LEVER CHARLES JAMES

THE KNIGHT OF GWYNNE, VOL. 1

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Содержание

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PREFACE

I wrote this story in the Tyrol. The accident of my residence there was in this wise: I had travelled about the Continent for a considerable time in company with my family with my own horses. Our carriage was a large and comfortable calèche, and our team, four horses; the leaders of which, well-bred and thriving-looking, served as saddle horses when needed.

There was something very gypsy-like in this roving, uncertain existence, that had no positive bent or limit, and left every choice of place an open question, that gave me intense enjoyment. It opened to me views of Continental life, scenery, people and habits I should certainly never have attained to by other modes of travel.

Not only were our journeys necessarily short each day, but we frequently sojourned in little villages, and out-of-the-world spots, where, if pleased by the place itself, and the accommodation afforded, we would linger on for days, having at our disposal the total liberty of our time, and all our nearest belongings around us.

In the course of these rambles we had arrived at the town of Bregenz, on the Lake of Constance; where the innkeeper, to whom I was known, accosted me with all the easy freedom of his calling, and half-jestingly alluded to my mode of travelling as a most unsatisfactory and wasteful way of life, which could never turn out profitably to myself or to mine. From the window where we were standing as we talked, I could descry the tall summit of an ancient castle, or schloss, about two miles away; and rather to divert my antagonist from his argument than with any more serious purpose, I laughingly told my host, if he could secure me such a fine old chateau as that I then looked at, I should stable my nags and rest where I was. On the following day, thinking of nothing less than my late conversation, the host entered my room to assure me that he had been over to the castle, had seen the baron, and learned that he would have no objection to lease me his chateau, provided I took it for a fixed term, and with all its accessories, not only of furniture but cows and farm requisites. One of my horses, accidentally pricked in shoeing, had obliged me at the moment to delay a day or two at the inn, and for want of better to do, though without the most remote intention of becoming a tenant of the castle, I yielded so far to my host's solicitation, – to walk over and see it.

If the building itself was far from faultless it was spacious and convenient, and its position on a low hill in the middle of a lawn finer than anything I can convey; the four sides of the schloss commanding four distinct and perfectly dissimilar views. By the north it looked over a wooded plain, on which stood the Convent of Mehreran; and beyond this, the broad expanse of the Lake of Constance. The south opened a view towards the Upper Rhine, and the valley that led to the Via Mala. On the east you saw the Gebhardsberg and its chapel, and the lovely orchards that bordered Bregenz; while to the west rose the magnificent Lenten and the range of the Swiss Alps, – their summits lost in the clouds.

I was so enchanted by the glorious panorama around me, and so carried away by the thought of a life of quiet labor and rest in such a spot, that after hearing a very specious account of the varied economies I should secure by this choice of a residence, and the resources I should have in excursions on all sides, that I actually contracted to take the chateau, and became master of the Rieden Schloss from that day.

Having thus explained by what chance I came to pitch my home in this little-visited spot, I have no mind to dwell further on my Tyrol experiences than as they concern the story which I wrote there.

If the scene in which I was living, the dress of the peasants, the daily ways and interests had been my prompters, I could not have addressed myself to an Irish theme; but long before I had come to settle at Predeislarg, when wandering amongst the Rhine villages, on the vine-clad slopes of the Bergstrasse, I had been turning over in my mind the Union period of Ireland as the era for a story. It was a time essentially rich in the men we are proud of as a people, and peculiarly abounding in traits of self-denial and devotion which, in the corruption of a few, have been totally lost sight of; the very patriotism of the time having been stigmatized as factious opposition, or unreasoning resistance to wiser counsels. That nearly every man of ability in the land was against the Minister, that not only all the intellect of Ireland, but all the high spirit of its squirearchy, and the generous impulses of its people, were opposed to the Union, – there is no denying. If eloquent appeal and powerful argument could have saved a nation, Henry Grattan or Plunkett would not have spoken in vain; but the measure was decreed before it was debated, and the annexation of Ireland was made a Cabinet decision before it came to Irishmen to discuss it.

I had no presumption to imagine I could throw any new light on the history of the period, or illustrate the story of the measure by any novel details; but I thought it would not be uninteresting to sketch the era itself; what aspect society presented; how the country gentleman of the time bore himself in the midst of solicitations and temptings the most urgent and insidious; what, in fact, was the character of that man whom no national misfortunes could subdue, no Ministerial blandishments corrupt; of him, in short, that an authority with little bias to the land of his birth has called, —*The First Gentleman of Europe*.

