I felt, too, that I had passed through a kind of ordeal; that my ducking, like the ceremonies on crossing the line, was a kind of masonic ordinance, indispensable to my opening career; and that thus I had got successfully through one at least of my "trials."

A species of filial instinct suggested to me the propriety of seeing Newgate, where my father lay, awaiting the arrival of the convict ship that was to convey him to Van Diemen's Land; and thither I accordingly repaired, not to enter, but simply to gaze, with a very awestruck imagination, upon that double-barred cage of human ferocity and crime.

In itself the circumstance has nothing worthy of record, nor should I mention it, save that to the deep impression of that morning do I owe a certain shrinking horror of all great crime; that impression has been of incalculable benefit to me through life.

I strained my eyes to mark if, amid the faces closely pressed against the strong bars, I could recognize that of my parent, but in vain; there was a terrible sameness in their features, as if the

individual had sunk in the criminal, that left all discrimination difficult; and so I turned away satisfied that I had done a son's part most completely.

CHAPTER V. A PEEP AT "HIGH AND LOW COMPANY"

I have often heard it observed that one has as little to do with the choice of his mode of life as with the name he receives at baptism. I rather incline to the opinion that this is true. My own very varied and somewhat dissimilar occupations were certainly far less the result of any preconceived plan or scheme than the mere "turn-up" of the rolling die of Fortune.

It was while revolving a species of fatalism in this wise, and calmly assuring myself that I was not born to be starved, that I strolled along Merrion Square on the same afternoon of my expulsion from Trinity and visit to Newgate.

There were brilliant equipages, cavaliers, and ladies on horseback; handsome houses, with balconies often thronged by attractive-looking occupants; and vast crowds of gayly dressed persons promenaded within the square itself, where a military band performed; in fact, there was more than enough to interest and amuse one of higher pretensions in the scale of pleasure than myself.

While I was thus gazing on this brilliant panorama of the outdoor life of a great city, and wondering and guessing what precise object thus brought people together, – for no feature of a market, or a fair, or any festive occupation solved the difficulty, – I was struck by a class of characters who seemed to play the subordinate parts of the drama, – a set of ragged, ill-fed, half-starved boys, who followed in crowds each new arrival on horseback, and eagerly sought permission to hold his horse when he dismounted; the contrast of these mangy looking attendants to the glossy coated and handsomely caparisoned steeds they led about being too remarkable to escape notice. Although a very fierce rivalry prevailed amongst them, they seemed a species of organized guild, who constituted a distinct walk in life, and indignantly resented the attempt of some two or three "voluntaries" who showed a wish to join the fraternity.

I sat against the rails of the square, studying with some curiosity little details of their etiquette, and their strange conventionalities. A regular corps of them stood in front of me, canvassing with all the eager volubility of their craft for the possession of a handsome thoroughbred pony, from which a young officer, in a cavalry undress, was about to dismount.

"I 'm your own boy, Captain! I'm Tim, sir!" cried one, with a leer of most familiar intimacy.

"'Tis me towld ye about Miss O'Grady, sir," shouted another, preferring another and stronger claim.

"I'm the boy caught your mare the day ye was thrown, Captain!" insinuated a third, exhibiting a want of tact in the reminiscence that drew down many a scoff upon him from his fellows; for these ragged and starving curs had a most lively sense of the use of flattery.

"Off with you! – stand off!" said the young dragoon, in a threatening tone; "let that fellow take my mare;" and he pointed to me as I sat, a patient but unconcerned spectator of the scene. Had a medical consultation been suddenly set aside on the eve of a great surgical operation, and the 'knife' committed to the unpractised hand of a new bystander, the breach of etiquette and the surprise could scarce have been greater. The gang stared at me with most undisguised contempt, and a perfect volley of abuse and irony followed me as I hastened to obey the summons.

It has been very often my fortune in life to take a position for which I neither had submitted to the usual probationary study, nor possessed the necessary acquirement; but I believe this my first step in the very humble walk of a "horse-boy" gave me more pain than ever did any subsequent one. The criticisms on my dress, my walk, my country look, my very shoes, – my critics wore none, – were all poignant and bitter; and I verily believe, such is the force of ridicule, I should have preferred the rags and squalor of the initiated, at that moment, to the warm gray frieze and blue worsted stockings of my country costume.

I listened attentively to the young officer's directions how I was to walk his mare, and where; and then, assuming a degree of indifference to sarcasm I was far from feeling, moved away from the spot in sombre dignity. The captain – the title is generic – was absent about an hour; and when he returned, seemed so well pleased with my strict obedience to his orders that he gave me a shilling, and desired me to be punctually at the same hour and the same place on the day following.

It was now dark; the lamplighter had begun his rounds, and I was just congratulating myself that I should escape my persecutors, when I saw them approaching in a body. In an instant I was surrounded, and assailed with a torrent of questions as to who I was, where I came from, what brought me there, and, lastly, and with more eagerness than all besides, – what did "the captain" give me? As I answered this query first, the others were not pressed; and it being voted that I should expend the money on the fraternity, by way of entrance-fee, or, as they termed it, "paying my footing," away we set in a body to a distant part of the town, remote from all its better and more spacious thoroughfares, and among a chaos of lanes and alleys called the "Liberties." If the title were conferred for the excessive and unlimited freedoms permitted to the inhabitants, it was no misnomer. On my very entrance into it I perceived the perfect free and easy which prevailed.

A dense tide of population thronged the close, confined passages, mostly of hodmen, bricklayers' laborers, and scavengers, with old-clothesmen, beggars, and others whose rollicking air and daring look bespoke more hazardous modes of life.

My companions wended their way through the dense throng like practised travellers, often cutting off an angle by a dive through the two doors of a whiskey shop, and occasionally making a great short-cut by penetrating through a house and the court behind it, – little exploits in geography expiated by a volley of curses from the occupants, and sometimes an admonitory brickbat in addition.

The uniform good temper they exhibited; the easy freedom with which they submitted to the rather rough jocularities of the passers-by, – the usual salute being a smart slap on the crown of the head, administered by the handicraft tool of the individual, and this sometimes being an iron trowel or a slater's hammer, – could not but exalt them in my esteem as the most patient set of varlets I had ever sojourned with. To my question as to why we were going so far, and whither our journey tended, I got for answer the one short reply, – "We must go to 'ould Betty's.'"

Now, as I would willingly spare as much of this period's recital to my reader as I can, I will content myself with stating that "ould Betty," or Betty Cobbe, was an old lady who kept a species of ordinary for the unclaimed youth of Dublin. They were fed and educated at her seminary; the washing cost little, and they were certainly "done" for at the very smallest cost, and in the most remarkably brief space of time. If ever these faint memorials of a life should be read in a certain far-off land, more than one settler in the distant bush, more than one angler in the dull stream of Swan River, will confess how many of his first sharp notions of life and manners were imbibed from the training nurture of Mrs. Elizabeth Cobbe.

Betty's proceedings, for some years before I had the honor and felicity of her acquaintance, had attracted towards her the attention of the authorities.

The Colonial Secretary had possibly grown jealous; for she had been pushing emigration to Norfolk Island on a far wider scale than ever a cabinet dreamed of; and thus had she acquired what, in the polite language of our neighbors, is phrased the "Surveillance of the Police," – a watchful superintendence and anxious protectorate, for which, I grieve to say, she evinced the very reverse of gratitude. Betty had, in consequence, and in requirement with the spirit of the times – the most capricious spirit that ever vexed plain, old-fashioned mortals – reformed her establishment; and from having opened her doors, as before, to what, in the language of East Indian advertisements, are called "a few spirited young men," she had fallen down to that small fry who, in various disguises of vagrancy and vagabondage, infest the highways of a capital.

By these disciples she was revered and venerated; their devotion was the compensation for the world's neglect, and so she felt it. To train them up with a due regard to the faults and follies of their

better-endowed neighbors was her aim and object, and to such teaching her knowledge of Dublin life and people largely contributed.

Her original walk had been minstrelsy; she was the famous ballad-singer of Drogheda Street, in the year of the rebellion of '98. She had been half a dozen times imprisoned, – some said that she had even visited "Beresford's riding-school," where the knout was in daily practice; but this is not so clear: certain it is, both her songs and sympathy had always been on the patriotic side. She was the terror of Protestant ascendency for many a year long.

Like Homer, she sung her own verses; or, if they were made for her, the secret of the authorship was never divulged. For several years previous to the time I now speak of, she had abandoned the Muses, save on some special and striking occasions, when she would come before the world with some lyric, which, however, did little more than bear the name of its once famed composer.

So much for the past. Now to the present history of Betty Cobbe.

In a large unceilinged room, with a great fire blazing on the hearth, over which a huge pot of potatoes was boiling, sat Betty, in a straw chair. She was evidently very old, as her snow-white hair and lustreless eye bespoke; but the fire of a truculent, unyielding spirit still warmed her blood, and the sharp, ringing voice told that she was decided to wrestle for existence to the last, and would never "give in" until fairly conquered.

Betty's chair was the only one in the chamber: the rest of the company disposed themselves classically in the recumbent posture, or sat, like primitive Christians, cross-legged. A long deal table, sparingly provided with wooden plates and a few spoons, occupied the middle of the room, and round the walls were several small bundles of straw, which I soon learned were the property of private individuals.

"Come along till I show ye to ould Betty," said one of the varlets to me, as he pushed his way through the crowded room; for already several other gangs had arrived, and were exchanging recognitions.

"She's in a sweet temper, this evening," whispered another, as we passed. "The Polis was here a while ago, and took up 'Danny White,' and threatened to break up the whole establishment."

"The devil a thing at all they'll lave us of our institushuns," said a bow-legged little blackguard, with the 'Evening Freeman' written round his hat; for he was an attaché of that journal.

"Ould Betty was crying all the evening," said the former speaker; by this time we had gained the side of the fireplace, where the old lady sat.

"Mother! mother, I say!" cried my guide, touching her elbow gently; then, stooping to her ear, he added, "Mother Betty!"

"Eh! Who's callin' me?" said the hag, with her hand aloft. "I'm here, my Lord, neither ashamed nor afeard to say my name."

"She's wanderin'," cried another; "she thinks she's in Coort."

"Betty Cobbe! I say. It's me!" said my introducer, once more.

The old woman turned fiercely round, and her dimmed and glassy eyes, bloodshot from excess and passion, seemed to flare up into an angry gleam as she said, "You dirty thief! Is it you that's turnin' informer agin me, – you that I took up – out of yer mother's arms, in Green Street, when she fainted at the cutting down of yer father? Your father," added she, "that murdered old Meredith!"

The boy, a hardened and bold-featured fellow, became lividly pale, but never spoke.

"Yes, my Lord," continued she, still following the theme of her own wild fancies, "it's James Butterley's boy! Butterley that was hanged!" and she shook and rocked with a fiendish exultation at the exposure.

"Many of us does n't know what bekem of our fathers!" said a sly-looking, old-fashioned creature, whose height scarcely exceeded two feet, although evidently near manhood in point of age.

"Who was yours, Mickey?" cried another.

"Father Glynn, of Luke Street," growled out the imp, with a leer.

"And yours?" said another, dragging me forward, directly in front of Betty.

"Con Cregan, of Kilbeggan," said I, boldly.

"Success to ye, ma bouchal!" said the old hag; "and so you 're a son of Con the informer." She looked sternly at me for a few seconds, and then, in a slower and more deliberate tone, added, "I 'm forty years, last Lady Day, living this way, and keepin' company with all sorts of thieves, and rogues, and blaguards, and worse, – ay, far worse besides; but may I never see Glory if an informer, or his brat, was under the roof afore!"

The steadfast decision of look and voice as she spoke seemed to impress the bystanders, who fell back and gazed at me with that kind of shrinking terror which honest people sometimes exhibit at the contact of a criminal.

During the pause of some seconds, while this endured, my sense of abject debasement was at the very lowest. To be the Pariah of such a society was indeed a most distinctive infamy.

"Are ye ashamed of yer father? Tell me that!" cried the hag, shaking me roughly by one shoulder.

"It is not here, and before the like of these," said I, looking round at the ragged, unwashed assemblage, "that I should feel shame! or if I did, it is to find myself among them!"

"That's my boy! that's my own spirited boy!" cried the old woman, dragging me towards her. "Faix, I seen the time we 'd have made somethin' out of you. Howld yer tongues, ye vagabonds! the child's right, – yer a dirty mean crew! Them!" said she, pointing to me, "them was the kind of chaps I used to have, long ago; that was n't afeard of all the Beresfords, and Major Sirr, and the rest of them. Singing every night on Carlisle Bridge, 'The Wearin' of the Green,' or 'Tra-lal-la, the French is coming;' and when they wor big and grown men, ready and willing to turn out for ould Ireland. Can you read, avick?"

"Yes, and write," answered I, proudly.

"To be sure ye can," muttered she, half to herself; "is it an informer's child, – not know the first rules of his trade!"

"Tear and ages, mother!" cried out the decrepit imp called Mickey, "we 're starvin' for the meat!"

"Sarve it up!" shouted the hag, with a voice of command; and she gave three knocks with her crutch on the corner of the table.

Never was command more promptly obeyed. A savory mess of that smoking compound called "Irish stew" was ladled out on the trenchers, and speedily disposed around the table, which at once was surrounded by the guests, – a place being made for myself by an admonitory stroke of Betty's crutch on the red head of a very hungry juvenile who had jostled me in his anxiety to get near the table.

Our meal had scarcely drawn to its close when the plates were removed, and preparations made for a new party; nor had I time to ask the reason, when a noisy buzz of voices without announced the coming of a numerous throng. In an instant they entered; a number of girls, of every age, from mere child to womanhood, – a ragged, tattered, reckless-looking set of creatures, whose wild, high spirits not even direst poverty could subdue. While some exchanged greetings with their friends of the other sex, others advanced to talk to Betty, or stood to warm themselves around the fire, until their supper, a similar one to our own, was got ready. My curiosity as to whence they came in such a body was satisfied by learning that they were employed at the "Mendicity Institution" during the day, and set free at nightfall to follow the bent of their own, not over well-regulated, tastes. These creatures were the ballad-singers of the city; and, sometimes alone, sometimes in company with one of the boys, they were wont to take their stand in some public thoroughfare, not only the character of the singer, but the poetry itself, taking the tone of the street; so that while some daring bit of town scandal caught the ears of College Green, a "bloody murder" or a "dying speech" formed the attraction of Thomas Street and the "Poddle."

Many years afterwards, in the checkered page of my existence, when I have sat at lordly tables and listened to the sharpened wit and polished raillery of the high-born and the gifted, my mind has often reverted to that beggar horde, and thought how readily the cutting jest was answered, how soon repartee followed attack – what quaint fancies, what droll conceits, passed through those brains, where one would have deemed there was no room for aught save brooding guilt and sad repining.

As night closed in, the assembly broke up; some issued forth to their stations as ballad-singers; some, in pure vagabond spirit, to stroll about the streets; while others, of whom I was one, lay down upon the straw to sleep, without a dream, till daylight.

CHAPTER VI. VIEWS OF LIFE

When I woke the next morning, it was a few minutes before I could thoroughly remember where I was and how I came there; my next thought was the grateful one, that if the calling was not a very exaltued one, I had at least secured a mode of living, and that my natural acuteness, and, better still, my fixed resolve within me "to get forward in the world," would not permit me to pass my days in the ignoble craft of a "horse-boy." I found that the "walk," like every other career, had certain guiding rules and principles by which it was regulated. Not only were certain parts of the town interdicted to certain gangs, but it was a recognized rule that when a particular boy was singled out habitually by any gentleman that no other should endeavor to supplant him. This was the less difficult as a perfect community of property was the rule of the order; and all moneys were each night committed to the charge of "old Betty," with a scrupulous fidelity that would have shamed many a "joint-stock company."

The regular etiquette required that each youth should begin his career in the north side of the city, where the class of horsemen was of a less distinguished order, and the fees proportionably lower. Thence he was promoted to the Four Courts; from which, as the highest stage, he arrived at Merrion Square and its neighborhood. Here the visitors were either the young officers of the garrison, the Castle officials, or a wealthy class of country gentlemen, all of whom gave sixpences; while in the cold quarter of northern Dublin, penny-pieces were the only currency. If the public differed in these three places, so did the claims of the aspirant: a grave, quiet, almost sombre look being the grand qualification in the one, while an air of daring effrontery was the best recommendation in the other. For while the master in chancery or the "six clerk" would only commit his bobtailed pony to a discreet-faced varlet of grave exterior, the dashing aide-de-camp on his thoroughbred singled out the wild imp with roguish eye and flowing hair, that kept up with him from the barrack in a sharp canter, and actually dived under a carriage-pole and upset an apple-stall to be "up" in time to wait on him; and while yet breathless and blown, was ready with voluble tongue to give him the current news of the neighborhood, – who was in the Square, or out dining; who had arrived, or why they were absent. To do this task with dexterity and tact was the crowning feature of the craft, and in such hasty journalism some attained a high proficiency; seasoning their scandal with sly bits of drollery or quaint allusions to the current topics of the day. To succeed in this, it was necessary to know the leading characters of the town and the circumstances of their private history; and these I set myself to learn with the assiduity of a study. Never did a Bath Master of the Ceremonies devote himself more ardently to the investigation of the faults and foibles of his company; never did young lady, before coming out, more patiently pore over Debrett, than did I pursue my researches into Dublin life and manners; until at last, what between oral evidence and shrewd observation, I had a key to the secret mysteries of nearly every well-known house in the city.

None like me to explain why the father of the dashing family in Stephen's Green only appeared of a Sunday; how the blinds of No. 18 were always drawn down at three o'clock; and what meant the hackney-coach at the canal bridge every Thursday afternoon. From the gentleman that always wore a geranium leaf in his coat, to the lady who dropped her glove in the Square, I knew them all. Nor was it merely that I possessed the knowledge, but I made it to be felt. I did not hoard my wealth like a miser, but I came forth like a great capitalist to stimulate enterprise and encourage credit. Had I been a malicious spirit, there is no saying what amount of mischief I might have worked, what discoveries anticipated, what awkward meetings effected. I was, however, what the French call a "bon diable," and most generously took the side of the poor sinner against the strong spirit of right. How many a poor subaltern had been put in arrest for wearing "mufti," had I not been there to apprise him the town-major White was coming. How often have I saved a poor college-man from a heavy fine, who, with his name on the sick-list, was flirting in the "Square." How have I hastened, at the risk of my

neck, between crashing carriages and prancing horses, to announce to a fair lady lounging in her britzska that the "Counsellor," her husband, was unexpectedly returning from court an hour earlier than his wont. I have rescued sons from fathers, daughters from mothers; the pupil from his guardian, the debtor from his creditor, – in a word, was a kind of ragged guardian angel, who watched over the peccadilloes of the capital. My "amour propre" – if such an expression of such a quality may be conceded to one like me – was interested in the cause of all who did wrong. I was the Quixote of all deceivers.

With "Con on the look-out," none feared surprise; and while my shrewdness was known to be first-rate, my honesty was alike unimpeachable. It may readily be believed how, with acquirements and talents like these, I no longer pursued the humble walk of "horse-holder;" indeed, I rarely touched a bridle, or, if I did so, it was only to account for my presence in such localities as I might need an excuse to loiter in. I was at the head of my profession; and the ordinary salutation of the cavaliers, "Con, get me a fellow to hold this mare," showed that none presumed to expect the ignoble service at my own hands.

To some two or three of my early patrons, men who had noticed me in my obscurity, I would still condescend to yield this attention, – a degree of grateful acknowledgment on my part which they always rewarded most handsomely. Among these was the young officer whose pony I had held on the first night of my arrival. He was an Honorable Captain De Courcy, very well-looking, well-mannered, and very poor, – member of the Commander-in-Chief's staff, who eked out his life by the aid of his noble birth and his wits together.

At the time I speak of, his visits to Merrion Square were devoted to the cause of a certain Mrs. Mansergh, the young and beautiful wife of an old red-faced, foul-mouthed Queen's Counsel, at least forty years her senior. The scandal was, that her origin had been of the very humblest, and that, seen by accident on circuit, she had caught the fancy of the old lawyer, a well-known connoisseur in female beauty. However that might be, she was now about two years married, and already recognized as the reigning beauty of the viceregal court and the capital.