I know well, I feel too acutely, how inadequately I have pictured what I desired to paint; but even now, after the interval of years, I look back on my poor attempt with the satisfaction of one whose aim was not ignoble. A longer and deeper experience of life has succeeded to the time since I wrote this story, but in no land nor amongst any people have I ever found the type of what we love to emblematize by the word Gentleman, so distinctly marked out as in the educated and travelled Irishman of that period. The same unswerving fidelity of friendship, the same courageous devotion to a cause, the same haughty contempt for all that was mean or unworthy; these, with the lighter accessories of genial temperament, joyous disposition, and a chivalrous respect for women, made up what I had at least in my mind when I tried to present to my readers my Knight of Gwynne.

That my character of him was not altogether ideal, I can give no better proof than the fact that during the course of the publication I received several letters from persons unknown to me, asking whether I had not drawn my portrait from this or that original, several concurring in the belief that I had taken as my model The Knight of Kerry, whose qualities, I am well assured, fully warranted the suspicion.

For my attempt to paint the social habits of the period, I had but to draw on my memory. In my boyish days I had heard much of that day, and was familiar with most of the names of its distinguished men. Anecdotes of Henry Grattan, Flood, Parsons, Ponsonby, and Curran jostled in my mind with stories of their immediate successors, the Bushes and the Plunketts, whose fame has come down to the very day we live in. As a boy, it was my fortune to listen to the narratives of the men who had been actors in the events of that exciting era, and who could even show me in modern Dublin the scenes where memorable events occurred, and not unfrequently the very houses where celebrated convivialities occurred. And thus from Drogheda Street, the modern Sackville Street, where the beaux of the day lounged in all their bravery, to the Circular road, where a long file of carriages, six in hand, evidenced the luxury and tone of display of the capital. I was deeply imbued with the features of the time, and ransacked the old newspapers and magazines with a zest which only great familiarity with the names of the leading characters could have inspired.

Though I have many regrets on the same score, there is no period of my life in which I have the same sorrow for not having kept some sort of note-book, instead of trusting to a memory most fatally unretentive and uncertain. Through this omission I have lost traces of innumerable epigrams, and

jeux d'esprit of a time that abounded in such effusions, and even where my memory has occasionally relieved the effort, I have forgotten the author. To give an instance, the witty lines, —

> "With a name that is borrowed, a title that 's bought,
> Sir William would fain be a gentleman thought;
> His wit is but cunning, his courage but vapor,
> His pride is but money, his money but paper:" —

which, wrongfully attributed to a political leader in the Irish house, were in reality written by Lovel Edgeworth on the well-known Sir William Gladowes, who became Lord Newcomen; and the verse was not only poetry but prophecy, for in his bankruptcy some years afterwards the sarcasm became fact, – "his money was but paper."

This circumstance of the authorship was communicated to me by Miss Maria Edgeworth, whose letter was my first step in acquaintance with her, and gave me a pleasure and a pride which long years have not been able to obliterate.

I remember in that letter her having told me how she was in the habit of reading my story aloud to the audience of her nephews and nieces; a simple announcement that imparted such a glow of proud delight to me, that I can yet recall the courage with which I resumed the writing of my tale, and the hope it suggested of my being able one day to win a place of honor amongst those who, like herself, had selected Irish traits as the characteristics to adorn fiction.

For Con Heffernan I had an original. For Bagenal Daly, too, I was not without a model. His sister is purely imaginary, but that she is not unreal I am bold enough to hope, since several have assured me that they know where I found my type. In my brief sketch of Lord Castlereagh I was not, I need scarcely say, much aided by the journals and pamphlets of the time, where his character and conduct were ruthlessly and most falsely assailed. It was my fortune, however, to have possessed the close intimacy of one who had acted as his private secretary, and whose abilities have since raised him to high station and great employment; and from him I came to know the real nature of one of the ablest statesmen of his age, as he was one of the most attractive companions, and most accomplished gentlemen. I have no vain pretence to believe that by my weak and unfinished sketch I have in any way vindicated the Minister who carried the Union against the attacks of his opponents, but I have tried at least to represent him such as he was in the society of his intimates; his gay and cheerful temperament, his frank nature, and what least the world is disposed to concede to him, his sincere belief in the honesty of men whose convictions were adverse to him, and who could not be won over to his opinions.