The circumstances of her history, – her low origin, her beauty, and the bold game she played, – all invested her with a great interest in my eyes. I used to flatter myself that there was a kind of similarity in at least our early fortunes; and I enlisted myself in her cause with an ardor that I could not explain to myself. How often, as she passed in her splendid barouche, – the best-appointed and handsomest equipage of the capital, – have I watched her as, wrapped in her Cashmere, she reclined in all the voluptuous indolence of her queenly state; glorying to think that *she*, – she, whose proud glance scarce noticed the obsequious throng that bowed with uncovered heads around her, – that she was perhaps not better nurtured than myself. Far from envious jealousy at her better fortune, I exulted in it; she was a kind of beacon set on a hill to guide and cheer me. I remember well, it was an actual triumph to me one day, as the Viceroy, a gay and dashing nobleman, not overscrupulous where the claim of beauty was present, stopped, with all his glittering staff, beside her carriage, and in playful raillery began to chide her for being absent from the last drawing-room. "We missed you sadly, Mrs. Mansergh," said he, smiling his most seductive smile. "Pray tell my friend Mansergh that he shows himself a most lukewarm supporter of the Government who denies us the fairest smiles of the capital."

"In truth, my Lord, he would not give me a new train, and I refused to wear the old one," said she, laughing.

"Downright disloyalty, upon my honor," said the Viceroy, with well got-up gravity.

"Don't you think so, my Lord?" rejoined she; "so I even told him that I 'd represent the case to your Excellency, who, I 'm sure, would not refuse a velvet robe to the wife, while you gave a silk gown to the husband."

"It will be the very proudest of my poor prerogatives," said he, bowing, while a flash of crimson lit up his pleased features. "Your favorite color is – "

"I should like to wear your Lordship's," said she, with a look the most finished coquette might envy, so admirably blended were trust and timid bashfulness.

What he replied I could not catch. There was a flattering courtesy, however, in his smile, and in the familiar motion of the hand with which he bade "good-bye," that were enough to show me that he, the haughty mirror of his sovereign, did not think it beneath him to bandy compliments and exchange soft looks with the once humble beauty. From that time out, my whole thoughts day and night were centred in her; and I have passed hours long, fancying all the possible fortunes for which destiny might intend her. It seemed to me as though she was piloting out the course for me in life, and that her success was the earnest of my own. Often, when a ball or a great reception was given by her, have I sat, cold, shivering, and hungry, opposite the house, watching with thrilling interest all the equipages as they came, and hearing the high and titled names called aloud by the servants, and thinking to myself, "Such are *her* associates *now*. These great and haughty personages are here to do honor to *her*, their lovely hostess; and *she*, but a few years back, if report spoke truly, was scarcely better off than I was – I – myself."

Only they who have a sanguine, hopeful temperament will be able to understand how the poor houseless, friendless boy – the very outcast of the world, the convict's child – could ever dare to indulge in such day-dreams of future greatness. But I had set the goal before my eyes; the intermediate steps to it I left to fortune. The noble bearing and polished graces of the high and wealthy, which to my humble associates seemed the actual birthright of the great, I perceived could all be acquired. There was no prescriptive claim in any class to the manners of high breeding; and why should not I, if fortune favored, be as good a gentleman as the best? In other particulars, all that I had observed showed me no wondrous dissimilarity of true feeling in the two classes. The gentleman, to be sure, did not swear like the common fellow; but on the racecourse or the betting-ground I had seen, to the full, as much deceit as ever I witnessed in my "own order." There was faithlessness beneath Valenciennes lace and velvet as well as beneath brown stuff and check; and a spirit of backbiting, that we ragged folk knew nothing of, seemed a current pastime in better circles.

What, then, should debar me from that class? Not the manners, which I could feign, nor the vices, which I could feel. To be like them, was only to be of them, – such, at least, was then my conviction and my theory.

Any one who will take the pains to reflect on and analyze the mode of thinking I have here mentioned, will see how necessarily it tends rather to depress those above than to elevate those beneath. I did not purpose to myself any education in high and noble sentiments, but simply the performance of a part which I deemed easy to assume. The result soon began to tell. I felt a degree of contemptuous hatred for the very persons I had once revered as almost demigods. I no longer looked up to the "gentleman" as such by right divine, but by accident; and I fostered the feeling by the writings of every radical newspaper I could come at. All the levelling doctrines of socialism, all the plausibilities of equality, became as great truths to me; and I found a most ready aptitude in my mind to square the fruits of my personal observation to these pleasant theories. The one question recurred every morning as I arose, and remained unanswered each night as I lay down, "Why should I hold a horse, and why should another man ride one?" I suppose the difficulty has puzzled wiser heads; indeed, since I mooted it to myself, it has caused some trouble in the world; nor, writing now as I do in the year of grace '48, do I suppose the question is yet answered.

I have dwelt perhaps too long on this exposition of my feelings; but as my subsequent life was one of far more action than reflection, the indulgent reader will pardon the prosiness, not simply as explaining the history which follows, but also as affording a small breathing-space in a career where there were few "halts."

I have said that I began to conceive a great grudge against all who were well off in life, and against none did I indulge this aversion more strongly than "the captain," my first patron, – almost my only one. Though he had always employed me, – and none ever approached him save myself, – he

had never condescended to the slightest act of recognition beyond the tap on my head with his gold-mounted whip, and a significant nod where to lead his pony. No sign of his, no look, no gesture, ever confessed to the fact that I was a creature of his own species, that I had had a share in the great firm which, under the name of Adam and Co., has traded so long and industriously.

If I were sick, or cold, or hungry, it mattered not; my cheek might be sunk with want or care, my rags might drip with rain, or freeze with sleet, – he never noticed them; yet if the wind played too roughly with his Arab's mane, or the silky tasselled tail, he saw it at once. If her coat stirred with the chill breeze, he would pat and pet her. It was evident enough which had the better existence.

If these thoughts chafed and angered me at first, at least they served to animate and rouse my spirit. He who wants to rise in life must feel the sharp spur of a wrong, – there is nothing like it to give vigor and energy to his motions. When I came to this conclusion, I did not wait long to put the feeling into action; and it was thus – But a new chapter of my life deserves a new chapter of my history.

CHAPTER VII. A BOLD STROKE FOR AN OPENING IN THE WORLD

As regular as the day itself did I wait at the corner of Merrion Square, at three o'clock, the arrival of Captain De Courcy, who came punctual to the instant; indeed, the clatter of the pony's hoofs as he cantered along always announced the striking of the Post-office clock. To dismount, and fling me the bridle, with a short nod of the head in the direction he wished me to walk the animal, was the extent of recognition ever vouchsafed me; and as I never ventured upon even a word with him, our intercourse was of the simplest possible kind. There was an impassive quietude about his pale cold features that awed me. I never saw him smile but once; it was when the mare seized me by the shoulder, and tore with her teeth a great piece of my ragged coat away. Then, indeed, he did vouchsafe to give a faint, listless smile, as he said to his pampered nag, "Fie, fie! What a dirty feeder you are!"

Very little notice on his part, the merest act of recognition, a look, a monosyllable, would have been enough to satisfy me, – anything, in short, which might acknowledge that we were part of the same great chain, no matter how many links might lie between us.

I do not wish it to be inferred that I had any distinct right to such an acknowledgment, nor that any real advantage would have accrued to me from obtaining it, – far from that; very little consideration might have induced me to be contented with my station; and, if so, instead of writing these notes in a boudoir with silk hangings, and – but this is anticipating with a vengeance! And now to go back.

After three hours of a cold wait, on a rainy and dreary afternoon, the only solace to my hunger being the imaginative one of reflecting on the pleasure of those happy mortals who were sitting down to dinner in the various houses along the Square, and fancying to myself the blessed state of tranquillity it must impart to a man's nature to see a meal of appetizing excellence, from which no call of business, no demand of any kind could withdraw him. And what speculations did I indulge in as to the genial pleasantry that must abound, – the happy wit, the joyous ease of such gatherings when three or four carriages at a door would bespeak the company at such a dinner-party!

At last, out came my captain, with a haste and flurry of manner quite unusual. He did not, as was his constant custom, pass his hand along the mare's neck to feel her coat, nor did he mutter a single word of coaxing to her as he mounted. He flung himself with a jerk into the saddle, and, rapping my knuckles sharply with the gold knob of his whip, pettishly cried, "Let her go, sirrah!" and cantered away. I stood for some moments motionless, my mind in that strange state when the first thought of rebellion has entered, and the idea of reprisal has occurred. I was about to go away, when the drawing-room window, straight above me, was opened, and a lady stepped out upon the balcony. It was too dark to discern either her features or her dress; but a certain instinct told me it was Mrs. Mansergh. "Are you Captain De Courcy's boy?" said she, in a sweet and subdued voice. I replied in the affirmative, and she went on: "You know his quarters at the Royal Hospital? Well, go there at once, as speedily as you can, and give him this note." She hesitated for a second, as if uncertain what to say, and then added, "It is a note he dropped from his pocket by accident."

"I'll do it, ma'am," said I, catching the letter and the half-crown, which she had half inserted in the envelope to give it weight. "You may trust me perfectly." Before the words were well uttered, she had retired, the window was closed, the curtain drawn, and, except the letter and the coin in my fingers, nothing remained to show that the whole had not been a trick of my foolish brain.

My immediate impulse was to fulfil my mission; I even started off at full speed to do so. But as I turned the corner of the Square, the glare of a bright gas-lamp suggested the temptation of at least a look at my despatches; and what was my astonishment to find that on this note, which had been dropped by "accident" from the captain's pocket, the superscription was scarcely dry, – in the

very act of catching, I had blotted the words! This, of course, was no affair of mine; but it evinced deception, – and deception at certain moments becomes a dangerous injury. There are times when the mind feels deceit to be an outrage. The stormy passions of the fury-driven mob, reckless and headstrong, show this; and the most terrible moment in all political convulsions is when the people feel, or even suspect, that they have been tricked. My frame of mind was exactly in that critical stage. A minute before, I was ready to yield any obedience, tender any service; and now, of a sudden, – without the slightest real cause, or from anything which could in the remotest way affect me, – I had become a rebel. Let the reader forgive the somewhat tedious analysis of a motive, since it comes from one who has long studied the science of moral chemistry, and made most of his experiments – as the rule directs – in "ignoble bodies."

My whole resolve was changed: I would not deliver the note. Not that I had any precise idea wherefore, or that I had the least conception what other course I should adopt; I was a true disciple of revolt: I rebelled for very rebellion's sake.

Betty Cobbe's was more than usually brilliant on that evening. A race, which was to come off at Kingstown the next day, had attracted a numerous company, in the various walks of horse-boys, bill-carriers, and pickpockets, all of whom hoped to find a ready harvest on the morrow. The conversation was, therefore, entirely of a sporting character. Anecdotes of the turf and the ring went round, and in the many curious devices of roguery and fraud might be read the prevailing taste of that select company. Combinations were also formed to raise the rate of payment, and many ingenious suggestions thrown out about turning cattle loose, slacking girths, stealing curb-chains, and so on, from that antagonistic part of the public who preferred holding their horses themselves than intrusting them to the profession.

The race itself, too, engrossed a great share of interest; and a certain Fergusson was talked of with all the devotedness and affection of a dear friend. Nor, as I afterwards learned, was the admiration a merely blind one, as he was a most cunning adept in all the wily stratagems by which such men correct the wilful ways of Fortune.

How my companions chuckled over stories of "rotten ditches" that were left purposely to betray the unwary; swinging gates that would open at the least touch, and inevitably catch the horse that attempted to clear, if the hoof but grazed them; bog-holes, to swamp, and stone fences, to smash, – had their share of approval; but a drain dug eight feet deep, and that must certainly break the back of the horse, if not of the rider also, who made a "mistake" over it, seemed the triumph which carried away the suffrages of the whole assembly.

Now, although I had seen far more of real sport and horsemanship than the others, these narratives were for the most part new to me; and I listened with a high interest to every scheme and trick by which cunning can overreach and outmanoeuvre simplicity. The admiration of adroit knavery is the first step on the road to fraud; and he who laughs heartily at a clever trick, seldom suspects how he is "booking himself" for the same road. For my own part, neither were my principles so fixed, nor my education so careful, that I did not conceive a very high respect for the rogue, and a very contemptuous disdain for his victim.

Morning came, and a bright sunny one it was, with a keen frost and that kind of sharp air that invigorates and braces both mind and body. The crisp, clear outline of every tree and building seen against the deep blue sky; the sparkling river, with its clean bed of bright gravel; and the ruddy faces one meets, – are all of a nature to suggest pleasant and cheerful thoughts. Even we – we, with our frail fragments and chapped hands – felt it, and there was an alacrity of movement and a bounding step, a gay laugh and a merry voice, everywhere. All set out for Kingstown, in the neighborhood of which the race was to come off. I alone remained behind, resisting every entreaty of my companions to join them, – I cannot yet say why I did so. It was partly that long habit had made my attendance upon "the Captain" a duty; partly, perhaps, that some vague notion that the letter, of which I still kept possession, should be delivered by me at last.

The town was quite empty on that day, – not a carriage, nor a horseman to be seen. There were very few on foot, and the Square was deserted of all, save its nursery population. I never felt a more tedious morning. I had full time, as I loitered along all alone, to contrast my solitude with the enjoyment my companions were at that same moment pursuing.

True to the instant, Captain De Courcy cantered up, his face a thought graver and more stern than I had ever seen it before. As he dismounted, my hand, in holding his stirrup, soiled the brilliant polish of his lacquered boot; he perceived it, and rewarded my awkwardness with a smart cut of his whip. A minute before I had made up my mind to give him the note; now, torture itself would not have torn it from me.

I followed him with my eyes till he entered the house, – not over distinctly, it is true, for they were somewhat blinded by tears that would, in spite of me, come forth. The sensation was a most painful one; and I am heartily glad to confess I have seldom experienced a recurrence of it. Scarcely was the hall-door closed on him, when I remembered that he would soon hear of the note, which I had failed to deliver, and that, in all likelihood, a heavy punishment awaited me. My offence was a grave one: what was to be done? Turn the mare loose and fly, or patiently await my fate? Either were bad enough; the latter certainly the less advisable of the two. A third course soon suggested itself, doubtless inspired by that most mischief-working adage which says that one may be "as well hanged for the sheep as the lamb."

I therefore voted for the "larger animal;" and to satisfy myself that I was honest to my own convictions, I immediately proceeded to act upon them. I led the mare quietly along to the angle of the Square, and then, turning into the next street, I shortened the stirrups, mounted, and rode off.

"Set a beggar on horseback – " says the proverb; and although the consequence is only meant figuratively, I have a suspicion that it might bear a literal reading. I rode away, at first, at a trot, and then, striking into a brisk canter, I took the road to Kingstown, whither, even yet, some horsemen were hastening.

Every stride of the bounding animal elevated my spirits and nerved my courage. The foot-passengers, that plodded wearily along, I looked down upon as inferior; with the horsemen on either side I felt a kind of equality. How differently does one view life from the saddle and from the ground! The road became more thronged as I advanced, thicker crowds pressed eagerly forward, and numerous carriages obstructed the way. At another moment, perhaps, I should have attracted attention; but stranger sights were passing at every instant, and none troubled their heads about the "ragged urchin on the thoroughbred."

The crowd at last became so dense that horsemen were fain to desert the high road, and take short cuts wherever an open gate or an easily crossed fence opened the way. Following a group of well-mounted gentlemen, I cleared a low wall into a spacious grass field, over which we cantered, and beyond this, by leaping an easy ditch, into another of the same kind, till at length we saw the vast crowds that blackened a hill in front, and, beneath them, could distinguish the fluttering flags that marked the course, and the large floating standard of the winning-post.

What a grand sight was that! For what is so imposing a spectacle as vast myriads of people stirred by one interest, and animated by one absorbing passion? Every one has nowadays seen something of the kind, therefore I shall not linger to tell of the impression it made upon my youthful senses. The first race had already come off; but the second, and the great event of the day, was yet to take place.

It was a steeplechase by "gentlemen riders" over a very severe line of country; several fences of most break-neck character having been added to the natural difficulties of the ground.

Mounted on my splendid barb, I rode boldly forward till I reached the field through which the first ditch ran, – a deep and wide trench, backed by a low rail, – a very formidable leap, and requiring both stride and strength to clear it.

"Some of 'em will tail off, when they sees that!" said an English groom, with a knowing wink; and the words were only out when, at a "slapping canter," the riders were seen coming down the gently sloping hill. Three rode nearly abreast; then came a single horseman; and, after him, an indiscriminate mass, whose bright and party-colored jackets glowed like a rainbow.

I watched them with a breathless interest; as they came nearer they widened the space between them, and each cast a rapid but stealthy glance at his neighbor. One – he rode a powerful black horse – took the lead, and, dashing at the leap, his horse rose too soon, and fell, chested against the opposite bank, the rider under him; the next swerved suddenly round and balked; the third did the same; so that the leading horseman was now he who rode alone at first. Quickening his speed as he came on, he seemed actually to fly; and when he did take the fence, it was like the bound of a cannon-shot, – up, and over at once! Of the rest, some two or three followed well; others pulled short up; while the larger share, in various forms of accident and misfortune, might be seen either struggling in the brook, or endeavoring to rescue their horses from the danger of broken legs and backs.

I did not wait to watch them; my interest was in those who gallantly led onward, and who now, some four in number, rode almost abreast. Among these, my favorite was the sky-blue jacket who had led the way over the dyke; and him did I follow with straining eyes and palpitating heart. They were at this moment advancing towards a wall, – a high and strong one, and I thought, in the slackened pace and more gathered-up stride, I could read the caution a difficult leap enforced.

A brown jacket with white sleeves was the first to charge it; and after a tremendous scramble, in which the wall, the horse, and the rider were all tumbling together, he got over; but the animal went dead lame, and the rider, dismounting, led him off the ground.

Next came blue-jacket; and just at the very rise his mare balked, and, at the top of her speed, ran away along the side of the wall. A perfect roar of angry disappointment arose from the multitude, for she was the favorite of the country people, who were loudly indignant at this mischance.

"The race is sold!" cried one.

"Beatagh" – this was the rider – "pulled her round himself! the mare never was known to refuse a fence!"

"I say you're both wrong!" cried a third, whose excited manner showed he was no indifferent spectator of the scene. "She never will take her first wall fairly; after that she goes like a bird!"

"What a confounded nuisance to think that no one will lead her over the fence! Is there not one here will show her the way?" said he, looking around.

"There's the only fellow I see whose neck can afford it!" said another, pointing to me. "He, evidently, was never born to be killed in a steeplechase."

"Devilish well mounted he is, too!" remarked some one else.

"Hallo, my smart boy!" said he who before alluded to the mare as a bolter, "try your nag over that wall yonder, – go boldly. Let her have her head, and give her a sharp cut as she rises. Make way there, gentlemen! Let the boy have fair play, and I 'll wager a five-pound note he does it! You shall have half the stakes too, if you win!" added he. These were the last words I heard; for the crowd, clearing in front, opened for me to advance, and without a moment's hesitation of any kind, I dashed my heels to the mare's flanks, and galloped forward. A loud shout, and a perfect shower of whips on the mare's quarter from the bystanders, put all question of pulling up beyond the reach of possibility. In a minute more I was at the wall, and, ere I well knew, over it. A few seconds after, the blue-jacket was beside me. "Well done, my lad! You've earned twenty guineas if I win the race! Lead the way a bit, and let your mare choose her ground when she leaps." This was all he said; but such words of encouragement never fell on my ears before.

Before us were the others, now reduced to three in number, and evidently holding their stride and watching each other, never for a moment suspecting that the most feared competitor was fast creeping up behind them. One fence separated us, and over this I led again, sitting my mare with all the composure of an old steeplechaser. "Out of the way, now!" cried my companion, "and let *me* at

them!" and he tore past me at a tremendous pace, shouting out, as he went by the rest, "Come along, my lads! I 'll show the way!"

And so he did! With all their efforts, and they were bold ones, they never overtook him afterwards. His mare took each fence flying, and as her speed was much greater than the others', she came in full half a minute in advance. The others arrived all together, crest fallen and disappointed, and, like all beaten men, receiving the most insulting comments from the mob, who are somewhat keen critics on misfortune. I came last, for I had dropped behind when I was ordered; but, unable to extricate my mare from the crowd, was compelled to ride the whole distance with the rest. If the losing horsemen were hooted and laughed at, *my* approach was a kind of triumphal entry. "There's the chap that led over the wall! That little fellow rode the best of them all!" "See that ragged boy on the small mare; he could beat the field this minute!"

"'T is fifty guineas in goold ye ought to have, my chap!" said another, – a sentiment the unwashed on all sides seemed most heartily to subscribe to.

"Be my soul, I 'd rather be lookin' at him than the gentlemen!" said a very tattered individual, with a coat like a transparency. These, and a hundred similar comments, fell like hail-drops around; and I believe that in my momentary triumph I actually forgot all the dangers and perils of my offence.

It is a great occasion for rejoicing among the men of rags and wretchedness when a member of their own order has achieved anything like fame. The assertion of their ability to enter the lists with "their betters" is the very pleasantest of all flatteries. It is, so to say, a kind of skirmish, before that great battle which, one day or other, remains to be fought between the two classes which divide mankind, – those who have, and those who have not.

I little suspected that I was, to use the cant so popular at present, "the representative of a great principle" in my late success. I took all the praises bestowed, most literally, to myself, and shook hands with all the dirty and tattered mob, fully convinced that I was a very fine fellow.

"Mister Beatagh wants to see the boy that led him over the ditch," shouted out a huge, wide-shouldered, red-faced ruffian, as he shoved the crowd right and left to make way for the approach of the gentleman who had just won the race.

"Stand up bowld, avic!" whispered one in my ear, "and don't be ashamed to ax for your reward."

"Say ten guineas!" muttered another.

"No; but twenty!" growled out a third.

"And lashings of drink besides, for the present company!" suggested a big-headed cripple about two feet high.

"Are you the lad that took the fence before me?" cried out a smart-looking, red-whiskered young man, with a white surtout loosely thrown over his riding costume.

"Yes, sir," I replied, half modestly and half assured.

"Who are you, my boy, and where do you come from?"

"He's one of Betty Cobbe's chickens!" shouted out an old savage-faced beggar-man, who was terribly indignant at the great misdirection of public sympathy; "and a nice clutch they are!"

"What is it to you, Dan, where the crayture gets his bread?" rejoined an old newsvender, who, in all likelihood, had once been a parlor boarder in the same seminary.

"Never mind *them*, but answer me, my lad!" said the gentleman. "If you are willing to take service, and can find any one to recommend you – "

"Sure, we'll all go bail for him – to any amount!" shouted out the little crippled fellow, from his "bowl;" and certainly a most joyous burst of laughter ran through the crowd at the sentiment.

"Maybe ye think I'm not a householder," rejoined the fellow, with a grin of assumed anger; "but have n't I my own sugar hogshead to live in, and devil receave the lodger in the same premises!"

"I see there 's no chance of our being able to settle anything here," said the gentleman. "These good people think the matter more their own than ours; so meet to-morrow, my lad, at Dycer's, at twelve o'clock, and bring me anything that can speak for your character." As he said these few words

he brushed the crowd to one side with his whip, and forcing his way, with the air of a man who would not be denied, left the place.

"And he 's laving the crayture without givin' him a farden!" cried one of the mob, who suddenly saw all the glorious fabric of a carouse and a drunken bout disappear like a mirage.

"Oh, the 'tarnal vagabond" shouted another, more indignantly; "to desart the child that a-way, – and he that won the race for him!"

"Will yez see the little crayture wronged?" said another, who appeared by his pretentious manner to be a practised street orator. "Will yez lave the dissolute orphan – " he meant "desolate" – "to be chayted out of his pater money? Are yez men at all? or are yez dirty slaves of the bloody 'stokessy that's murderin' ould Ireland'?"

"We'll take charge of the orphan, and of you too, my smart fellow, if you don't brush off pretty lively!" said a policeman, as, followed by two others, he pushed through the crowd with that cool determination that seems to be actually an instinct with them. Then, laying a strong hand on my collar, he went on: "How did you come by that mare, my lad?"

"She belongs to Captain De Courcy, of the Royal Hospital," said I, doing my utmost to seem calm and collected.

"We know that already; what we want to hear is, what brought you here with her? It was n't Captain De Courcy's orders?"

"No, sir. I was told to hold her for him, and – and – "

"And so you rode off with her, – out with it, it saves time, my lad. Now, let me ask you another question: Have you any notion of the crime you have just committed? Do you know that it amounts to horse-stealing? And do you know what the penalty is for that offence?"

"No, sir; I know neither one nor the other," said I, resolutely; "and, if I did, it doesn't matter much. As well to live upon prison diet as to starve in the streets!"

"He's a bad 'un; I told ye that!" remarked another of the policemen. "Take him off, Grimes!" and so, amid a very general but subdued murmur of pity and condolence from the crowd, I was dragged away on one side, while the mare was led off on another.

It was a terrible tumble down, from being a hero to an embryo felon; from being cheered by the populace, to being collared by a policeman! As we went along towards Dublin on a jaunting-car, I was regaled by interesting narratives of others who had begun life like myself, and took an abrupt leave of it in a manner by no means too decorous. The peculiarity of anecdote which pertains to each profession was strongly marked in these officers of the law; and they appeared to have studied the dark side of human nature with eyes the keenest and most scrutinizing.

I wish I could even now forget the long and dreary hours of the night that ensued, as I lay, with some fifty others, in the jail of the station-house. The company was assuredly not select, nor their manners at all improved by the near approach of punishment. It seemed as if all the disguises of vice were thrown off at once, and that iniquity stood forth in its own true and glaring livery. I do not believe that the heart can ever experience a ruder shock than when an unfledged criminal first hears himself welcomed into the "Masonry" of guilt. To be claimed by such associates as a fellow-laborer, to be received as one of the brethren into the guild of vice, is really an awful blow to one's self-esteem and respect; to feel yourself inoculated with a disease whose fatal marks are to stamp you like this one or that, sends a shuddering terror through the heart, whose cold thrill is never, in a life-long afterwards, thoroughly eradicated.

There should be a quarantine for suspected guilt, as for suspected disease; and the mere doubt of rectitude should not expose any unfortunate creature to the chances of a terrible contagion! I do not affect by this to say that I was guiltless, – not in the least; but my crime should scarcely have classified me with the associates by whom I was surrounded. Nor was a night in such company the wisest mode of restoring to the path of duty one who might possibly have only slightly deviated from the straight line.

When morning came I was marched off, with a strong phalanx of other misdoers, to the College Street office, where a magistrate presided whose bitterest calumniators could never accuse of any undue leanings towards mercy. By him I had the satisfaction of hearing a great variety of small offences decided with a railroad rapidity, only interrupted now and then by a whining lamentation over the "lenity of the legislature," that never awarded one tithe of the suitable penalty, and bewailing his own inability to do more for the criminal than send him to prison for two months with hard labor, and harder diet to sweeten it.

At last came my name; and as I heard it shouted aloud, it almost choked me with a nervous fulness in the throat. I felt as though I was the greatest criminal in the universe, and that the whole vast assemblage had no other object or aim there than to see me arraigned for my offence.

I was scarcely ordered to advance before I was desired to stand back again, the prosecutor, Captain De Courcy, not being in court. While a policeman was, therefore, despatched by the magistrate to request that he would have the kindness to appear, – for the captain was an honorable and an aide-de-camp, titles which the sitting justice knew well how to respect, – other cases were called and disposed of. It was nigh three o'clock when a great bustle in the outer court and a tremendous falling back of the dense crowd, accompanied by an ostentatious display of police zeal, heralded a group of officers, who, with jingling spurs and banging sabretaches, made their way to the bench, and took their seats beside the justice. Many were the courtesies interchanged between the magistrate and the captain: one averring that the delay was not in the slightest degree inconvenient; the other professing the greatest deference for the rules of court; neither bestowing a thought upon him most deeply concerned of all.

A very brief narrative, delivered by the captain with a most military abruptness, detailed my offence; and, although not exaggerated in the slightest degree, the occasional interruptions of the magistrate served very considerably to magnify its guilt, – such as "Dear me! a favorite mare; a pure Arab; a present from your noble father, Lord Littlemore; infamous treatment; abominable case; abandoned young scoundrel!" and so on; closing with the accustomed peroration of regret that, as hanging was now done away with, he feared that the recorder could only award me a transportation for life!

"Have you anything to say, sirrah?" said he at last, turning towards me; "or would you rather reserve your observations for another time? as I shall certainly commit you for trial at the commission."

"I have only to suggest," said I, with an air of most insolent composure, "that you are probably mistaken in your law. The offence with which I stand charged amounts, at most, to the minor one of breach of trust."

"What! have we got a lawyer in the dock?" said the magistrate, reddening with fear and anger together.

"I have enjoyed some opportunities of legal study, your worship," said I, "and am happy to state that my opinion in the present instance will not discredit the assertion. The case stands thus: I am employed by the Honorable Captain De Courcy to perform a particular duty, which is of the distinct nature of a trust; that trust, whose importance I do not seek to extenuate in the slightest, I fail in. I will not plead the strong temptation of a race and a great spectacle. I will not allege, as perhaps I might, the example of my companions, then revelling in all the pleasures of the day. I will simply say that no one fact can be adduced to favor the suspicion of a meditated robbery; and that my conduct, so palpably open and public, rejects the least assumption of the kind, and at the utmost can establish nothing beyond what I am willing to plead guilty to, – a breach of trust."

"Listen to the Attorney-General! By the hokey, it's himself they 've in the dock!" said one.

"That's the chap can give them chapter and varse!" cried another.

"Silence there! Keep silence in the court!" said the justice, now really warm with passion. "I'd have you to know, sirrah," said he, addressing me, "that your pettifogging shrewdness is anything

but favorable to you in the unfortunate position in which you stand. I shall commit you for trial, and would advise you – it is the only piece of advice I 'll trouble you with – to charge some more skilful advocate with your defence, and not intrust it to the knavish flippancy of conceit and chicanery."

"I mean to have counsel, your worship," said I, resolutely; for my blood was up, and I would have argued with the twelve judges. "I mean to have one of the first and most eminent at the bar for my defence. Mr. Mansergh, of Merrion Square, will not refuse my brief when he sees the fee I can offer him."

A regular roar of laughter filled the court; the impudence of my speech, and my thus introducing the name of one of the very first men at the bar, as likely to concern himself for such a miserable case and object, was too much for any gravity; and when the magistrate turned to comment upon my unparalleled assurance and impertinence to Captain De Courcy, he discovered that the honorable captain had left his place.

Such was the fact! The dashing aide-de-camp was at that moment standing in earnest converse with myself beside the dock.

"May I speak with this boy in another room, your worship?" said he, addressing the court.

"Certainly, Captain De Courcy! Sergeant Biles, show Captain De Courcy into my robing-room."

The honorable captain did not regain his composure immediately on finding himself alone with me; on the contrary, his agitation was such that he made two or three efforts before he could utter the few words with which he first addressed me.

"What did you mean by saying that Mr. Mansergh would defend you? and what was the fee you alluded to?" were the words.

"Just what I said, sir," said I, with the steady assurance a confidence of victory gives. "I thought it was better to have able counsel; and as I know I have the means of recompensing him, the opportunity was lucky."

"You don't pretend that you could afford to engage one like him, my lad?" said he, affecting, but very poorly, an air of easy composure. "What could you give him?"

"A note, sir; and although it never issued from the Bank, one not without value!"

The captain became deadly pale; he made one step towards the door, and in a low voice of ill-restrained anger said, "I'll have you searched, sirrah! If anything belonging to me is found upon you – "

"No fear, sir," said I, composedly; "I have taken precautions against that; the note is safe!"

He threw himself upon a chair, and stared at me steadily for some minutes without a word. There we were, each scanning the other, and inwardly calculating how to win the game we were playing.

"Well," said he, at last; "what are your terms? You see I give in."

"And so best," said I; "it saves time. I ask very little from your honor, – nothing more, in fact, than to have this charge dismissed. I don't mean to wear rags all my life, and consort with vagabonds, and so I dislike to have it said hereafter that I was ever arraigned or committed for an offence like this. You must tell the justice that it was some blunder or mistake of your orders to me; some accidental circumstance or other, – I don't much care what, or how; nor will he, if the explanation comes from *you!* This done, I 'll place the note in your hand within half an hour, and we need never see much more of each other."

"But who is to secure me that you keep your promise?"

"You must trust to me," said I, carelessly; "I have no bail to give."

"Why not return now, with the policeman, for the note, before I speak to the justice?"

"Then who is to go bail for *you?*" said I, smiling.

"You are a cool fellow, by Jove!" cried he, at the steady impudence which I maintained in the discussion.

"I had need be," replied I, in a voice very different from the feigned hardihood of my assumed part. "The boy who has neither a home nor a friend in the world has little else to rely on, save the cold recklessness of what may befall him!"

I saw a curl of contempt upon the captain's lip at the energy of this speech; for now, when, for the first time between us, a single genuine sentiment broke from me, he deemed it "cant."

"Well!" cried he, "as you wish; I'll speak to the justice, and you shall be free."

He left the room as he spoke, but in a few moments reentered it, saying, "All is right! You are discharged! Now for *your* share of the bargain."

"Where will your honor be in half an hour?"

"At the Club, Foster Place."

"Then I 'll be there with the note," said I.

He nodded, and walked out. I watched him as he went; but he neither spoke to a policeman, nor did he turn his head round to see what became of me. There was something in this that actually awed me. It was a trait so unlike anything I had ever seen in others that I at once perceived it was "the gentleman's" spirit, enabling him to feel confidence even in a poor ragged street wanderer as I was. The lesson was not lost on me. My life has been mainly an imitative one, and I have more than once seen the inestimable value of "trusting."

No sooner was I at large than I speeded to Betty's, and was back again long before the half-hour expired. I had to wait till near five, however, before he appeared; so sure was he of my keeping my word that he never troubled himself about me. "Ha!" said he, as he saw me, "long here?"

"Yes, sir, about an hour;" and I handed him the note as I spoke.

He thrust it carelessly into his sabretache, and, pulling out a crown piece, chucked it towards me, saying, "Good-bye, friend; if they don't hang you, you 'll make some noise in the world yet."

"I mean it, sir," said I, with a familiar nod; and so, genteelly touching my cap in salute, I walked away.

CHAPTER VIII. A QUIET CHOP AT 'KILLEEN'S' AND A GLANCE AT A NEW CHARACTER

I looked very wistfully at my broad crown piece as it lay with its honest platter face in the palm of my hand, and felt, by the stirring sensations it excited within me, some inklings of his feelings who possesses hundreds of thousands of them. Then there arose in my mind the grave question how it was to be spent; and such a strange connection is there between what economists call supply and demand, that, in place of being, as I esteemed myself a few minutes back, "passing rich," I at once perceived that I was exceeding poor, since to effect any important change in my condition, five shillings was a most inadequate sum. It would not buy me more than a pair of shoes; and what use in repairing the foundation of the edifice, when the roof was in ruin? – not to speak of my other garments, to get into which, each morning, by the same apertures as before, was a feat that might have puzzled a harlequin.

I next bethought me of giving an entertainment to my brethren at Betty's; but, after all, they had shown little sympathy with me in my late misfortune, and seemed rather pleased to be rid of a dangerous professional rival. This, and a lurking desire to leave the fraternity, decided me against this plan.

Then came the thought of entertaining myself, giving myself a species of congratulatory dinner on my escape; and, in fact, commemorating the event by anticipating the most fashionable mode now in use.

I canvassed the notion with all the skill and fairness I could summon, starting the various objections against it, and answering them with what seemed to myself a most judicial impartiality.

"Who does a man usually entertain," said I, "but his intimate friends?" Those whose agreeability is pleasing to him, or whose acquaintance is valuable from their station and influence. Now, with whom had I such an unrestrained and cordial intercourse as myself? Whose society never wearied, whose companionship always interested me? My own! And who, of all the persons I had ever met with, conceived a sincere and heartfelt desire for my welfare, preferring it to all others? "Con Cregan, it is you," said I, enthusiastically. "In you my confidence is complete. I believe you incapable of ever forgetting me. Come, then, and let us pledge our friendship over a flowing bowl."

Where, too, was the next doubt? With a crown to spend, I was not going to descend to some subterranean den among coalheavers, newsvenders, and umbrella-hawkers. But how was I to gain access to a better-class ordinary, – that was the difficulty, – who would admit the street-runner, in his rags, into even a brief intimacy with his silver forks and spoons? And it was precisely to an entertainment on such a scale as a good tavern could supply that I aspired. It was to test my own feelings under a new stimulant, – just as I have often since seen grave people experiment upon themselves with laughing-gas and magnetism and the fumes of ether.

"It may be too much for you, Con," said I, as I went along; "there's no knowing what effect it may have on your nerves.

"Remember that your system is not attuned to such variations. Your vagaries may prove extravagant, and the too sudden elevation may disturb your naturally correct judgment." Against these doubts I pleaded the necessity of not being ungrateful to myself, not refusing a very proper acknowledgment of my own skill and astuteness; and, lastly, I suggested a glancing kind of hope that, like those famed heroes who dated their great fortune to having gone to sleep beneath the shadow of some charmed tree, or near the ripple of a magic fountain, that I, too, should arise from this banquet with some brilliant view of life, and see the path to success, bright and clear before me, through the hazy mists of fancy.

As I reasoned thus, I passed various ordinaries, stopping with a kind of instinct at each, to gaze at the luscious rounds of beef so daintily tricked out with sprigs of parsley; the appetizing cold

sirloins, so beautifully stratified with fat and lean; with hams that might tempt a rabbi; not to speak of certain provocative little paragraphs about “Ox-tail and Gravy ready at all hours.” “Queer world it is,” said I; “and there are passing at every instant, by tens and twenties, men and women and children, famishing and hungry, who see all these things separated from them by a pane of window-glass; and yet they only gather their rags more closely together, clench their thin lips tighter, and move on. Not that alone; but here am I, with means to buy what I want, and yet I must not venture to cross that threshold, as though my rags should be an insult to their broadcloth.” “Move on, youngster,” quoth a policeman at this moment, and thus put an end to my soliloquy.

Wearied with rambling, and almost despairing of myself, I was about to cross Carlisle Bridge, when the blazing effulgence of a great ruby-colored lamplight attracted my attention, over which, in bright letters, ran the words, “Killeen’s Tavern and Chop House,” and beneath: “Steak, potatoes, and a pint of stout, one shilling and fourpence.” Armed with a bold thought, I turned and approached the house.

Two or three waiters, in white aprons, were standing at the door, and showed little inclination to make way for me as I advanced.

“Well,” cried one, “who are you? Nobody sent for you.”

“Tramp, my smart fellow,” said the other; “this an’t your shop.”

“Is n’t this Killeen’s?” said I, stoutly.

“Just so,” said the first, a little surprised at my coolness.

“Well, then, a young gentleman from the college sent me to order dinner for him at once, and pay for it at the same time.”

“What will he have?”

“Soup, and a steak, with a pint of port,” said I; just the kind of dinner I had often heard the old half-pay officers talking of at the door of the Club in Foster Place.

“What hour did he say?”

“This instant. He’s coming down; and as he starts by the mail at seven, he told me to have it on the table when he came.”

“All right; four-and-six,” said the waiter, holding out his hand for the money.

I gave him my crown piece; and as he fumbled for the sixpence I insinuated myself quietly into the hall.

“There’s your change, boy,” said the waiter; “you need n’t stop.”

“Will you be so good, sir,” said I, “to write ‘paid’ on a slip of paper for me, just to show the gentleman?”

“Of course,” said he, taken possibly by the flattering civility of my address; and he stepped into the bar, and soon reappeared with a small scrap of paper, with these words: “Dinner and a pint of port, 4s. 6d. – paid.”

“I’m to wait for him here, sir,” said I, most obsequiously.

“Very well, so you can,” replied he, passing on to the coffee-room.

I peeped through the glass door, and saw that in one of the little boxes into which the place was divided, a table was just spread, and a soup-tureen and a decanter placed on it. “This,” thought I, “is for me;” for all the other boxes were already occupied, and a great buzz of voices and clashing of plates and knives going on together.

“Serve the steak, sir,” said I, stepping into the room and addressing the head-waiter, who, with a curse to me to “get out of that,” passed on to order the dish; while I, with an adroit flank movement, dived into the box, and, imitating some of the company, spread my napkin like a breastplate across me. By a great piece of fortune the stall was the darkest in the room, so that when seated in a corner, with an open newspaper before me, I could, for a time at least, hope to escape detection.

“Anything else, sir?” cried a waiter, as he uncovered the soup, and deposited the dish of smoking beef-steak.

"Nothing," responded I, with a voice of most imposing sternness, and manfully holding up the newspaper between us.

The first three or four mouthfuls I ate with a faint heart; the fear of discovery, exposure, and expulsion almost choked me. A glass of port rallied, a second one cheered, and a third emboldened me, and I proceeded to my steak in a spirit of true ease and enjoyment. The port was most insidious; place it wherever I would on the table, it invariably stole over beside me, and, in spite of me, as it were, the decanter would stand at my elbow. I suppose it must be in reality a very gentlemanlike tipple; the tone of sturdy self-reliance, the vigorous air of command, the sense of absolutism it inspires, smack of Toryism; and as I sipped, I felt myself rising above the low prejudices I once indulged in against rank and wealth, and insensibly comprehending the beauty of that system which divides and classifies mankind.