I have not tried to conceal the gross corruption of an era which remains to us as a national shame, but I would wish to lay stress on the fact that not a few resisted offers and temptations, which to men struggling with humble fortune, and linked for life with the fate of the weaker country, must redound to their high credit. All the nobler their conduct, as around them on every side were the great names of the land trafficking for title and place, and shamelessly demanding office for their friends and relatives as the price of their own adhesion.

For that degree of intimacy which I have represented as existing between Bagenal Daly and Freney the robber, I have been once or twice reprehended as conveying a false and unreal view of the relations of the time; but the knowledge I myself had of Freney, his habits and his exploits, were given to me by a well-known and highly-connected Irish gentleman, who represented a county in the Irish Parliament, and was a man of unblemished honor, conspicuous alike in station and ability. And there is still, and once the trait existed more remarkably in Ireland, a wonderful sympathy between all classes and conditions of people: so that the old stories and traditions that amuse the crouching listener round the hearth of the cottage, find their way into luxurious drawing-rooms; and by their

means a brotherhood of sentiment was maintained between the highest class in the land and the humblest peasant who labored for his daily bread.

I tried to display the effect of this strange teaching on the mind of a cultivated gentleman when describing the Knight of Gwynne. I endeavored to show the “Irishry” of his nature was no other than the play of those qualities by which he appreciated his countrymen and was appreciated by them. So powerful is this sympathy, and so strong the sense of national humor through all classes of the people, that each is able to entertain a topic from the same point of view as his neighbor, and the subtle *équivoque* in the polished witticism that amuses the gentleman is never lost on the untutored ear of the unlettered peasant. Is there any other land of which one can say as much?

If this great feature of attractiveness pertains to the country and adds to its adaptiveness as the subject of fiction, I cannot but feel that to un-Irish ears it is necessary to make an explanation which will serve to show that which would elsewhere imply a certain blending of station and condition, is here but a proof of that widespread understanding by which, however divided by race, tradition, and religion, we are always able to appeal to certain sympathies and dispositions in common, and feel the tie of a common country.

At the period in which I have placed this story the rivalry between the two nations was, with all its violence, by no means ungenerous. No contemptuous estimate of Irishmen formed the theme of English journalism; and between the educated men of both countries there was scarcely a jealousy that the character which political contest assumed later on, changed much of this spirit and dyed nationalities with an amount of virulence which, with all its faults and all its shortcomings, we do not find in the times of the Knight of Gwynne.

CHARLES LEVER.

Trieste, 1872.

CHAPTER I. A FIRESIDE GROUP

It was exactly forty-five years ago that a group, consisting of three persons, drew their chairs around the fire of a handsome dinner-room in Merrion Square, Dublin. The brilliantly lighted apartment, the table still cumbered with decanters and dessert, and the sideboard resplendent with a gorgeous service of plate, showed that the preparations had been made for a much larger party, the last of whom had just taken his departure.

Of the three who now drew near the cheerful blaze, more intent, as it seemed, on confidential intercourse than the pleasures of the table, he who occupied the centre was a tall and singularly handsome man, of some six or seven-and-twenty years of age. His features, perfectly classical in their regularity, conveyed the impression of one of a cold and haughty temperament, unmoved by sudden impulse, but animated by a spirit daringly ambitious. His dress was in the height of the then mode, and he wore it with the air of a man of fashion and elegance.

This was Lord Castlereagh, the youthful Secretary for Ireland, one whose career was then opening with every promise of future distinction.

At his right hand sat, or rather lounged, in all the carelessness of habitual indolence, a young man some years his junior, his dark complexion and eyes, his aquiline features, and short, thin upper lip almost resembling a Spanish face.

His dress was the uniform of the Foot Guards, – a costume which well became him, and set off to the fullest advantage a figure of perfect symmetry. A manner of careless inattention in which he indulged, contrasted strongly with the quick impatience of his dark glances and the eager rapidity of his utterance when momentarily excited; for the Honorable Dick Forester was only cool by training, and not by temperament, and, at the time we speak of, his worldly education was scarcely more than well begun.