The very air of the place, the loud, overbearing talk, the haughty summons to the waiter, the imperious demand for this or that requisite of the table, all conspired to impress me with the pleasant sensation imparted to him who possesses money. Among the various things called for on every side, I remarked that mustard seemed in the very highest request. Every one ate of it; none seemed to have enough of it. There was a perpetual cry, "Mustard! I say, waiter, bring me the mustard;" while one very choleric old gentleman, in a drab surtout and a red nose, absolutely seemed bursting with indignation as he said, "You don't expect me to eat a steak without mustard, sir?" – a rebuke at which the waiter grew actually purple.

Now, this was the very thing I had myself been doing, – actually eating "a steak without mustard!" What a mistake, and for one who believed himself to be in every respect conforming to the choicest usages of high life! What was to be done? The steak had disappeared; no matter, it was never too late to learn, and so I cried out, "Waiter, the mustard here!" in a voice that almost electrified the whole room.

I had scarcely concealed myself beneath my curtain, – "The Times," – when the mustard was set down before me, with a humble apology for forgetfulness. I waited till he withdrew, and then helping myself to the unknown delicacy, proceeded to eat it, as the phrase is, "neat." In my eagerness, I swallowed two or three mouthfuls before I felt its effects; and then a sensation of burning and choking seized upon me. My tongue seemed to swell to thrice its size; my eyes felt as if they would drop out of my head; while a tingling sensation, like "frying," in my nostrils, almost drove me mad; so that after three or four seconds of silent agony, during which I experienced about ten years of torture, unable to endure more, I screamed out that "I was poisoned," and, with wide-open mouth and staring eyes, ran down the coffee-room.

Never was seen such an uproar! Had an animal from a wild-beast menagerie appeared among the company, the consternation could scarce be greater; and in the mingled laughter and execrations might be traced the different moods of those who resented my intrusion. "Who is this fellow? How did he get in? What brought him here? What's the matter with him?" poured in on all sides, – difficulties the head-waiter thought it better to deal with by a speedy expulsion than by any lengthened explanation.

"Get a policeman, Bob!" said he to the next in command; and the order was given loud enough to be heard by me.

"What the devil threw him amongst us?" said a testy-looking man in green spectacles.

"I came to dine, sir," said I; "to have my steak and my pint of wine, as I hoped, in comfort, and as one might have it in a respectable tavern."

A jolly burst of laughter stopped me, and I was obliged to wait for its subsidence to continue.

"Well, sir! I paid for my dinner – "

"Is that true, Sam?" said a shrewd-looking man to the waiter.

"Quite true, sir! he paid four-and-sixpence, saying that the dinner was for a College gentleman."

"I have been in College," said I, coolly; "but no matter, the thing is simple enough: I am here in a house of public entertainment, the proprietors of which have accepted my money for a specific purpose; and putting aside the question whether they can refuse admission to any well-conducted individual (see Barnes *versus* MacTivell, in the 8th volume Term Reports; and Hobbes against Blinkerton, Soaker, and others, in the Appendix), I contend that my presence here is founded upon contract."

Another and still louder roar of mirth again stopped me, and before I could resume, the company had gathered round me, in evident delight at my legal knowledge; and in particular, he of the spectacles, who was a well-known attorney of the Court of Conscience.

"That fellow's a gem!" said he. "Hang me if he's not equal to Bleatem! Sam, take care what you do; he 's the chap to have his action against you! I say, my man, come and sit down here, and let us have a little chat together."

"Most willingly, sir," responded I. "Waiter, bring my wine over to this table." This was the signal for another shout, of which I did not deign to take the slightest notice.

"I'll wager a hundred oysters," exclaimed one of the party, among whom I now seated myself, "that I have seen him before! Tell me, my lad, didn't you ride over the course yesterday, and cut out the work for Mr. Beatagh?"

I bowed an assent. "Who the devil is he?" cried two or three together; and my appearance and manner did not check the audible expression of this sentiment.

"A few words will suffice, gentlemen," said I, "on that head. My father was an estated gentleman, of small, but unincumbered fortune, which he lost by an unfortunate speculation; he accordingly went abroad – "

"To Norfolk Island!" suggested one, with a wink.

"Exactly," responded I, "a Colonial appointment; leaving me, like Norval, not exactly on the Grampian Hills, but in a worse place, in the middle of the bog of Allen; my sole dependence being in certain legal studies I had once made, and a natural taste for getting forward in life; which, with a most enthusiastic appreciation of good company," – here I bowed politely all round, – "are, I flatter myself, my chief characteristics."

After a little, but most good-humored, quizzing about my present occupation and future prospects, they, with far more politeness than might be expected, turned the conversation upon other matters, and kindly permitted me to throw in from time to time my observations, – remarks which I could see, from their novelty, at least, seemed often to surprise them.

At length the hour of separating arrived, and I arose to bid the company good-night, which I performed with a very fair imitation of that quiet ease I had often studied in the young guardsmen about town.

"What do you bet that he has neither home to shelter him, nor bed to sleep on, this night?" whispered one to his neighbor.

"What are you writing there, Cox?" said another, to the keen-eyed man, who was pencilling something on a card.

"There, that's my address, my boy, – 12, Stafford Street: Jeremiah Cox. Come to me about ten to-morrow."

Another, while he was speaking, made an effort to slip a half-crown into my hand, – a measure I felt it becoming to decline with a prompt, but courteous, refusal. Indeed, I had so identified myself with the part I was performing that I flung down my only sixpence on the table for the waiter, and, with a last salutation to the honorable company, walked out. I have a perfect memory of every circumstance of the evening, and I recollect that my swaggering exit was as free from any semblance of concern or care as though a carriage waited for me outside to convey me to a luxurious home!

It has often been a fancy of mine through life to pass the entire of a summer night out of door; to wander either through the moonlit roads of some picturesque country, or in the still more solitary

streets of a great city. I have always felt on these occasions as though one were “stealing a march” upon the sleeping world, – gaining so many more hours of thought and reflection, which the busy conflict of life renders so often difficult.

The hours of the night seem to typify so many stages of existence, – only reversing the natural order of age, and making the period of deep reflection precede the era of sanguine hope; for if the solemn closing in of the darkness suggests musing, so do the rosy tints and fresh air of breaking day inspire the warm hopefulness of youth. If “the daylight sinking” invites the secret communing of the heart, “the dawning of morn” glows with energetic purpose and bold endeavor.

To come back to myself. I left the tavern without a thought whither I should turn my steps. It was a calm night, with a starry sky and a mild, genial air, so that to pass the hours until morning without shelter was no great privation. One only resolve I had formed, – never to go back to Betty’s. I felt that I had sojourned over long in such companionship; it was now time some other, and more upward, path should open before me.

Following the course of the Liffey, I soon reached the quay called the North Wall, and at last arrived at the bluff extremity which looks out upon the opening of the river into the Bay of Dublin. The great expanse was in deep shadow, but so calm the sea that the two lighthouses were reflected in long columns of light in the tranquil water. The only sound audible was the low, monotonous plash of the sea against the wall, or the grating noise of a chain cable, as the vessel it held surged slowly with the tide. The sounds had something plaintive in them, that soon imparted a tone of sadness to my mind; but it was a melancholy not unpleasing; and I sat down upon a rude block of stone, weaving strange fancies of myself and my future.

As I sat thus, my ear, grown more acute by habit, detected the light clank of a chain, and something like a low thumping sound in the water beneath me; and on peering down, I discovered the form of a small boat, fastened to a ring in the wall, and which from time to time grated against the strong masonry. There it lay, with a pair of light oars run under the thwarts, and its helm flapping to and fro, inert and purposeless, like myself! So at least I fancied it; and soon began conceiving a strange parallel between it and me. I was suddenly startled from these musings by the sound of feet rapidly approaching.

I listened, and could hear a man coming towards me at full speed. I sat down beneath the shadow of the wall, and he passed me unnoticed, and then, springing up on the parapet, he gave a loud, shrill whistle, waiting a few seconds as if for the reply. He was silent, and then repeated it; but still in vain, – no answer came. “Blast them!” muttered he, “the scoundrels will not show a light!” A third time did he whistle; but though the sounds might be heard a mile off, neither sight nor sound ever responded to them. “And that rascal, too, to have left the boat at such a moment!” Just as he uttered these words, he sprang down from the wall, and caught sight of me, as I lay, affecting sleep, coiled up beneath it.

With a rude kick of his foot on my side he aroused me, saying, “D – n the fellow! is this a time for sleeping? I told you to keep a sharp look-out for me here! What! who are you?” cried he, as I stood upright before him.

“A poor boy, sir, that has no roof to shelter him,” said I, plaintively.

He bent his head and listened; and then, with a horrible curse, exclaimed, “Here they are! here they come! Can you pull an oar, my lad?”

“I can sir,” answered I.

“Well, jump down into the punt there, and row her round the point to the stairs. Be quick! down with you! I have cut my hand, and cannot help you. There, that ‘s it, my lad! catch the ring; swing yourself a little more to the right; her gunwale is just beneath your foot; all right now! well done! Be alive now! give way, give way!” And thus encouraging me, he walked along the parapet above me, and in a few minutes stood fast, calling out, but in a lower and more cautious voice, “There! close in, now a strong pull – that ‘s it!” and then, hastily descending a narrow flight of steps, he sprang into

the boat, and seated himself in the stern. “Hush! be still!” cried he; “do not stir! they’ll never see us under the shadow of the wall!”

As he spoke, two dark figures mounted the wall, straight above our heads, and stood for some seconds as it were peering into the distance.

“I ‘ll swear I saw him take this way,” cried one, in a deep low voice.

“If he were the Devil himself, he could not escape us here,” said the other, with an accent of vindictive passion.

“And he is the Devil,” said the former speaker.

“Pooh, nonsense, man! any fellow who can win at dice, or has a steady finger with a pistol, is a marvel for you. Curses on him! he has given us the slip somehow.”

“I’d not wonder, Harry, if he has taken the water; he swims like a duck!”

“He could not have sprung from a height like that without a plash, and we were close enough upon his heels to hear it; flash off some powder in a piece of paper: it is dark as pitch here.”

While the men above were preparing their light, I heard a slight stir in the stern of the boat. I turned my head, and saw my companion coolly fitting a cap on his pistol; he was doing it with difficulty, as he was obliged to hold the pistol between his knees, while he adjusted the cap with his left hand; the right hand he carried in the breast of his coat. Nothing could be more calm and collected than his every movement, up to the instant when, having cocked the weapon, he lay back in the boat, so as to have a full stare at the two dark figures above us.

At last, the fuse was ready, and, being lighted, it was held for a few seconds in the hand, and then thrown into the air. The red and lurid glare flashed full upon two savage-looking faces, straight above our heads, and for an instant showed their figures with all the distinctness of noonday. I saw them both, as if by a common impulse, lean over the parapet and peer down into the dark water below, and I could have almost sworn that we were discovered; my companion evidently thought so too, for he raised his pistol steadily, and took a long and careful aim. What a moment was that for me, expecting at every instant to hear the report, and then the heavy fall of the dead man into the water! My throat was full to bursting. The bit of burning paper of the fuse had fallen on my companion’s pistol-hand; but though it must have scorched him, he never stirred, nor even brushed it off. I thought that by its faint flicker, also, we might have been seen. But no, it was plain they had not perceived us; and it was with a delight I cannot describe that I saw one and then the other descend from the wall, while I heard the words, “There’s the second time above five hundred pounds has slipped from us. D – n the fellow! but if I hang for him, I’ll do it yet!”

“Well, you’ve spoiled his hand for hazard for a while, anyhow, Harry!” said the other. “I think you must have taken his fingers clean off!”

“The knife was like a razor,” replied the other, with a laugh; “but he struck it out of my hand with a blow above the wrist; and, I can tell you, I ‘d as soon get the kick of a horse as a short stroke of the same closed fist.”

They continued to converse as they moved away, but their words only reached me in broken, unconnected sentences. From all I could glean, however, I was in company with one of enormous personal strength and a most reckless intrepidity. At last, all was still; not a sound to be heard on any side; and my companion, leaning forward, said, “Come, my lad, pull me out a short distance into the offing; we shall soon see a light to guide us!”

In calm, still water I could row well. I had been boat-boy to the priest at all his autumn fishing excursions on the Westmeath lakes, so that I acquitted myself creditably, urged on, I am free to confess, by a very profound fear of the large figure who loomed so mysteriously in the stern. For a time we proceeded in deep silence, when at last he said, “What vessel do you belong to, boy?”

“I was never at sea, sir,” replied I.

“Not a sailor! How comes it, then, you can row so well?”

“I learned to row in fresh water, sir.”

"What are you? How came you to be here to-night?"

"By merest chance, sir. I had no money to pay for a bed. I have neither home nor friends. I have lived, by holding horses, and running errands, in the streets."

"Picking pockets occasionally, I suppose, too, when regular business was dull!"

"Never!" said I, indignantly.

"Don't be shocked, my fine fellow," said he, jeeringly; "better men than ever you 'll be have done a little that way. I have made some lighter this evening myself, for the matter of that!"

This confession, if very frank, was not very reassuring; and so I made no answer, but rowed away with all my might.

"Well!" said he, after a pause, "luck has befriended me twice to-night; and sending you to sleep under that wall was not the worst turn of the two. Ship your oars there, boy, and let us see if you are as handy a surgeon as you are a sailor! Try and bind up these wounded fingers of mine, for they begin to smart with the cold night air."

"Wait an instant," cried he; "we are safe now, so you may light this lantern;" and he took from his pocket a small and most elegantly fashioned lantern, which he immediately lighted.

I own it was with a most intense curiosity I waited for the light to scan the features of my singular companion; nor was my satisfaction inconsiderable when, instead of the terrific-looking fellow – half bravo, half pirate – I expected, I perceived before me a man of apparently thirty-one or two, with large but handsome features and gentlemanly appearance. He had an immense beard and moustache, which united at either side of the mouth; but this, ferocious enough to one unaccustomed to it, could not take off the quiet regularity and good-humor of his manly features. He wore a large-brimmed slouched felt hat that shaded his brows, and he seemed to be dressed with some care, beneath the rough exterior of a common pilot-coat, – at least, he wore silk stockings and shoes, as if in evening-dress. These particulars I had time to note, while he unwound from his crippled hand the strips of a silk handkerchief which, stiffened and clotted with blood, bespoke a deep and severe wound.

If the operation were often painful even to torture, he never winced, or permitted the slightest expression of suffering to escape him. At last the undressing was completed, and a fearful gash appeared, separating the four fingers almost entirely from the hand. The keenness of the cut showed that the weapon must have been, as the fellow averred, sharp as a razor. Perhaps the copious loss of blood had exhausted the vessels, or the tension of the bandage had closed them; for there was little bleeding, and I soon succeeded, with the aid of his cravat, in making a tolerable dressing of the wound, and by filling up the palm of the hand as I had once seen done by a country surgeon in a somewhat similar case. The pain was relieved by the gentle support afforded.

"Why, you are a most accomplished vagrant!" said he, laughing, as he watched the artistic steps of my proceeding. "What's your name? – I mean, what do you go by at present? for of course a fellow like you has a score of aliases."

"I have had only one name up to this," said I, – "Con Cregan."

"Con Cregan! sharp and shrewd enough it sounds too!" said he. "And what line of life do you mean to follow, Master Con? for I suspect you have not been without some speculations on the subject."

"I have thought of various things, sir; but how is a poor boy like me to get a chance? I feel as if I could pick up a little of most trades; but I have no money, nor any friends."

"Money – friends!" exclaimed he, with a burst of bitterness quite unlike his previous careless humor. "Well, my good fellow, I had both one and the other, – more than most people are supposed to have of either; and what have they brought me to?" He held up his maimed and blood-clotted hand as he spoke this with a withering scorn in every accent.

"No, my boy; trust one who knows something of life, – the lighter you start, the easier your journey! He that sets his heart on it, can always make money; and friends, as they are called by courtesy, are still more easily acquired."

This was the first time I had ever heard any one speak of the game of life as such; and I cannot say what intense pleasure the theme afforded me. I am certain I never stopped to consider whether his views were right or not, whether the shrewd results of a keen observer, or the prejudices of a disappointed man. It was the subject, the matter discussed, delighted me.

My companion appeared to feel that he had a willing listener, and went freely on, canvassing the various roads to success, and with a certain air of confidence in all he said that to me seemed quite oracular. “What a fellow am I,” said he at last, “to discourse in this strain to a street urchin whose highest ambition is to outrun his ragged competitors, and be first ‘in,’ for the sixpence of some cantering cornet! Pull ahead, lad, there’s the light at last; and hang me if they’re not two miles out.”

The contemptuous tone of the last few words effectually repressed any desire I might have had for further colloquy; and I rowed away in silence, putting forth all my strength and skill, so that the light skiff darted rapidly and steadily through the water.

CHAPTER IX. SIR DUDLEY BROUGHTON

Steadily, and with all the vigor I could command, I pulled towards the light. My companion sat quietly watching the stars, and apparently following out some chain of thought to himself; at last he said, "There, boy, breathe a bit; there's no need to blow yourself; we 're all safe long since; the 'Firefly' is right ahead of us, and not far off either. Have you never heard of the yacht?"

"Never, sir."

"Nor of its owner, Sir Dudley Broughton?"

"No, sir, I never heard the name."

"Well, come," cried he, laughing, "that is consolatory. I 'm not half so great a reprobate as I thought myself! I did not believe till now that there was an urchin of your stamp living who could not have furnished at least some anecdotes for a memoir of me! Well, my lad, yonder, where you see the blue light at the peak, is the 'Firefly,' and here, where I sit, is Sir Dudley Broughton. Ten minutes more will put us alongside, so, if you're not tired, pull away."

"No, Sir Dudley," said I, for I was well versed in the popular tact of catching up a name quickly, "I am able to row twice as far."

"And now, Master Con," said he, "we are going to part. Are you too young a disciple of your craft for a glass of grog; or are you a follower of that new-fangled notion of pale-faced politicians, who like bad coffee and reason better than whiskey and fun?"

"I'll take nothing to drink, Sir Dudley," said I. "I have dined and drunk well to-day, and I'll not venture further."

"As you please; only I say you 're wrong not to victual the ship whenever you stand in-shore. No matter; put your hand into this vest pocket, – you 'll find some shillings there: take them, whatever they be. You'll row the boat back with one of my people; and all I have to say is, if you do speak of me, as no doubt you will and must, don't say anything about these smashed fingers; I suppose they'll get right one of these days, and I 'd rather there was no gossip about them."

"I 'll never speak of it – I – "

"There, now, that's enough; no swearing, or I know you'll break your promise. Back water a little; pull the starboard oar, – so; here we are alongside."

Sir Dudley had scarce done speaking when a hoarse voice from the yacht challenged us. This was replied to by a terrific volley of imprecations on the stupidity of not sooner showing the light, amid which Sir Dudley ascended the side and stood upon the deck. "Where's Halkett?" cried he, imperiously. "Here, sir," replied a short, thickset man, with a sailor-like shuffle in his walk. "Send one of the men back with the gig, and land that boy. Tell the fellow, too, he's not to fetch Waters aboard, if he meets him: the scoundrel went off and left me to my fate this evening; and it might have been no pleasant one, if I had not found that lad yonder."

"We have all Sam Waters' kit on board, Sir Dudley," said Halkett; "shall we send it ashore?"

"No. Tell him I'll leave it at Demerara for him; and he may catch the yellow fever in looking after it," said he, laughing.

While listening to this short dialogue I had contrived to approach a light which gleamed from the cabin window, and then took the opportunity to count over my wealth, amounting, as I supposed, to some seven or eight shillings. Guess my surprise to see that the pieces were all bright yellow gold, – eight shining sovereigns!

I had but that instant made the discovery, when the sailor who was to put me on shore jumped into the boat and seated himself.

"Wait one instant," cried I. "Sir Dudley – Sir Dudley Broughton!"

"Well, what's the matter?" said he, leaning over the side.

"This money you gave me – "

"Not enough, of course! I ought to have known that," said he, scornfully. "Give the whelp a couple of half-crowns, Halkett, and send him adrift."

"You 're wrong, sir," cried I, with passionate eagerness; "they are gold pieces, – sovereigns."

"The devil they are!" cried he, laughing; "the better luck yours. Why did n't you hold your tongue about it?"

"You bid me take some shillings, sir," answered I.

"How d – d honest you must be! Do you hear that, Halkett? The fellow had scruples about taking his prize-money! Never mind, boy, I must pay for my blunder, – you may keep them now."

"I have pride, too," cried I; "and hang me if I touch them."

He stared at me, without speaking, for a few minutes, and then said, in a low, flat voice, "Come on deck, lad." I obeyed; and he took a lighted lantern from the binnacle, and held it up close to my face, and then moved it so that he made a careful examination of my whole figure.

"I 'd give a crown to know who was your father," said he, dryly.

"Con Cregan, of Kilbeggan, sir."

"Oh, of course, I know all that. Come, now, what say you to try a bit of life afloat? Will you stay here?"

"Will you take me, sir?" cried I, in ecstasy.

"Halkett, rig him out," said he, shortly. "Nip the anchor with the ebb, and keep your course down channel." With this he descended the cabin stairs and disappeared, while I, at a signal from Halkett, stepped down the ladder into the steerage. In the mean while it will not be deemed digressionary if I devote a few words to the singular character into whose society I was now thrown, inasmuch as to convey any candid narrative of my own career I must speak of those who, without influencing the main current of my life, yet certainly gave some impulse and direction to its first meanderings.

Sir Dudley Broughton was the only son of a wealthy baronet, who, not from affection or overkindness, but out of downright indolent indifference, permitted him, first as an Eton boy, and afterwards as a gentleman commoner of Christ Church, to indulge in every dissipation that suited his fancy. An unlimited indulgence, a free command of whatever money he asked for, added to a temper constitutionally headstrong and impetuous, soon developed what might have been expected from the combination. He led a life of wild insubordination at school, and was expelled from Oxford. With faculties above rather than beneath mediocrity, and a certain aptitude for acquiring the knowledge most in request in society, he had the reputation of being one who, if he had not unhappily so addicted himself to dissipation, would have made a favorable figure in the world. After trying in vain to interest himself in the pursuits of a country life, of which the sporting was the only thing he found attractive, he joined a well-known light cavalry regiment, celebrated for numbering among its officers more fast men than any other corps in the service. His father, dying about the same time, left him in possession of a large fortune, which, with all his extravagance, was but slightly encumbered. This fact, coupled with his well-known reputation, made him popular with his brother officers, most of whom, having run through nearly all they possessed, saw with pleasure a new Croesus arrive in the regiment. Such a man as Broughton was just wanted. One had a charger to get off; another wanted a purchaser for his four-in-hand drag. The senior captain was skilful at billiards; and every one played "lansquenet" and hazard.

Besides various schemes against his purse, the colonel had a still more serious one against his person. He had a daughter, a handsome, fashionable-looking girl, with all the manners of society, and a great deal of that tact only to be acquired in the very best foreign society. That she was no longer in the fresh bloom of youth, nor with a reputation quite spotless, were matters well known in the regiment; but as she was still eminently handsome, and "the Count Radchoffsky" had been recalled by the emperor from the embassy of which he was secretary, Lydia Delmar was likely, in the opinions of keen-judging parties, to make a good hit with "some young fellow who did n't know

town." Broughton was exactly the man Colonel Delmar wanted, – good family, a fine fortune, and the very temper a clever woman usually contrives to rule with absolute sway.

There would be, unfortunately, no novelty in recording the steps by which such a man is ruined. He did everything that men do who are bent upon testing Fortune to the utmost. He lent large sums to his "friends;" he lost larger ones to them. When he did win, none ever paid him, except by a good-humored jest upon his credit at Coutts's. "What the devil do you want with money, Sir Dudley?" was an appeal he could never reply to. He ran horses at Ascot, and got "squeezed;" he played at "Crocky's," and fared no better; but he was the favorite of the corps. "We could never get on without Dudley," was a common remark; and it satisfied him that, with all his extravagance, he had made an investment in the hearts at least of his comrades. A few months longer of this "fast" career would, in all likelihood, have ruined him. He broke his leg by a fall in a steeplechase, and was thus driven, by sheer necessity, to lay up, and keep quiet for a season. Now came Colonel Delmar's opportunity; the moment the news reached Coventry, he set off with his daughter to Leamington. With the steeplechasing, hazard-playing, betting, drinking, yachting, driving Sir Dudley, there was no chance of even time for their plans; but with a sick man on the sofa, bored by his inactivity, hipped for want of his usual resources, the game was open. The Colonel's visit, too, had such an air of true kindness!

Broughton had left quarters without leave; but instead of reprimands, arrests, and Heaven knows what besides, there was Colonel Delmar, the fine old fellow, shaking his finger in mock rebuke, and saying, "Ah, Dudley, my boy, I came down to give you a rare scolding; but this sad business has saved you!" And Lydia also, against whom he had ever felt a dislike, – that prejudice your boisterous and noisy kind of men ever feel to clever women, whose sarcasms they know themselves exposed to, – why, she was gentle good-nature and easy sisterlike kindness itself! She did not, as the phrase goes, "nurse him," but she seldom left the room where he lay. She read aloud, selecting with a marvellous instinct the very kind of books he fancied, – novels, tales of every-day life, things of whose truthfulness he could form some judgment; and sketches wherein the author's views were about on a level with his own. She would sit at the window, too, and amuse him with descriptions of the people passing in the street; such smart shrewd pictures were they of watering-place folks and habits, Dudley never tired of them! She was unsurpassed for the style with which she could dress up an anecdote or a bit of gossip; and if it verged upon the free, her French education taught her the nice perception of the narrow line that separates "libertinage" from indelicacy.

So far from feeling impatient at his confinement to a sofa, therefore, Broughton affected distrust in his renovated limb for a full fortnight after the doctor had pronounced him cured. At last he was able to drive out, and soon afterwards to take exercise on horseback, Lydia Delmar and her father occasionally accompanying him.

People will talk at Leamington, as they do at other places; and so the gossips said that the rich – for he was still so reputed in the world – the "rich" Sir Dudley Broughton was going to marry Miss Delmar.

Gossip is half-brother to that all-powerful director called "Public Opinion;" so that when Sir Dudley heard, some half-dozen times every day, what it was reputed he would do, he began to feel that he ought to do it.

Accordingly, they were married; the world – at least the Leamington section of that large body – criticising the match precisely as it struck the interests and prejudices of the class they belonged to.

Fathers and mothers agreed in thinking that Colonel Delmar was a shrewd old soldier, and had made an "excellent hit." Young ladies pronounced Liddy – for a girl who had been out eight years – decidedly lucky. Lounging men at club doors looked knowingly at each other as they joked together in half sentences, "No affair of mine; but I did not think Broughton would have been caught so easily." "Yes, by Jove!" cried another, with a jockey-like style of dress, "he 'd not have made so great a mistake on the 'Oaks' as to run an aged nag for a two-year old!"

"I wonder he never heard of that Russian fellow!" said a third.

"Oh, yes!" sighed out a dandy, with an affected drawl; "poor dear Liddy did indeed catch a 'Tartar '!"

Remarks such as these were the pleasant sallies the event provoked; but so it is in higher and greater things in life! At the launch of a line-of-battle ship, the veriest vagrant in Tags fancies he can predict for her defeat and shipwreck!

The Broughtons were now the great people of the London season, at least to a certain "fast" set, who loved dinners at the Clarendon, high play, and other concomitant pleasures. *Her* equipages were the most perfect; *her* diamonds the most splendid; while *his* dinners were as much reputed by one class, as *her* toilet by another.

Loans at ruinous interest; sales of property for a tithe of its value; bills renewed at a rate that would have swamped Rothschild; purchases made at prices proportionate to the risk of non-payment; reckless waste everywhere; robbing solicitors, cheating tradesmen, and dishonest servants! But why swell the list, or take trouble to show how the ruin came? If one bad leak will cause a shipwreck, how is the craft to mount the waves with every plank riven asunder?

If among the patriarchs who lend at usury, Broughton's credit was beginning to ebb, in the clubs at the West End, in the betting-ring, at Crockford's, and at Tattersall's, he was in all the splendor of his former fame. Anderson would trust him with half his stable. Howell and James would send him the epergne they had designed for a czar. And so he lived. With rocks and breakers ahead, he only "carried on" the faster and the freer.

Not that he knew, indeed, the extent, or anything approaching the extent, to which his fortune was wrecked. All that he could surmise on the subject was founded on the increased difficulty he found in raising money, – a circumstance his pliant solicitor invariably explained by that happy phrase, the "tightness of the money market." This completely satisfied Sir Dudley, who, far from attributing it to his own almost exhausted resources, laid all the blame upon some trickery of foreign statesmen, some confounded disturbance in Ireland, something that the Foreign Secretary had done, or would not do; and that thus the money folk would not trust a guinea out of their fingers. In fact, it was quite clear that to political intrigue and cabinet scheming all Sir Dudley's difficulties might fairly be traced!

It was just at this time that the Count Radchoffsky arrived once more in London in charge of a special mission, no longer the mere secretary of embassy, driving about in his quiet cab, but an envoy extraordinary, with cordons and crosses innumerable. He was exactly the kind of man for Broughton's "set," so that he soon made his acquaintance, and was presented by him to Lady Broughton as a most agreeable fellow, and something very distinguished in his own country.

She received him admirably: remembered to have met him, she thought, at Lord Edenbury's but he corrected her by saying it was at the Duke of Clifton's, – a difference of testimony at which Broughton laughed heartily, saying, in his usual rough way, "Well, it is pretty clear you didn't make much impression on each other."

The Russian noble was a stranger to the turf. In the details of arranging the approaching race, in apportioning the weights and ages and distances, Broughton passed his whole mornings for a month, sorely puzzled at times by the apathy of his Northern friend, who actually never obtruded an opinion, or expressed a wish for information on the subject.

Sir Dudley's book was a very heavy one too. What "he stood to win" was a profound secret; but knowing men said that if he lost, it would be such a "squeeze" as had not been known at Newmarket since the Duke of York's day.

Such an event, however, seemed not to enter into his own calculations; and so confident was he of success that he could not help sharing his good fortune with his friend Radchoffsky, and giving him something in his own book. The count professed himself everlastingly grateful, but confessed that he knew nothing of racing matters, and that, above all, his Majesty the Emperor would be excessively annoyed if a representative of his in any way interfered with the race; in fact, the honor of the Czar

would be tarnished by such a proceeding. Against such reasonings there could be no opposition; and Broughton only took to himself all the benefits he had destined for his friend.

At last the eventful day came; and although Sir Dudley had arranged that Lady Broughton should accompany him to the course, she was taken with some kind of nervous attack that prevented her leaving her bed. Her husband was provoked at this ill-timed illness, for he was still vain of her appearance in public; but knowing that he could do nothing for hysterics, he sent for Doctor Barham, and then with all speed he started for the race.

Among the friends who were to go along with him, the count had promised to make one; but despatches – that admirable excuse of diplomatists, from the great secretary to the humblest unpaid attaché – despatches had just arrived; and if he could manage to get through his business early enough, "he'd certainly follow."

Scarcely had Sir Dudley reached the ground when a carriage drove up to the stand, and a gentleman descended in all haste. It was Mr. Taperton, his solicitor, – his trusty man of loans and discounts for many a day, "Eh, Tappy!" cried Broughton, "come to sport a fifty on the filly?"

"Walk a little this way, Sir Dudley," said he, gravely; and his voice soon convinced the hearer that something serious was in the wind.

"What's the matter, man? You look as if Cardinal was dead lame."

"Sir Dudley, you must start from this at once. Holdsworth has taken proceedings on the bills; Lord Corthern has foreclosed; the whole body of the creditors are up; and you 'll be arrested before you leave the field!"

If the threat had conveyed the ignominious penalty of felony, Broughton could not have looked more indignant. "Arrested! You don't mean that we cannot raise enough to pay these rascals?"

"Your outstanding bills are above twenty thousand, sir."

"And if they be; do you tell me that with my estate – "

"My dear Sir Dudley, how much of it is unencumbered? What single portion, save the few hundreds a year of Lady Broughton's jointure, is not sunk under mortgage? But this is no time for discussion; get into the chaise with me; we 'll reach London in time for the mail; to-morrow you can be in Boulogne, and then we shall have time at least for an arrangement."

"The race is just coming off! how can I leave? I'm a steward; besides, I have a tremendous book. Do you know how many thousands I stand to win here?"

"To lose, you mean," said the solicitor. "You 're sold!" The words were whispered so low as to be almost inaudible; but Broughton actually staggered as he heard them.

"Sold! how? what? Impossible, man! Who could sell me?"

"Only one man, perhaps, but he has done it! Is it true you have backed Calliope?"

"Yes!" said he, staring wildly.

"She was found hamstrung this morning in the stable, then," said Taperton; "if you want to hear further particulars, you must ask your friend the Count Radchoffsky!"

"The scoundrel! the black-hearted villain! I see it all!" cried Broughton. "Come, Taperton, let us start! I'll go with you; by Jove, you have found a way to make me eager for the road!"

The lawyer read in the bloodshot eye and flushed face the passion for vengeance that was boiling within him, but he never spoke as they moved on and entered the carriage.

It was full three hours before the expected time of his return, when the chaise in which they travelled drew up at the Clarendon, and Broughton, half wild with rage, dashed upstairs to the suite of splendid rooms he occupied.

"Oh, dear, Sir Dudley," cried the maid, as she saw him hastening along the corridor, "oh, I 'm sure, sir, how you 'll alarm my lady if she sees you so flurried!"

"Stand out of the way, woman!" said he, roughly, endeavoring to push her to one side, for she had actually placed herself between him and the door of the drawing-room.

"Surely, sir, you'll not terrify my lady! Surely, Sir Dudley – "

Despite her cries, for they had now become such, Broughton pushed her rudely from the spot, and entered the room.

Great was his astonishment to find Lady Broughton, whom he had left so ill, not only up, but dressed as if for the promenade; her face was flushed, and her eye restless and feverish; and her whole manner exhibited the highest degree of excitement.

Broughton threw down his hat upon the table, and then, returning to the door, locked and bolted it.

"Good Heavens, Dudley!" exclaimed she, in a voice of terror, "what has happened?"

"Everything!" said he; "utter ruin! The whole crew of creditors are in full chase after me, and in a few hours we shall be stripped of all we possess."

She drew a long full breath as she listened; and had her husband been in a mood to mark it, he might have seen how lightly his terrible tidings affected her.

"I must fly! Taperton – he's in the carriage below – says France, at least for some weeks, till we can make some compromise or other; but I have one debt that must be acquitted before I leave."

There was a terrible significance in the words, and she was sick to the heart as she asked, "What, and to whom?"

"Radchoffsky!" cried he, savagely; "that scoundrel whom I trusted like a brother!"

Lady Broughton fell back, and for a moment her motionless limbs and pallid features seemed like fainting; but with a tremendous effort rallying herself, she said, "Go on!"

"He betrayed me, – told every circumstance of my book! And the mare I had backed for more than thirty thousand is dying this instant; so that I am not only ruined, but dishonored!"

She sat with wide staring eyes and half-open lips while he spoke, nor did she seem, in the fearful confusion of her fear, to understand fully all he said.

"Have I not spoken plainly?" said he, angrily. "Don't you comprehend me when I say that to-morrow I shall be branded as a defaulter at the settling? But enough of this. Tell Millar to get a portmanteau ready for me. I 'll start this evening; the interval is short enough for all I have to do." As he spoke, he hastened to his bedroom, and, providing himself with a case containing his duelling-pistols, he hurried downstairs, ordering the postilion to drive to the Russian Embassy.

The carriage was scarce driven from the door when Lady Broughton, taking a key from her pocket, opened a small door which led from the drawing-room into her dressing-room, from which the count walked forth, – his calm features unruffled and easy as though no emotion had ever stirred them.

"You heard what Broughton said?" whispered she, in an accent of faltering agitation.

"Oui, *parbleu*, every word of it!" replied he, laughing gently. "The people of the house might almost have heard him."

"And is it true?" asked she, while a cold sickness crept over her, and her mouth was shaken convulsively.

"I believe so," said he, calmly.

"Oh, Alexis, do not say so!" cried she, in an agony of grief; "or, least of all, in such a voice as that."

He shrugged his shoulders; and then, after a moment's pause, said, "I confess myself quite unprepared for this show of affection, madame – "

"Not so, Alexis. It is for *you* I am concerned; for your honor as a gentleman; for your fair fame among men – "

"Pardon, madame, if I interrupt you; but the defence of my honor must be left to myself – "

"If I had but thought this of you – "

"It is never too late for repentance, madame. I should be sorry to think I could deceive you."

"Oh, it is too late, far too late!" cried she, bursting into tears. "Let us go! I must never see him again! I would not live over that last half-hour again to save me from a death of torture!"

"Allow me, then," said he, taking her shawl and draping it on her shoulders. "The carriage is ready;" and with these words, spoken with perfect calm, he presented his arm and led her from the room.

To return to Sir Dudley. On arriving at the Russian Embassy, he could learn nothing of the whereabouts of him he sought; a young secretary, however, with whom he had some intimacy, drawing him to one side, whispered, "Wait here a moment; I have a strange revelation to make you, – but in confidence, remember, for it must not get abroad." The story was this: Count Radchoffsky had been, on his recall from the Embassy, detected in some Polish intrigue, and ordered to absent himself from the capital and preserve a life of strict retirement, under police "surveillance;" from this, he had managed to escape and reach England, with forged credentials of Envoy Extraordinary; the mission being an invention of his own, to gain currency in the world and obtain for him loans of large sums from various houses in the "City." "As he knows," continued Broughton's informant, "from his former experience, the day of our courier's expected arrival, he has up to this lived fearlessly and openly; but the despatch having reached us through the French cabinet sooner than he expected, his plot is revealed. The great difficulty is to avoid all publicity; for we must have no magisterial interference, no newspaper or police notoriety; all must be done quietly, and he must be shipped off to Russia without a rumor of the affair getting abroad."

Broughton heard all this with the dogged satisfaction of a man who did not well know whether to be pleased or otherwise that an object of personal vengeance had been withdrawn from him.

But not accustomed to dwell long on any subject where the main interest of his own line of action was wanting, he drove home to his hotel to hasten the preparations for his departure. On his arrival at the Clarendon, a certain bustle and movement in the hall and on the stairs attracted his attention, and before he could inquire the cause, a half whisper, "There he is; that's Sir Dudley!" made him turn round; the same instant a heavy hand was laid on his shoulder, and a man said, "I arrest you, Sir Dudley Broughton, at the suit of Messrs. Worrit and Sneare, Lombard Street."

"Be calm; don't make any resistance," whispered Taperton in his ear; "come upstairs." They passed on, and entered the drawing-room, where everything appeared in disorder. As for Broughton, he was bewildered and stupefied by all he had gone through, and sat in a chair staring vacantly at the groups around him, evidently unable, through the haze of his disordered faculties, to see clearly how, and in what, he was interested in the affair.

"Where's my lady?" whispered Taperton to the valet, who stood almost as spell-bound as his master.

"Gone, sir; she's gone," said the man, in a faint voice.

"Gone where, scoundrel?" said Sir Dudley, jumping up and seizing him by the throat with both hands, while he roared out the words with a savage vehemence that startled all the room.

"Gone away, Sir Dudley," said the half-choking man; "I saw her drive off in a chaise and pair with Count Radchoffsky."

Broughton let go his hold, and fell heavily upon his face to the ground. A surgeon was called in, who at once perceived that the attack was one of apoplexy. For that night and part of the next day his recovery was almost hopeless; for, though repeatedly bled, he gave no signs of returning animation, but lay heaving, at intervals, long, heavy sighs, and respiring with an effort that seemed to shake the strong frame in convulsions.

Youth and bold remedies, however, favored him, and on the third morning he awoke, weak and weary, like one who had just reached convalescence after a long and terrible fever. His features, his gestures, his very voice, were all altered; there was a debility about him – mental and physical – that seemed like premature decay; and they who knew the bold, high-spirited man of a few days before could never have recognized him in the simple-looking, vacant, and purposeless invalid who sat there, to all seeming, neither noticing nor caring what happened around him. It is true, indeed, few essayed the comparison. Of those who visited him, the greater number were creditors curious to

speculate on his recovery; there were a couple of reporters, too, for gossiping newspapers desirous of coining a paragraph to amuse the town; but no friends, – not a man of those who dined, and drank, and drove, and played with him. In fact his fate was soon forgotten even in the very circles of which he had been the centre; nor did his name ever meet mention, save in some stale report of a bankruptcy examination, or a meeting of creditors to arrange for the liquidation of his debts.

The wasteful, heedless extravagance of his mode of living was urged even to vindictiveness by his creditors, so that for three years he remained a prisoner in the Fleet; and it was only when they saw he had no feeling of either shame or regret at his imprisonment that an arrangement was at last agreed to, and he was liberated, – set free to mix in a world in which he had not one tie to bind, or one interest to attach him!

From that hour forth none ever knew how far his memory retained the circumstances of his past life; he never certainly mentioned them to any of those with whom he formed companionship, nor did he renew acquaintance with one among his former friends. By great exertions on the part of his lawyers, almost a thousand a year was secured to him from the wreck of his great fortune, – the proceeds of a small estate that had belonged to his mother.