The third figure – strikingly unlike the other two – was a man of fifty or thereabouts, short and plethoric. His features, rosy and sensual, were lit up by two gray eyes whose twinkle was an incessant provocative to laughter. The mouth was, however, the great index to his character. It was large and full, the under lip slightly projecting, – a circumstance perhaps acquired in the long habit of a life where the tasting function had been actively employed; for Con Heffernan was a gourmand of the first water, and the most critical judge of a vintage the island could boast. Two fingers of either hand were inserted in the capacious pockets of a white vest, while, his head jauntily leaning to one side, he sat the very ideal of self-satisfied ease and contentment. The *aplomb*– why should there be a French word for an English quality? – he possessed was not the vulgar ease of a presuming or underbred man, – far from it; it was the impress of certain gifts which gave him an acknowledged superiority in the society he moved in. He was shrewd, without over-caution; he was ready-witted, but never rash; he possessed that rare combination of quick intelligence with strong powers of judgment; and, above all, he knew men, or at least such specimens of the race as came before him in a varied life, well and thoroughly.

If he had a weak point in his character, it was a love of popularity, – not that vulgar mob-worship which some men court and seek after; no, it was the estimation of his own class and set he desired to obtain. He was proud of his social position, and nervously sensitive in whatever might prejudice or endanger it. His enemies – and Con was too able a man not to have made some – said that his low origin was the secret of his nature; that his ambiguous position in society demanded exertions uncalled for from others less equivocally circumstanced; and that Mr. Heffernan was, in secret, very far from esteeming the high and titled associates with whom his daily life brought him in contact. If this were the case, he was assuredly a consummate actor. No man ever went through a longer or more searching trial unscathed, nor could an expression be quoted, or an act mentioned, in which he derogated, even for a moment, from the habits of “his order.”

"You never did the thing better in your life, my Lord," said Con, as the door closed upon the last departing guest. "You hit off Jack Massy to perfection; and as for Watson, though he said nothing at the time, I 'll wager my roan cob against Deane Moore's hackney – long odds, I fancy – that you find him at the Treasury to-morrow morning, with a sly request for five minutes' private conversation."

"I'm of your mind, Heffernan. I saw that he took the bait, – indeed, to do the gentlemen justice, they are all open to conviction."

"You surely cannot blame them," said Con, "if they take a more conciliating view of your Lordship's opinions when assisted by such claret as this: this is old '72, if I mistake not."

"They sold it to me as such; but I own to you I 'm the poorest connoisseur in the world as regards wine. Some one remarked this evening that the '95 was richer in bouquet."

"It was Edward Harvey, my Lord. I heard him; but that was the year he got his baronetcy, and he thinks the sun never shone so brightly before; his father was selling Balbriggan stockings when this grape was ripening, and now, the son has more than one foot on the steps of the peerage." This was said with a short, quick glance beneath the eyelids, and evidently more as a feeler than with any strong conviction of its accuracy.

"No Government can afford to neglect its supporters, and the acknowledgments must be proportioned to the sacrifices, as well as to the abilities of the individuals who second it."

"By Jove! if these gentlemen are in the market," said Forester, who broke silence for the first time, "I don't wonder at their price being a high one; in consenting to the 'Union,' they are virtually voting their own annihilation."

"By no means," said the Secretary, calmly; "the field open to their ambition is imperial, and not provincial; the English Parliament will form an arena for the display of ability as wide surely as this of Dublin. Men of note and capacity will not be less rewarded: the losers will be the small talkers, county squires of noisy politics, and crafty lawyers of no principles; they will, perhaps, be obliged to remain at home and look after their own affairs; but will the country be the worse for that, while the advantages to trade and commerce are inconceivable?"

"I agree with you there," said Con; "we are likely to increase our exports, by sending every clever fellow out of the country."

"Why not, if the market be a better one?"

"Would n't you spare us a few luxuries for home consumption?" said Con, as he smacked his lips and looked at his glass through the candle.

His Lordship paid no attention to the remark, but, taking a small tablet from his waistcoat-pocket, seemed to study its contents. "Are we certain of Cuffe; is he pledged to us, Heffernan?"

"Yes, my Lord, he has no help for it; we are sure of him; he owes the Crown eleven thousand pounds, and says the only ambition he possesses is to make the debt twelve, and never pay it."