On this income he lived some time in total seclusion, when, to the astonishment of all, he was again seen about town, in company with men of the most equivocal character, – noted gamblers at hells, “Legs of Newmarket,” and others to whom report attributed bolder and more daring feats of iniquity. While it was a debated point among certain fashionables of the clubs how far he was to be recognized by them, he saved them all the difficulty, by passing his most intimate friends without a bow or the slightest sign of recognition. A stern, repulsive frown never left his features; and he whose frank, light-hearted buoyancy had been a proverb, was grave and silent, rarely admitting anything like an intimacy, and avoiding whatever could be called a friendship.

After a while he was missed from his accustomed haunts, and it was said that he had purchased a yacht and amused himself by sea excursions. Then there came a rumor of his being in the Carlist insurrection in Spain, – some said with a high command; and afterwards he was seen in a French voltigeur regiment serving in Africa. From all these varied accidents of life he came back to London, frequenting, as before, the same play resorts, and betting sums whose amount often trenched upon the limits of the bank. If, in his early life, he was a constant loser, now he invariably won; and he was actually the terror of hell-keepers, whose superstitious fears of certain “lucky ones” are a well-known portion of their creed.

As for himself, he seemed to take a kind of fiendish sport in following up this new turn of fortune. It was like a Nemesis on those who had worked his ruin. One man in particular, a well-known Jew money-lender of great wealth, he pursued with all the vindictive perseverance of revenge. He tracked him from London to Brighton, to Cheltenham, to Leamington, to Newmarket, to Goodwood; he followed him to Paris, to Brussels; wherever in any city the man opened a table for play, there was Broughton sure to be found.

At last, by way of eluding all pursuit, the Jew went over to Ireland, – a country where of all others fewest resources for his traffic presented themselves; and here again, despite change of name and every precaution of secrecy, Broughton traced him out; and, on the night when I first met him, he was on his return from a hell on the Quays where he had broken the bank and arisen a winner of above two thousand pounds.

The peculiar circumstances of that night’s adventure are easily told. He was followed from the play table by two men, witnesses of his good fortune, who saw that he carried the entire sum on his person; and from his manner, – a feint I found he often assumed, – they believed him to be drunk. A row was accordingly organized at the closing of the play, the lights were extinguished, and a terrible scene of tumult and outrage ensued, whose sole object was to rob Broughton of his winnings.

After a desperate struggle, in which he received the wound I have mentioned, he escaped by leaping from a window into the street, – a feat too daring for his assailants to imitate. The remainder

is already known; and I have only again to ask my reader's indulgent pardon for this long episode, without which, however, I felt I could not have asked his companionship on board the "Firefly."

CHAPTER X. THE VOYAGE OUT

The crew of the “Firefly” consisted of twelve persons, natives of almost as many countries. Indeed, to see them all muster on deck, it was like a little congress of European rascality, – such a set of hang-dog, sullen, reckless wretches were they; Halkett, the Englishman, being the only one whose features were not a criminal indictment, and he, with his nose split by the slash of a cutlass, was himself no beauty. The most atrocious of all, however, was a Moorish boy, about thirteen years of age, called El Jarasch (the fiend), and whose diabolical ugliness did not belie the family name. His functions on board were to feed and take care of two young lion whelps which Sir Dudley had brought with him from an excursion in the interior of Africa. Whether from his blood or the nature of his occupation, I know not, but I certainly could trace in his features all the terrible traits of the creatures he tended. The wide, distended nostrils, the bleared and bloodshot eyes, the large, full-lipped mouth, drawn back by the strong muscles at its angles, and the great swollen vessels of the forehead, were developed in him, as in the wild beasts. He imitated the animals, too, in all his gestures, which were sudden and abrupt; the very way he ate, tearing his food and rending it in fragments, like a prey, shewed the type he followed. His dress was handsome, almost gorgeous; a white tunic of thin muslin reached to the knees, over which he wore a scarlet cloth jacket, open, and without sleeves: this was curiously slashed and laced, by a wonderful tissue of gold thread so delicately traceried as to bear the most minute examination; a belt of burnished gold, like a succession of clasps, supported a small scimitar, whose scabbard of ivory and gold was of exquisite workmanship, the top of the handle being formed by a single emerald of purest color; his legs were bare, save at the ankles, where two rings of massive gold encircled them; on his feet he wore a kind of embroidered slippers, curiously studded with precious stones. A white turban of muslin, delicately sprigged with gold, covered his head, looped in front by another large emerald, which glared and sparkled like an eye in the centre of his forehead.

This was his gala costume; but his every-day one resembled it in everything, save the actual value of the material. Such was El Jarasch, who was to be my companion and my messmate, – a fact which seemed to afford small satisfaction to either of us.

Nothing could less resemble his splendor than the simplicity of my costume. Halkett, when ordered to “rig me out,” not knowing what precise place I was to occupy on board, proceeded to dress me from the kit of the sailor we had left behind in Dublin; and although, by rolling up the sleeves of my jacket, and performing the same office for the legs of my trousers, my hands and feet could be rendered available to me, no such ready method could prevent the clothes bagging around me in every absurd superfluity, and making me appear more like a stunted monster than a human being. Beside my splendidly costumed companion I made, indeed, but a sorry figure, nor was it long dubious that he himself thought so; the look of savage contempt he first bestowed on me, and then the gaze of ineffable pleasure he accorded to himself afterwards, having a wide interval between them. Neither did it improve my condition, in his eyes, that I could lay claim to no distinct duty on board. While I was ruminating on this fact, the morning after I joined the yacht, we were standing under easy sail, with a bright sky and a calm sea, the southeastern coast of Ireland on our lee; the heaving swell of the blue water, the fluttering bunting from gaff and peak, the joyous bounding motion, were all new and inspiriting sensations, and I was congratulating myself on the change a few hours had wrought in my fortune, when Halkett came to tell me that Sir Dudley wanted to speak with me in his cabin. He was lounging on a little sofa when I entered, in a loose kind of dressing-gown, and before him stood the materials of his yet untasted breakfast. The first effect of my appearance was a burst of laughter; and although there is nothing I have ever loved better to hear than a hearty laugh, his was not of a kind to inspire any very pleasant or mirthful sensations. It was a short, husky, barking noise, with derision and mockery in every cadence of it.

"What the devil have we here? Why, boy, you'd disgrace a stone lighter at Sheerness. Who rigged you in that fashion?"

"Mr. Halkett, sir."

"Halkett, if you please; I know no 'misters' among my crew. Well, this must be looked to; but Halkett might have known better than to send you here in such a guise."

I made no answer; and, apparently, for some minutes, he forgot all about me, and busied himself in a large chart which covered the table. At last he looked up; and then, after a second or two spent in recalling me to his recollection, said, "Oh, you 're the lad I took up last night; very true. I wanted to speak with you. What can you do, besides what I have seen; for I trust surgery is an art we shall seldom find use for, – can you cook?"

I was ashamed to say that I could boil potatoes and fry rashers, which were all my culinary gifts, and so I replied that "I could not."

"Have you never been in any service, or any kind of employment?"

"Never, sir."

"Always a vagabond?"

"Always, sir."

"Well, certes, I have the luck of it!" said he, with one of his low laughs. "It is, perhaps, all the better. Come, my boy, it does not seem quite clear to me what we can make of you; we have no time, nor, indeed, any patience, for making sailors of striplings, – we always prefer the ready-made article; but you must pick up what you can, keep your watches when on board, and when we go ashore anywhere, you shall be my scout; therefore don't throw away your old rags, but be ready to resume them when wanted, – you hear?"

"Yes, sir."

"So far! Now, the next thing is, – and it is right you should know it, – though I keep a yacht for my pleasure and amusement, I sometimes indulge myself in a little smuggling, – which is also a pleasure and amusement; and, therefore, my people are liable, if detected, to be sentenced to a smart term of imprisonment, – not that this has yet happened to any of them, but it may, you know; so it is only fair to warn you."

"I 'll take my chance with the rest, sir."

"Well said, boy! There are other little ventures, too, I sometimes make; but you 'd not understand them, so we need not refer to them. Now, as to the third point, – discipline. So long as you are on board, I expect obedience in everything; that you agree with your messmates, and never tell a lie. On shore, you may cut each other's throats to your heart's content. Remember, then; the lesson is easy enough: if you quarrel with your comrades, I 'll flog you; if you ever deceive me by an untruth, I'll blow your brains out!" The voice in which he spoke these last few words grew harsher and louder, and at the end it became almost a shout of angry denunciation.

"For your private governance, I may say, you'll find it wise to be good friends with Halkett, and, if you can, with Jarasch. Go now; I 've nothing more to say."

I was about to retire, when he called me back.

"Stay! you've said nothing to me, nor have I to you, about your wages."

"I want none, sir. It is enough for me if I am provided in all money could buy for me."

"No deceit, sir! No trickery with *me!*" cried he, fiercely, and he glared savagely at me.

"It is not deceit, nor trick either," said I, boldly; "but I see, sir, it is not likely you 'll ever trust one whom you saw in the humble condition you found me. Land me, then, at the first port you put in to. Leave me to follow out my fortune my own way."

"What if I take you at your word," said he, "and leave you among the red Moors, on the coast of Barbary?"

I hung my head in shame and dismay.

"Ay, or dropped you with the Tongo chiefs, who'd grill you for breakfast?"

"But we are nigh England now, sir."

"We shall not long be so," cried he, joyfully. "If this breeze last, you 'll see Cape Clear by sunrise, and not look on it again at sunset. There, away with you! Tell Halkett I desire that you should be mustered with the rest of the fellows, learn the use of a cutlass, and to load a pistol without blowing your fingers off."

He motioned me now to leave, and I withdrew, if I must own it, only partially pleased with my new servitude. One word here to explain my conduct, which perhaps in the eyes of some, may appear inconsistent or improbable. It may be deemed strange and incomprehensible why I, poor, friendless, and low-born, should have been indifferent, even to the refusal of all wages. The fact is this: I had set out upon my "life pilgrimage" with a most firm conviction that one day or other, sooner or later, I should be a "gentleman;" that I should mix on terms of equality with the best and the highest, not a trace or a clew to my former condition being in any respect discoverable. Now, with this one paramount object before me, all my endeavors were gradually to conform, so far as might be, all my modes of thought and action to that sphere wherein yet I should move; to learn, one by one, the usages of gentle blood, so that, when my hour came I should step into my position ready suited to all its requirements and equal to all its demands. If this explanation does not make clear the reasons of my generosity, and my other motives of honorable conduct, I am sorry for it, for I have none other to offer.

I have said that I retired from my interview with Sir Dudley not at all satisfied with the result. Indeed, as I pondered over it, I could not help feeling that gentlemen must dislike any traits of high and honorable motives in persons of my own station, as though they were assuming the air of their betters. What could rags have in common with generous impulses; how could poverty and hunger ever consort with high sentiments or noble aspirations? They forgive us, thought I, when we mimic their dress and pantomime their demeanor, because we only make *ourselves* ridiculous by the imitation; but when we would assume the features that regulate their own social intercourse, they hate us, as though we sullied with our impure touch the virtues of a higher class of beings.

The more I thought over this subject, the more strongly was I satisfied that I was correct in my judgment; and, sooth to say, the less did I respect that condition in life which could deem any man too poor to be high-minded.

Sir Dudley's anticipations were all correct. The following evening at sunset the great headlands of the south of Ireland were seen, at first clear, and at last like hazy fogbanks; while our light vessel scudded along, her prow pointing to where the sun had just set behind the horizon; and then did I learn that we were bound for North America.

Our voyage for some weeks was undistinguished by any feature of unusual character. The weather was uniformly fine; steady breezes from the northeast, with a clear sky and a calm sea, followed us as we went, so that, in the pleasant monotony of our lives, one day exactly resembled another. It will, therefore, suffice if, in a few words, I tell how the hours were passed. Sir Dudley came on deck after breakfast, when I spread out a large white bear's skin for him to lie upon; reclined on which, and with a huge meerschaum of great beauty in his hand, he smoked, and watched the lions at play. These gambols were always amusing, and never failed to assemble all the crew to witness them. Jarasch, dressed in a light woollen tunic, with legs, arms, and neck bare, led them forth by a chain; and, after presenting them to Sir Dudley, from whose hands they usually received a small piece of sugar, they were then set at liberty, – a privilege they soon availed themselves of, setting off at full speed around the deck, sometimes one in pursuit of the other, sometimes by different ways, crossing and recrossing each other; now with a bold spring, now with cat-like stealthiness, creeping slowly past. The exercise, far from fatiguing, seemed only to excite them more and more, since all this time they were in search of the food which Jarasch, with a cunning all his own, knew how, each day, to conceal in some new fashion. Baffled and irritated by delay, the eyes grew red and lustrous, the tails stiffened, and were either carried high over the back or extended straight backwards; they contracted

their necks too, till the muscles were gathered up in thick massive folds, and then their great heads seemed actually fastened on the fore part of the trunk. When their rage had been sufficiently whetted by delay, Jarasch would bring forth the mess in a large “grog tub,” covered with a massive lid, on which seating himself, and armed with a short stout bludgeon, he used to keep the beasts at bay. This, which was the most exciting part of the spectacle, presented every possible variety of combat. Sometimes he could hold them in check for nigh half-an-hour, sometimes the struggle would scarce last five minutes. Now, he would, by a successful stroke, so intimidate one of his assailants that he could devote all his energies against the other. Now, by a simultaneous attack, the savage creatures would spring upon and overthrow him, and then, with all the semblance of ungovernable passion, they would drag him some distance along the deck, mouthing him with frothy lips, and striking him about the head with their huge paws, from which they would not desist till some of the sailors, uncovering the mess, would tempt them off by the savor of the food. Although, in general, these games passed off with little other damage than a torn tunic or a bruise more or less severe, at others Jarasch would be so sorely mauled as to be carried off insensible; nor would he again be seen for the remainder of the day. That the combat was not quite devoid of peril was clear, by the fact that several of the sailors were always armed, some with staves, others with cutlasses, since, in the event of a bite, and blood flowing, nothing but immediate and prompt aid could save the boy from being devoured. This he knew well, and the exercises were always discontinued whenever the slightest cut, or even a scratch, existed in any part of his person. Each day seemed to heighten the excitement of these exhibitions; for, as Jarasch became more skilful in his defence, so did the whelps in the mode of attack; besides that, their growth advanced with incredible rapidity, and soon threatened to make the amusement no longer practicable. This display over, Sir Dudley played at chess with Halkett, while I, seated behind him, read aloud some book, – usually one of voyages and travels. In the afternoon he went below, and studied works in some foreign language of which he appeared most eager to acquire a knowledge, and I was then ordered to copy out into a book various extracts of different routes in all parts of the world: sometimes, the mode of crossing a Syrian desert; now the shortest and safest way through the wild regions on the shores of the Adriatic. At one time the theme would be the steppes of Tartary or the snowy plains of the Ukraine; at another, the dangerous passes of the Cordilleras or the hunting-grounds of the Mandaus. What delightful hours were these to me; how full of the very highest interest! The wildest adventures were here united with narratives of real events and people, presenting human life in aspects the strangest and most varied. How different from my old clerkship with my father, with the interminable string of bastard and broken law Latin! I believe that in all my after-life, fortunate as it has been in so many respects, I have never passed hours more happy than these were.

In recompense for my secretarial functions, I was free of the middle watch; so that, instead of turning into my berth at sundown to snatch some sleep before midnight, I could lounge about at will, – sometimes dropping into the steerage to listen to some seaman’s “yarn” of storm and shipwreck, but far oftener, book in hand, taking a lesson in French from the old cook, for which I paid him in being “aide-de-cuisine;” or, with more hardy industry, assisting our fat German mate to polish up his Regensburg pistols, by which I made some progress in that tongue of harsh and mysterious gutturals.

Through all these occupations the thought never left me, – what could be the object of Sir Dudley’s continued voyaging? No feature of pleasure was certainly associated with it; as little could it be attributed to the practice of smuggling, – the very seas he had longest cruised in forbade that notion. It must be, thought I, that other reason to which he so darkly alluded on the day he called me to his cabin; and what could that be? Never was ingenuity more tortured than mine by this ever-recurring question; since it is needless to tell the reader I was not then, nor indeed for a very long time afterwards, acquainted with those particulars of his history I have already jotted down. This intense curiosity of mine would doubtless have worn itself out at last, but for a slight circumstance occurring to keep it still alive within me. The little state-room in which I used to write lay at one side of the cabin, from which it was entered, – no other means of getting to it existing; a heavy silk

curtain supplied the place of a door between the two; and this, when four o'clock came, and my day's work was finished, was let down till the following morning, when it was drawn aside, that Sir Dudley, from time to time, might see, and, if needful, speak with me. Now, one day, when we had been about three weeks at sea, the weather being intensely hot and sultry, Sir Dudley had fallen asleep in his cabin while I sat writing away vigorously within. Suddenly, I heard a shout on deck: "The whales! a shoal of whales ahead!" and immediately the sudden scuffling of feet, and the heavy hum of voices, proclaimed the animation and interest the sight created. I strained myself to peep through the little one-paned window beside me, but all I could see was the great blue heaving ocean as, in majestic swell, it rolled along. Still the noise continued; and, by the number and tone of the speakers, I could detect that all the crew were on deck, – every one, in fact, save myself. What a disappointment! full as my mind was of every monster of land and water, burning to observe some of the wonderful things I had read so much about, and now destined actually to be denied a sight on which my comrades were then gazing! I could endure the thought no longer; and although my task was each morning allotted to me, and carefully examined the next day by Sir Dudley, I stepped lightly out on tiptoe, and letting fall the curtain so that if he awoke I should not be missed, I stole up the "companion," and reached the deck.

What a sight was there! the whole sea around us was in motion with the great monsters, who, in pursuit of a shoal of herrings, darted at speed through the blue water, – spouting, blowing, and tossing in all the wildest confusion; here, every eye was bent on a calm still spot in the water, where a whale had "sounded," that is, gone down quite straight into the depths of the sea; here, another was seen scarcely covered by the water, his monstrous head and back alternately dipping below or emerging above it; harpoons and tackle were sought out, firearms loaded, and every preparation for attack and capture made, but none dared to venture without orders, nor was any hardy enough to awake him and ask for them. Perhaps the very expectancy on our part increased the interest, for certainly the excitement of the scene was intense, – so much so that I actually forgot all about my task, and, without a thought of consequences, was hanging eagerly over the taffrail in full enjoyment of the wild scene, when the tinkle of the captain's bell startled me, and, to my horror, I remembered it was now his dinner hour, and that, for the rest of the day, no opportunity would offer of my reaching the state-room to finish my writing.

I was so terrified that I lost all interest in the spectacle, whereof, up to that time, my mind was full. It was my first delinquency, and had all the poignancy of a first fault. The severity I had seen practised on others for even slight infractions of duty was all before me, and I actually debated with myself whether it would not be better to jump overboard at once than meet the anger of Sir Dudley. With any one else, perhaps, I should have bethought me of some cunning lie to account for my absence; but he had warned me about trying to deceive him, and I well knew he could be as good as his word. I had no courage to tell any of the sailors my fault, and ask their advice; indeed, I anticipated what would be the result: some brutal jest over my misfortune, some coarse allusion to the fate they had often told me portended me, since "no younker had ever gone from land to land with Sir Dudley without tasting his hemp fritters." I sat down, therefore, beside the bowsprit, where none should see me, to commune alone with my grief, and, if I could, to summon up courage to meet my fate.

Night had closed in some time, and all was tranquil on board, when I saw Halkett, as was his custom, going aft to the cabin, where he always remained for an hour or more each evening. It was just then, I know not how the notion occurred, but it struck me that if I could lower myself over the side, I might be able to creep through the little window into the state-room, and carry away the paper to finish it before morning. I lost little time in setting about my plot; and having made fast a rope to one of the clews, I lowered myself fearlessly over the gunwale, and pushing open the little sash, which was unfastened, I soon managed to insert my head and shoulders, and, without any difficulty dragging my body slowly after, entered the state-room. So long as the danger of the enterprise and its difficulty lasted, so long my courage was high and my heart fearless; but when I sat down in the little

dark room, scarcely venturing to breathe, lest I should be overheard, almost afraid to touch the papers on the table, lest their rustling noise should betray me, how was this terror increased when I actually heard the voices of Sir Dudley and Halkett as plainly as though I were in the cabin beside them!

"And so, Halkett," said Sir Dudley, "you think this expedition will be as fruitless as the others?"

"I do, sir," said the other, in a low, dogged tone.

"And yet you were the very man who encouraged me to make it!"

"And what of that? Of two things, I thought it more likely that he should be the leader of a band to a regiment in Canada than be a Faquino on the Mole of Genoa. A fellow like him could scarcely fall so low as that."

"He shall fall lower, by Heaven, if I live!" said Sir Dudley, in a voice rendered guttural with deep passion.

"Take care you fall not with him, sir," said Halkett, in a tone of warning.

"And if I should, – for what else have I lived these three last years? In that pursuit have I perilled health and life, satisfied to lose both if I but succeed at last."

"And how do you mean to proceed? For, assuredly, if he be attached to the regiment at Kingstown, he 'll hear of you, from some source or other. You remember when we all but had him at Torlosk, and yet he heard of our coming before we got two posts from Warsaw; and again, at 'Forli,' we had scarce dropped anchor off Rimini when he was up and away."

"I 'll go more secretly to work this time, Halkett; hitherto I have been slow to think the fellow a coward. It is so hard to believe anything so base as a man bereft of every trait of virtue: now I see clearly that he is so. I 'll track him, not to offer him the chances of a duel, but to hunt him down as I would a wild beast. I 'll proceed up the river in the disguise of an itinerant merchant, – one of those pedler fellows of which this land is full, – taking the Irish dog along with me."

"Of whom, remember, you know nothing, sir," interposed Halkett.

"Nor need to know," said he, impatient at the interruption. "Let him play me false, let me only suspect that he means it, and my reckoning with him will be short. I have watched him closely of late, and I see the fellow's curiosity is excited about us: he is evidently on the alert to learn something of our object in this voyage; but the day he gains the knowledge, Tom, will be his last to enjoy it. It is a cheap process if we are at sea, – a dark night and an eighteen-pound shot! If on shore, I 'll readily find some one to take the trouble off my hands."

It may be imagined with what a sensation of terror I heard these words, feeling that my actual position at the moment would have decided my fate, if discovered; and yet, with all this, I could not stir, nor make an effort to leave the spot; a fascination to hear the remainder of the conversation had thoroughly bound me as by a spell; and in breathless anxiety I listened, as Sir Dudley resumed:

"You, with Heckenstein and the Greek, must follow, ready to assist me when I need your aid; for my plan is this: I mean to entice the fellow, on pretence of a pleasure excursion, a few miles from the town, into the bush, there to bind him hand and foot, and convey him, by the forest tracks, to the second 'portage,' where the batteaux are stationed, by one of which – these Canadian fellows are easily bribed – we shall drop down to Montreal. There the yacht shall be in waiting all ready for sea. Even without a wind, three days will bring us off the Island of Orleans, and as many more, if we be but fortunate, to the Gulf. The very worst that can happen is discovery and detection; and if that ensue, I 'll blow his brains out."

"And if we succeed in carrying him off, Sir Dudley, what then?"

"I have not made up my mind, Halkett, what I'll do. I 've thought of a hundred schemes of vengeance; but, confound it, I must be content with one only, though fifty deaths would not satisfy my hate."

"I'd put a bullet through his skull, or swing him from the yardarm, and make an end of it," said Halkett, roughly.

"Not I, faith! He shall live; and, if I can have my will, a long life too. His own government would take charge of him at 'Irkutsk,' for that matter, at the quicksilver mines; and they say the diseased bones, from the absorption of that poison, is a terrible punishment. But I have a better notion still. Do you remember that low island off the east shore of the Niger, where the negro fellows live in log huts, threshing the water all day to keep the caymans from the rice-grounds?"

"The devil!" exclaimed Halkett; "you'll not put him there?"

"I have thought of it very often," said Sir Dudley, calmly. "He 'd see his doom before him every day, and dream of it each night too. One cannot easily forget that horrid swamp, alive and moving with those reptiles! It was nigh two months ere I could fall asleep at night without starting up in terror at the thought of them." Sir Dudley arose as he said this, and walked the cabin with impatient steps; sometimes as he passed his arm would graze the curtain and shake its folds, and then my heart leaped to my mouth in very terror. At last, with an effort that I felt as the last chance of life, I secured the papers in my bosom, and, standing up on the seat, crept through the window, and, after a second's delay to adjust the rope, clambered up the side, and gained the deck unobserved. It could not have been real fatigue, for there was little or no exertion in the feat; but yet such was my state of exhaustion that I crept over to the boat that was fastened midships, and, lying down in her, on a coil of cable, slept soundly till morning. If my boyish experiences had familiarized my mind with schemes of vengeance as terrible as ever fiction fabricated, I had yet to learn that "gentlemen" cherished such feelings; and I own the discovery gave me a tremendous shock. That some awful debt of injury was on Sir Dudley's mind was clear enough, and that I was to be, in some capacity or other, an aid to him in acquitting it, was a fact I was more convinced of than pleased at. Neither did I fancy his notions of summary justice, – perhaps it was my legal education had prejudiced me in favor of more formal proceedings; but I saw with a most constitutional horror the function of justice, jury, and executioner in the hands of one single individual.

So impressed was I with these thoughts that had I not been on the high seas, I should inevitably have run for it. Alas, however, the banks of Newfoundland – which, after all I had heard mentioned on our voyage, I imagined to be grassy slopes glittering with daisies, and yellow with daffodils – are but sand heaps some two hundred fathoms down in "the ocean blue;" and all one ever knows of them is the small geological specimens brought up on the tallowed end of the deep-sea lead. Escape, therefore, was for the present out of the question; but the steady determination to attempt it was spared me by a circumstance that occurred about a week later.

After some days of calm, common enough in these latitudes, a slight but steady breeze set in from the northeast, which bore us up the Gulf with easy sail till we came in sight of the long, low island of Anticosti, which, like some gigantic monster, raises its dark, misshapen beach above the water. Not the slightest trace of foliage or verdure to give it a semblance to the aspect of land. Two dreary-looking log-houses, about eighteen miles apart, remind one that a refuge for the shipwrecked is deemed necessary in this dangerous channel; but, except these, not a trace exists to show that the foot of man had trod that dreary spot.

The cook's galley is sure to have its share of horrors when a ship "lies to" near this gloomy shore; scarcely a crew exists where some one belonging to it has not had a messmate wrecked there; and then, the dreadful narratives of starvation, and strife, and murders, were too fearful to dwell on. Among the horrors recorded on every hand all agreed in speaking of a terrible character who had never quitted the island for upwards of forty years. He was a sailor who had committed a murder under circumstances of great atrocity, and dared not revisit the mainland, for fear of the penalty of his guilt. Few had ever seen him; for years back, indeed, he had not been met with at all, and rumor said that he was dead. Still, no trace of his body could be found, and some inclined to the opinion that he might at last have made his escape.

He was a negro, and was described as possessing the strength of three or four men; and although the proverbial exaggeration of sailors might, and very probably did, color these narratives, the sad

fate of more than one party who had set out to capture him, gave the stories a terrible air of truth. The fear of him was such that although very liberal terms had been offered to induce men to take up their abode in the island to succor the crews of wrecked vessels, none could be found to accept the post; and even at the period when I visited these seas, and after a long lapse of years since the Black Boatswain had been seen, no one would venture.

The story went that his ghost still wandered there, and that at night, when the storm was high, and the waves of the Gulf sent the spray over that low and dreary island, his cries could be heard, calling aloud to "shorten sail," to "brace round the yards, close the hatchways," mingled with blasphemies that made the very hair stand on end.

If the reader, armed with the triple mail of incredulity, so snugly ensconced in his easy-chair, before a sea-coal fire, can afford to scoff at such perils, not so did I, as I sat in a corner of the galley, gathering with greedy ears the horrors that fell on every side, and now and then stealing out to cast a glance over the bulwarks at the long low bank of sand, which seemed more like an exhalation from the water than a solid mass of rock and shingle.

I have said that a feeling of rivalry existed between the Moorish boy, El Jarasch, and myself; and although I endured the scoffs and sneers at first with a humility my own humble garb and anomalous position enforced, I soon began to feel more confidence in myself, and that species of assurance a becoming dress seems somehow to inspire; for I was now attired like the rest of the crew, and wore the name of the yacht in gold letters on my cap, as well as on the breast of my waistcoat.

The hatred of El Jarasch increased with every day, and mutual scoffs and gibes were the only intercourse between us. More than once, Halkett, who had always befriended me, warned me of the boy, and said that his Moorish blood was sure to make his vengeance felt; but I only laughed at his caution, and avowed myself ready to confront him when and however he pleased. Generosity was little wasted on either side, so that when one day, in a fierce encounter with the lions, El Jarasch received a fall which broke one of his ribs, and was carried in a state of insensibility to his berth, I neither pitied him nor regretted his misfortune. I affected even to say that his own cowardice had rendered the creatures more daring, and that had he preserved a bolder front the mischance would have never occurred. These vauntings of mine, coupled with an avowed willingness to take his place, came to Sir Dudley's ears on the third evening after the accident, and he immediately sent for me to his cabin.

"Is it true, sirrah," said he, in a harsh, unpleasant voice, "that you have been jesting about Jarasch, and saying that you were ready to take charge of the whelps in his stead?"

"It is," said I, answering both questions together.

"You shall do so to-morrow, then," replied he, solemnly; "take care that you can do something as well as boast!" and with this he motioned me to leave the cabin.

I at once repaired to the steerage to report my interview to the men, who were all more friendly with me than with the "Moor." Many were the counsels I received about how I should conduct myself the next morning; some asserting that, as it was my first time, I could not be too gentle with the animals, avoiding the slightest risk of hurting them, and even suffering their rough play without any effort to check it. Others, on the contrary, advised me at once to seek the mastery over the beasts, and by two or three severe lessons to teach them caution, if not respect. This counsel, I own, chimed in with my own notions, and also better accorded with what, after my late vauntings, I felt to be my duty.

It was altogether a very anxious night with me, not exactly through fear, because I knew, as the men were always ready with their arms loaded, life could not be perilled, and I did not dread the infliction of a mere sprain or fracture; but I felt it was an ordeal wherein my fame was at stake. Were I to acquit myself well, there would be an end forever of those insulting airs of superiority the Moorish boy had assumed towards me. Whereas if I failed, I must consent to bear his taunts and sarcasms without a murmur.

In one point only the advice of all the crew agreed, which was, that the female cub, much larger and more ferocious than the male, should more particularly demand my watchfulness. "If she scratch

you, boy, mind that you desist," said an old Danish sailor, who had been long on the African coast. This caution was re-echoed by all; and, resolving to follow its dictates, I "turned in" to my hammock, to dream of combats and battles till morning.

I was early astir, – waking with a sudden start. I had been dreaming of a lion-hunt, and fancied I heard the deep-mouthed roaring of the beasts in a jungle; and, true enough, a low, monotonous howl came from the place where the animals lay, for it was now the fourth morning of their being confined without having been once at liberty.

I had just completed my dressing, – the costume was simply a short pair of loose trousers, hands, arms, and feet bare, and a small Fez cap on my head, – when Halkett came down to me to say that he had been speaking to Sir Dudley about the matter, and that as I had never yet accustomed myself to the whelps, it was better that I should not begin the acquaintance after they had been four days in durance. "At the same time," added Halkett, "he gives you the choice; you can venture if you please."

"I've made up my mind," said I. "I'm sure I'm able for anything the black fellow can do."

"My advice to you, boy," said he, "is to leave them alone. Those Moorish chaps are the creatures' countrymen, and have almost the same kind of natures, – they are stealthy, treacherous, and cruel. They never trust anything, man or beast!"

"No matter," said I. "I'm as strong as he is, and my courage is not less."

"If you will have it so, I have nothing to say, – indeed, I promised Sir Dudley I'd give you no advice one way or other; so now get the staff from Jarasch, and come on deck."

The staff was a short thick truncheon of oak, tipped with brass at each end, and the only weapon ever used by the boy in his encounters.

"So you're going to take my place!" said the black fellow, while his dark eyes were lighted up like coals of fire, and his white teeth glanced between his purple lips. "Don't hurt my poor pet cubs; be gentle with them."

"Where's the staff?" said I, not liking the tone in which he spoke, or well knowing if he affected earnest or jest.

"There it is," said he; "but your white hands will be enough without that. You'll not need the weapon the coward used!" and as he spoke, a kind of shuddering convulsion shook his frame from head to foot.

"Come, come," said I, stretching out my hand, "I ought not to have called you a coward, Jarasch, – that you are not! I ask you to forgive me; will you?"

He never spoke, but nestled lower down in the hammock, so that I could not even see his face.

"There, they 're calling me already. I must be off! Let us shake hands and be friends this time at least. When you're well and up, we can fight it out about something else!"

"Kiss me, then," said he; and though I had no fancy for the embrace, or the tone it was asked in, I leaned over the hammock, and while he placed one arm round my neck, and drew me towards him, I kissed his forehead, and he mine, in true Moorish fashion; and not sorry to have made my peace with my only enemy, I stepped up the ladder with a light heart and a firm courage.

I little knew what need I had for both! When Jarasch had put his arm around my neck, I did not know that he had inserted his hand beneath the collar of my shirt, and drawn a long streak of blood from his own vein across my back between my shoulders. When I arrived on deck, it was to receive the congratulations of the crew, who were all struck with my muscular arms and legs, and who unanimously pronounced that I was far fitter to exercise the whelps than was the Moor.

Sir Dudley said nothing. A short nod greeted me as I came towards him, and then he waved me back with his hand, – a motion which, having something contemptuous in it, pained me acutely at the moment. I had not much time, however, to indulge such feelings. The whelps were already on deck, and springing madly at the wooden bars of their cage for liberty. Eager as themselves, I hastened to unbolt the door and set them free.

No sooner were they at large than they set off down one side of the deck and up the other, careering at full speed, clearing with a bound whatever stood in their way; and when by any chance meeting each other, stopping for an instant to stare with glaring eyes and swelling nostrils; and then, either passing stealthily and warily past, or one would crouch while the other cleared him at a spring, and so off again. In all this I had no part to play. I could neither call them back, like Jarasch, whose voice they knew, nor had I his dexterity in catching them as they went, and throwing all manner of gambols over and upon them, as he did.

I felt this poignantly, the more as I saw, or thought I saw, Sir Dudley's eyes upon me more than once, with an expression of disdainful pity. At last, the great tub which contained the creatures' food was wheeled forward; and no sooner had the men retired than the quick-scented animals were on the spot, – so rapidly, indeed, that I had barely time to seat myself, cross-legged, on the lid, when they approached, and with stately step walked round the vessel, staring as it were in surprise at the new figure who disputed their meal with them.

At last, the male placed one paw on the lid, and with the other tapped me twice or thrice on the shoulder with the kind of gentle, pattering blow a cat will sometimes use with a mouse. It was a sort of mild admonition to "leave that," nothing of hostility whatever being announced.

I replied by imitating the gesture, so far as a half-closed fist would permit, and struck him on the side of the head. He looked grave at this treatment, and, slowly descending from his place, he lay down about a yard off. Meanwhile the female, who had been smelling and sniffing round and round the tub, made an effort to lift the lid with her head, and, failing, began to strike it in sharp, short blows with her paw; the excitement of her face, and the sturdy position of her hind legs, showing that her temper was chafed at the delay. To increase her rage, I pushed the lid a few inches back; and as the savory steam arose, the creature grew more eager, and at last attracted the other to the spot.

It was quite clear that hunger was the passion uppermost with them, and that they had not yet connected me with the cause of their disappointment; for they labored by twenty devices to insert a paw or to smash the lid, but never noticed me in the least. Wearied of my failures to induce them to play, and angry at the indifference they manifested to me, I sprang from the lid, and, lifting it from the tub, flung it back. In an instant they had each their heads in the mess; the female had even her great paw in the midst of the tub, and was eating away with that low, gurgling growl peculiar to the wild beast.

Dashing right between them, I seized one by the throat with both hands, and hurled him back upon the deck. A shout of "Bravo!" burst from the crew at the boldness of the feat, and with a bound the fellow made at me. I dropped suddenly on one knee as he came, and struck him with the staff on the fore legs. Had he been shot, he could not have fallen more rapidly; down he went, like a dead mass, on the deck. To spring on his back and hold him fast down was the work of a second, while I belabored him about the head with my fists.

The stunning effect of his first fall gave me the victory for a moment, but he soon rallied, and attacked me boldly. It was now a fair fight; for if I sometimes succeeded in making him shake his huge head or drop his paw with pain, more than once he staggered me with a blow which, had it been only quickly followed, would soon have decided the struggle. At last, after a scuffle in which he had nearly vanquished me, he made a leap at my throat. I put in a blow of such power with the staff on the forehead that he gave a loud roar of pain, and, with drooping tail, slunk to hide away himself beneath a boat.

Up to this moment the female had never stirred from the mess of food, but continued eating and snarling as though every mouthful was a battle. Scarcely, however, had the roar of the other cub been heard than she lifted her head, and, slowly turning round, stared at me with an expression which, even now, my dreams will recall.

I had not yet recovered from the exhaustion of my late encounter, and was half sitting, half kneeling on the deck, as the whelp stood glowering at me, with every vein in her vast forehead swollen,

and her large, red eyes seeming to dilate as she looked. The attitude of the creature must have been striking, for the crew cheered with a heartiness that showed how much they admired her.

So long as I sat unmoved she never stirred; but when I prepared to arise, she gave one bound, and, striking me with her head, hurled me back upon the deck: her own impulse had carried her clean over me, and when she returned, I was already up, on my knees, and better prepared to receive her. Again she tried the same manoeuvre; but this time I leaped to my feet, and, springing on one side, struck her a heavy blow on the top of the head. Twice or thrice the same attack, with the same result, followed; and at each blow a gallant cheer from the men gave me fresh courage.

The beast was now excited to a dreadful degree; but her very passion favored me, for her assaults were wilder and less circumspect than at first. At length, just as I was again making the side leap by which I had escaped, my foot slipped, and I fell. I was scarcely down ere she was upon me, not, as before, to strike with her paws, but with a rude shock she threw herself across me, as if to crush me by her weight; while her huge head and terrific mouth, frothy and steaming, lay within a few inches of my face.

Halkett and two others advanced to my rescue; but I bade them go back and leave me to myself, for I was only wearied, not conquered. For some minutes we lay thus; when at length, having recovered strength once more, I grasped the whelp's throat with both hands, and then by a tremendous effort threw her back, and rolled myself uppermost. She soon shook herself free, however, and turned upon me: I was now on my knees, and with the staff I dealt her a fierce blow on the leg. A terrific howl followed, and she closed with me in full fury. Seizing my shirt, she tore it away from my breast, and with her paw upon the fragment, ripped it in a hundred pieces. I endeavored to catch her by the throat once more, but failed, and rolled over on my face, and in doing so, disclosed the bloody streak between my shoulders; she saw it, and at the same instant sprang on me. I felt her teeth as they met in my neck, while her terrible cry, the most appalling ears ever heard, rang through my brain.

"Save him! Save him! She's killing him!" were now heard on every side; but none dared to fire for fear of wounding me, and the terrible rage of the animal deterred all from approaching her. The struggle was now a life-and-death one; and alternately falling and rolling, we fought – I cannot tell how, for the blood blinded me as it came from a wound in my forehead; and I only felt one firm purpose in my heart: "If I fall, she shall not survive me." Several of the sailors came near enough to strike her with their cutlasses; but these wounds only increased her rage, and I cried to them to desist.

"Shoot her! put a bullet through her!" cried Halkett. "Let none dare to shoot her!" cried Sir Dudley, loudly. I just heard these words, as, after a fierce struggle, in which she had seized me by the shoulder, I fell against the bulwark. With a last effort I staggered to my knees, flung open the gangway, and then, with an exertion that to myself seemed my very last on earth, I seized her by the throat and hurled her backwards into the sea. On hands and knees I leaned forward to see her as the rapid Gulf-stream, hurrying onward to the ocean, bore her away; and then, as my sight grew fainter, I fell back upon the deck, and believed I was dying.

CHAPTER XI. MEANS AND MEDITATIONS

It was the second evening after my lion adventure, and I was stretched in my hammock in a low, half-torpid state, not a limb nor a joint in all my body that had not its own peculiar pain; while a sharp wound in my neck, and another still deeper one in the fleshy part of my shoulder, had just begun that process called "union," – one which, I am bound to say, however satisfactory in result, is often very painful in its progress. The slightest change of position gave me intolerable anguish, as I lay, with closed eyes and crossed hands, not a bad resemblance of those stone saints one sees upon old tombstones.

My faculties were clear and acute, so that, having abundant leisure for the occupation, I had nothing better to do than take a brief retrospect of my late life. Such reviews are rarely satisfactory, or rather, one rarely thinks of making them when the "score of the past" is in our favor. Up to this moment it was clear I had gained little but experience; I had started light, and I had acquired nothing, save a somewhat worse opinion of the world and a greater degree of confidence in myself. I had but one way of balancing my account with Fortune, which was by asking myself, "Would I undo the past, if in my power? Would I wish once more to be back in my 'father's mud edifice,' now digging a drain, now drawing an indictment, – a kind of pastoral pettifogger, with one foot in a potato furrow, and the other in petty sessions?" I stoutly said, "No!" a thousand times "no!" to this question.

I could not ask myself as to my preference for a university career, for my college life had concluded abruptly, in spite of me; but still, during my town experiences I saw enough to leave me no regrets at having quitted the muses. The life of a "skip," as the Trinity men have it, —*vice* gyp., for the Greek word signifying a "vulture," – is only removed by a thin sheet of silver paper from that of a cabin boy in a collier; copious pummelling and short prog being the first two articles of your warrant; while in some respects the marine has a natural advantage over him on shore. A skip is invariably expected to invent lies "at discretion" for his master's benefit, and is always thrashed when they are either discovered or turn out adverse. On this point his education is perfectly "Spartan;" but, unhappily too, he is expected to be a perfect mirror of truth on all other occasions. This is somewhat hard, inasmuch as it is only in a man's graduate course that he learns to defend a paradox, and support by good reasons what he knows to be false.

Again a "skip" never receives clothes, but is flogged at least once a week for disorders in his dress, and for general untidiness of appearance; this, too, is hard, since he has as little intercourse with soap as he has with conic sections.

Thirdly, a good skip invariably obtains credit for his master at "Foles's" chop-house; while, in his own proper capacity, he would not get trust for a cheese-paring.

Fourthly, a skip is supposed to be born a valet, as some are born poets, – to have an instinctive aptitude for all the details of things he has never seen or heard of before; so that when he applies Warren's patent to French leather boots, polishes silver with a Bath brick, blows the fire with a quarto, and cuts candles with a razor, he finds it passing strange that he should be "had up" for punishment. To be fat without food, to be warm without fire, to be wakeful without sleep, to be clad without clothes, to be known as a vagabond, and to pass current for unblemished honesty, to be praised as a liar, and then thrashed for lying, – is too much to expect at fifteen years of age.

Lastly, as to Betty's I had no regrets. The occupation of horse-boy, like the profession of physic, has no "avenir." The utmost the most aspiring can promise to himself is to hold more horses than his neighbors, as the Doctor's success is to order more "senna." There is nothing beyond these; no higher path opens to him who feels the necessity for an "upward course." It is a ladder with but one round to it! No, no; I was right to "sell out" there.

My steeplechase might have led to something, – that is, I might have become a jockey; but then, again, one's light weight, like a "contralto" voice, is sure to vanish after a year or two; and then,

from the heyday of popularity, you sink down into a bad groom or a fourth-rate tenor, just as if, after reaching a silk gown at the bar, a man had to begin life again as crier in the Exchequer! Besides, in all these various walks I should have had the worst of all "trammels," a patron. Now, if any resolve had thoroughly fixed itself in my mind, it was this: never to have a patron, never to be bound to any man who, because he had once set you on your legs, should regulate the pace you were to walk through a long life. To do this, one should be born without a particle of manhood's spirit, – absolutely without volition; otherwise you go through life a living lie, talking sentiments that are not yours, and wearing a livery in your heart as well as on your back!

Why do we hear such tirades about the ingratitude of men, who, being once assisted by others, – their inferiors in everything save gold, – soar above the low routine of toadyism, and rise into personal independence? Let us remember that the contract was never a fair one, and that a whole life's degradation is a heavy sum to pay for a dinner with his Grace, or a cup of tea with her Highness. "My Lord," I am aware, thinks differently; and it is one of the very pleasant delusions of his high station to fancy that little folk are dependent upon him, – what consequence they obtain among their fellows by his recognition in public, or by his most careless nod in the street. But "my Lord" does not know that this is a paper currency that represents no capital, that it is not convertible at will, and is never a legal tender; and consequently, as a requital for actual *bona fide* services, is about as honest a payment as a flash note.

It was no breach of my principle that I accepted Sir Dudley's offer. Our acquaintance began by my rendering him a service; and I was as free to leave him that hour, and, I own, as ready to do so, if occasion permitted, as he could be to get rid of me; and it was not long before the occasion presented itself for exercising these views.

As I lay thus, ruminating on my past fortunes, Halkett descended the steerage-ladder, followed by Felborg, the Dane; and, approaching my hammock, held a light to my face for a few seconds. "Still asleep?" said Halkett. "Poor boy! he has never awoke since I dressed his wound this morning. I 'm sure it's better; so let us leave him so."

"Ay, ay," said the Dane, "let him sleep; bad tidings come soon enough, without one's being awoke to hear them. But do you think he 'll do it?" added he, with lower and more anxious tone.

"He has said so; and I never knew him fail in his promise when it was a cruel one."

"Have you no influence over him, Halkett? Could you not speak for the boy?"

"I have done all I could, – more than perhaps it was safe to do. I told him I could n't answer for the men, if he were to shoot him on board; and he replied to me short, 'I 'll take the fellow ashore with me alone; neither you nor they have any right to question what you are not to witness.'"

"Well, when I get back to Elsinore, it's to a prison and heavy irons I shall go for life, that's certain; but I 'd face it all rather than live the life we've done now for twenty months past."

"Hush! speak low!" said the other. "I suppose others are weary of it as well as you. Many a man has to live a bad life just because he started badly."

"I 'm sorry for the boy!" sighed the Dane; "he was a bold and fearless fellow."

"I am sorry for him too. It was an evil day for him when he joined us. Well, well, what would he have become if he had lived a year or two on board!"

"He has no father nor mother," said the Dane, "that's something. I lost mine, too, when I was nine years old; and it made me the reckless devil I became ever after. I was n't sixteen when the crew of the 'Tre-Kroner' mutinied, and I led the party that cut down the first lieutenant. It was a moonlight night, just as it might be now, in the middle watch, and Lieutenant Oeldenstrom was sitting aft, near the wheel, humming a tune. I walked aft, with my cutlass in one hand, and a pistol in the other; but just as I stepped up the quarter-deck my foot slipped, and the cutlass fell with a clank on the deck.

"'What's that?' cried the lieutenant.

"'Felborg, sir, mate of the watch,' said I, standing fast where I was. 'It's shoaling fast ahead, sir.'

"'D – n!' said he, 'what a coast!'

"'Could n't you say a bit of something better than that?' said I, getting nearer to him slowly.

"'What do you mean?' said he, jumping up angrily; but he was scarce on his legs when he was down again at his full length on the plank, with a bullet through his brain, never to move again!"

"There, there, avast with that tale; you've told it to me every night that my heart was heavy this twelvemonth past. But I 've hit on a way to save the lad, – will you help me?"

"Ay, if my help does n't bring bad luck on him; it always has on every one I befriended since – since – "

"Never mind that. There 's no risk here, nor much room for luck, good or bad." He paused a second or two, then added, —

"I 'm thinking we can't do better than shove him ashore on the island yonder."

"On Anticosti!" said Felborg, with a shudder.

"Ay, why not? There's always a store of biscuit and fresh water in the log-houses, and the cruisers touch there every six or seven weeks to take people off. He has but to hoist the flag to show he 's there."

"There's no one there now," said the Dane.

"No. I saw the flag-staff bare yesterday; but what does that matter? A few days or a few weeks alone are better than what's in store for him here."

"I don't think so. No! Beym alia Deyvelm! I 'd stand the bullet at three paces, but I 'd not meet that negro chap alone."

"Oh, he's dead and gone this many a year," said Halkett. "When the 'Rodney' transport was wrecked there, two years last fall, they searched the island from end to end, and could n't find a trace of him. They were seven weeks there, and it's pretty clear if he were alive – "

"Ay, just so, – if he were alive!"

"Nonsense, man! You don't believe those yarns they get up to frighten the boys in the cook's galley?"

"It's scarce mercy, to my reckoning," said Felborg, "to take the lad from a quick and short fate, and leave him yonder; but if you need my help, you shall have it."

"That's enough," said Halkett; "go on deck, and look after the boat. None of our fellows will betray us; and in the morning we 'll tell Sir Dudley that he threw himself overboard in the night, in a fit of frenzy. He'll care little whether it's true or false."

"I say, Con – Con, my lad," said Halkett, as soon as the other had mounted the ladder. "Wake up, my boy; I've something to tell you."

"I know it," said I, wishing to spare time, which I thought might be precious; "I've been dreaming all about it."

"Poor fellow, his mind is wandering," muttered Halkett to himself. "Come, my lad, try and put on your clothes, – here's your jacket;" and with that he lifted me from my hammock, and began to help me to dress.

"I was dreaming, Halkett," said I, "that Sir Dudley sent me adrift in the punt, and fired at me with the swivel, but that you rowed out and saved me."

"That's just it!" said Halkett, with an energy that showed how the supposed dream imposed upon him.

"You put me ashore on Anticosti, Halkett," said I; "but wasn't that cruel! – the Black Boatswain is there."

"Never fear the Black Boatswain, my lad, he 's dead years ago; and it strikes me you 'll steer a course in life where old wives' tales never laid down the soundings."

"I can always be brave when I want it, Halkett," said I, letting out a bit of my peculiar philosophy; but I saw he didn't understand my speech, and I went on with my dressing in silence.

Halkett meanwhile continued to give me advice about the island, and the log-houses, and the signal-ensign; in fact, about all that could possibly concern my safety and speedy escape, concluding

with a warning to me, never to divulge that anything but a mere accident had been the occasion of my being cast away. “This for your own sake and for mine too, Con,” said he; “for one day or other he,” – he pointed to the after-cabin, – “he’d know it, and then it would fare badly with some of us.”

“Why not come too, Halkett?” said I; “this life is as hateful to you as to myself.”

“Hush, boy; no more of that,” said he, with a degree of emotion which I had never witnessed in him before. “Make yourself warm and snug, for you mustn’t take any spare clothes, or you ‘d be suspected by whoever takes you off the island; here’s my brandy-flask and a tinder-box; that’s a small bag of biscuit, – for you ‘ll take six or seven hours to reach the log-house, – and here is a pistol, with some powder and ball. Come along, now, or shall I carry you up the ladder?”

“No, I’m able enough now,” said I, making an effort to seem free from pain while I stepped up on deck.

I was not prepared for the affectionate leave-taking which met me here; each of the crew shook my hand twice or thrice over, and there was not one did not press upon me some little gift in token of remembrance.

At last the boat was lowered, and Halkett and three others, descending noiselessly, motioned to me to follow. I stepped boldly over the side, and, waving a last good-bye to those above, sat down in the stern to steer, as I was directed.

It was a calm night, with nothing of a sea, save that rolling heave ever present in the Gulf-stream; and now the men stretched to their oars, and we darted swiftly on, not a word breaking the deep stillness.

Although the island lay within six miles, we could see nothing of it against the sky, for the highest point is little more than twelve feet above the water-level.

I have said that nothing was spoken as we rowed along over the dark and swelling water; but this silence did not impress me till I saw ahead of us the long low outline of the dreary island shutting out the horizon; then a sensation of sickening despair came over me. Was I to linger out a few short hours of life on that melancholy spot, and die at last exhausted and broken-hearted? “Was this to be the end of the brilliant dream I had so often revelled in?” “Ah, Con!” said I, “to play the game of life, a man must have capital to stand its losses, – its runs of evil fortune; but you are ruined with one bad deal!”

“Run her in here, in this creek!” cried Halkett to the men; and the boat glided into a little bay of still water under the lee of the land, and then, after about twenty minutes’ stout rowing, her keel grated on the rugged, shingly shore of Anticosti.

“We cannot land you dry-shod, Con,” said Halkett; “it shoals for some distance here.”

“No matter,” said I, trying to affect an easy, jocular air, my choking throat and swelling heart made far from easy; “for me to think of wet feet would be like the felon at the drop blowing the froth off the porter because it was unwholesome!”

“I ‘ve better hopes of you than that comes to, lad!” said he; “but good-bye! good-bye!” He shook my hand with a grasp like a vice, and sat down with his back towards me; the others took a kind farewell of me; and then, shouldering my little bag of biscuit, I pressed my cap down over my eyes, and stepped into the surf. It was scarcely more than over mid-leg, but the clay-like, spongy bottom made it tiresome walking. I had only gone a few hundred yards, when a loud cheer struck me; I turned: it was the boat’s crew, giving me a parting salute. I tried to answer it, but my voice failed me; the next moment they had turned the point, and I saw them no more!

I now plodded wearily on, and in about half an hour reached the land; and whether from weariness, or some strange instinct of security on touching shore, I know not, but I threw myself heavily down upon the shingly stones, and slept soundly, – ay, and dreamed too! dreamed of fair lands far away, such as I have often read of in books of travels, where bright flowers and delicious fruits were growing, and where birds and insects of gaudiest colors floated past with a sweet murmuring song that made the air tremble.

Who has not read “Robinson Crusoe;” and who has not imagined himself combating with some of the difficulties of his fortune, and pictured to his mind what his conduct might have been under this or that emergency?

No speculations are pleasanter, when indulged at our own fireside, in an easy-chair, after having solaced our “material” nature by a good dinner, and satisfied the “moral” man by the “City Article,” which assures us that the Three per Cents are rising, and that Consols for the Account are in a very prosperous state. Then, indeed, if our thoughts by any accident stray to the shipwrecked sailor, they are blended with a wholesome philanthropy, born of good digestion and fair worldly prospects; we assure ourselves that we should have made precisely the same exertions that he did, and comported ourselves in all the varied walks of carpenter, tailor, hosier, sail-maker, and boat-builder exactly like him. The chances are, too, that if accidentally out of temper with our neighbors, we cordially acknowledge that the retirement was not the worst feature in his history; and if provoked by John Thomas, the footman, we are ready to swear that there was more gratitude in Friday’s little black finger than in the whole body corporate of flunkeys, from Richmond to Blackwall.

While these very laudable sentiments are easy enough in the circumstances I have mentioned, they are marvellously difficult to practise at the touch of stern reality. At least I found them so, as I set out to seek the “Refuge” on Anticosti. It was just daybreak as, somewhat stiffened with a sleep on the cold beach, and sore from my recent bruises, I began my march. “Nor’-west and by west” was Halkett’s vague direction to me; but as I had no compass, I was left to the guidance of the rising sun for the cardinal points. Not a path nor track of any kind was to be seen; indeed, the surface could scarcely have borne traces of footsteps, for it was one uniform mass of slaty shingle, with here and there the backbone of a fish, and scattered fragments of seaweed, washed up by the storms, on this low bleak shore. I cannot fancy desolation more perfect than this dreary spot; slightly undulating, but never sufficient to lose sight of the sea; not a particle of shelter to be found; not a rock, nor even a stone large enough to sit upon when weary. Of vegetation, no trace could be met with; even a patch of moss or a lichen would have been a blessing to see; but there were neither. At last, as I journeyed on, I wandered beyond the sound of the sea as it broke upon the low strand, and then the silence became actually appalling. But a few moments back, and the loud booming of the breakers stunned the ear; and now, as I stopped to listen, I could hear my own heart as in full, thick beat it smote against my ribs. I could not dismiss the impression that such a stillness, thus terrible, would prevail on the day of judgment, when, after the graves had given up their millions of dead, and the agonizing cry for mercy had died away, then, as in a moment of dread suspense, the air would be motionless, not a leaf to stir, not a wing to cleave it. Such possession of me did this notion take that I fell upon my knees and sobbed aloud, while, with trembling and uplifted hands, I prayed that I too might be pardoned.

So powerful is the influence of a devotional feeling, no matter how associated with error, how alloyed by the dross of superstition, that I, who but an instant back could scarcely drag my wearied limbs along for very despair, became of a sudden trustful and courageous. Life seemed no longer the worthless thing it did a few minutes before; on the contrary, I was ready to dare anything to preserve it; and so, with renewed vigor I again set forward.

At each little swell of the ground, I gazed eagerly about me, hoping to see the log-hut, but in vain; nothing but the same wearisome monotony met my view. The sun was now high, and I could easily see that I was following out the direction Halkett gave me, and which I continued to repeat over and over to myself as I went along. This and watching my shadow – the only one that touched the earth – were my occupations. It may seem absurd, even to downright folly; but when from any change in the direction of my course the shadow did not fall in front of me, where I could mark it, my spirits fell, and my heavy heart grew heavier.

When, however, it did precede me, I was never wearied watching how it dived down the little slopes, and rose again on the opposite bank, bending with each swell of the ground. Even this was companionship, – its very motion smacked of life.

At length I came upon a little pool of rain-water, and, although far from clear, it reflected the bright blue sky and white clouds so temptingly that I sat down beside it to make my breakfast. As I sat thus, Hope was again with me, and I fancied how – in some long distant time, when favored by fortune, and possessed of every worldly gift, with rank, and riches, and honor – I should remember the hour when, a poor, friendless outcast, I ate my lonely meal on Anticosti. I fancied even, how friends would listen almost incredulously to the tale, and with what traits of pity or of praise they would follow me in my story.

I felt I was not doomed to die in that dreary land, that my own courage would sustain me; and, thus armed, I again set out.

Although I walked from daybreak to late evening, it was only a short time before darkness closed in that I saw a bulky mass straight before me, which I knew must be the log-house. I could scarcely drag my legs along a few moments before; but now I broke into a run, and with many a stumble, and more than one fall, – for I never turned my eyes from the hut, – I at last reached a little cleared spot of ground, in the midst of which stood the "Refuge-house."

What a moment of joy was that as, unable to move farther, I sat down upon a little bench in front of the hut! All sense of my loneliness, all memory of my desolation, was lost in an instant. There was my home; how strange a word for that sad-looking hut of pine-logs, in a lone island, uninhabited! No matter, it would be my shelter and my refuge till better days came round; and with that stout resolve I entered the great roomy apartment, which in the settling gloom of night seemed immense.

Striking a light, I proceeded to take a survey of my territory, which I rejoiced to see contained a great metal stove and an abundant supply of bed-clothing, – precautions required by the frequency of ships being ice-bound in these latitudes. There were several casks of biscuits, some flour, a large chest of maize, besides three large tanks of water, supplied by the rain. A few bags of salt and some scattered objects of clothing completed the catalogue, which, if not very luxurious, contained nearly everything of absolute necessity.

I lighted a good fire in the stove, less because I felt cold, for it was still autumn, than for the companionship of the bright blaze and the crackling wood. This done, I proceeded to make myself a bed on one of the platforms, arranged like bed-places round the walls, and of which I saw the upper ones seemed to have a preference in the opinion of my predecessors, since, in these, the greater part of the bed-clothing was to be found, – a choice I could easily detect the reason of, in the troops of rats which walked to and fro, with a most contemptuous indifference to my presence; some of them standing near me while I made my bed, and looking, as doubtless they felt, considerably surprised at the nature of my operations. Promising myself to open a spirited campaign against them on the morrow, I trimmed and lighted a large lamp, which from its position had defied their attempt on the oil it still contained; and then, a biscuit in hand, betook myself to bed, watching with an interest not, I own, altogether pleasant, the gambols of these primitive natives of Anticosti.

From my earliest years I had an antipathy to rats, – so great that it mastered all the instincts of my courage. I feared them with a fear I should not have felt in presence of a wild beast, and I was confident that had I been attacked vigorously by even a single rat, the natural disgust would have rendered me unable to cope with him. When very young, I remembered hearing the story of an officer who, desirous of visiting the vaults under St. Patrick's Church, in Dublin, descended into them under the escort of the sexton. By some chance they separated from each other, and the sexton, after in vain seeking and calling for his companion for several hours, concluded that he had already returned to the upper air; and so he returned also, locking and barring the heavy door, as was his wont. The following day the officer's friends, alarmed at his absence, proceeded to make search for him through the city, and at last, learning that he had visited the cathedral, went thither, and even examined the vaults, when what was their horror to discover a portion of the brass ornament of his shako and a broken sword in the midst of several hundreds of rats, dead and dying, – the terrible remains of a combat that must have lasted for hours. This story, for the truth of which some persons yet living will

vouch, I heard when a mere child; and perhaps to its influence may I date a species of terror that has always been too much for either my reason or my courage.

If I slept, then, it was more owing to my utter weariness and exhaustion than to that languid frame of mind; and although too tired to dream, my first waking thought was how to commence hostilities against the rats. As to any personal hand-to-hand action, I need scarcely say I declined engaging in such; and, my supply of gunpowder being scanty, the method I hit upon was to make a species of grenade, by inserting a quantity of powder with a sufficiency of broken glass into a bottle, leaving an aperture through the cork for a fuse; then, having smeared the outside of the bottle plentifully with oil, of which I discovered a supply in bladders suspended from the ceiling, I retired to my berth, with the other extremity of the fuse in my hand, ready to ignite when the moment came.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.