"What of that canting fellow from the North, – New-land?"

"He accepts your terms conditionally, my Lord," said Con, with a sly roll of his eye. "If the arguments are equal to your liberality, he will vote for you; but as yet he does not *see* the advantages of a Union."

"Not *see* them!" said Lord Castlereagh, with a look of irony; "why did you not let him look at them from your own windows, Heffernan? The view is enchanting for the Barrack Department."

"The poor man is short-sighted," said Con, with a sigh, "and never could stretch his vision beyond the Custom House."

"Be it so, in the devil's name; a commissioner more or less shall never, stop us!"

"What a set of rascals," muttered Forester between his teeth, as he tossed off a bumper to swallow his indignation.

"Well, Forester, what of your mission? Have you heard from your friend Darcy?"

"Yes; I have his note here. He cannot come over just now, but he has given me an introduction to his father, and pledges himself I shall be well received."

"What Darcy is that?" said Heffernan.

"The Knight of Gwynne," said his Lordship; "do you know him?"

"I believe, my Lord, there is not a gentleman in Ireland who could not say yes to that question; while west of the Shannon, Maurice Darcy is a name to swear by."

"We want such a man much," said the Secretary, in a low, distinct utterance; "some well-known leader of public opinion is of great value just now. How does he vote usually? I don't see his name in the divisions."

"Oh, he rarely comes up to town, never liked Parliament; but when he did attend the House, he usually sat with the Opposition, but, without linking himself to party, spoke and voted independently, and, strange to say, made considerable impression by conduct which in any other man would have proved an utter failure."

"Did he speak well, then?"

"For the first five minutes you could think of nothing but his look and appearance; he was the handsomest man in the House, a little too particular, perhaps, in dress, but never finical; as he went on, however, the easy fluency of his language, the grace and elegance of his style, and the frank openness of his statements, carried his hearers with him; and many who were guarded enough against the practised power of the great speakers were entrapped by the unstudied, manly tone of the Knight of Gwynne. You say truly, he would be a great card in your hands at this time."

"We must have him at his own price, if he has one. Is he rich?"

"He has an immense estate, but, as I hear, greatly encumbered; but don't think of money with him, that will never do."

"What's the bait, then? Does he care for rank? Has he any children grown up?"

"One son and one daughter are all his family; and as for title, I don't think that he 'd exchange that of Knight of Gwynne for a Dukedom. His son is a lieutenant in the Guards."

"Yes; and the best fellow in the regiment," broke in Forester. "In every quality of a high-spirited gentleman, Lionel Darcy has no superior."

"The better deserving of rapid promotion," said his Lordship, smiling significantly.

"I should be sorry to offer it to him at the expense of his father's principles," said Forester.

"Very little fear of your having to do so," said Heffernan, quickly; "the Knight would be no easy purchase."

"You must see him, however, Dick." said the Secretary; "there is no reason why he should not be with us on grounds of conviction. He is a man of enlightened and liberal mind, and surely will not think the worse of a measure because its advocates are in a position to serve his son's interests."

"If that topic be kept very studiously out of sight, it were all the more prudent," said Con, dryly.

"Of course; Forester will pay his visit, and only advert to the matter with caution and delicacy. To gain him to our side is a circumstance of so much moment that I say *carte blanche* for the terms."

"I knew the time that a foxhound would have been a higher bribe than a blue ribbon with honest Maurice; but it's many years since we met, now, and Heaven knows what changes time may have wrought in him. A smile and a soft speech from a pretty woman, or a bold exploit of some hare-brained fellow, were sure to find favor with him, when he would have heard flattery from the lips of royalty without pride or emotion."

"His colleague in the county is with us; has he any influence over the Knight?"

"Far from it. Mr. Hickman O'Reilly is the last man in the world to have weight with Maurice Darcy, and if it be your intention to make O'Reilly a peer, you could have taken no readier method to arm the Knight against you. No, no; if you really are bent on having him, leave all thought of a purchase aside; let Forester, as the friend and brother officer of young Darcy, go down to Gwynne, make himself as agreeable to the Knight as may be, and when he has one foot on the carriage-step at his departure, turn sharply round, and say, 'Won't you vote with us, Knight?' What between surprise

and courtesy, he may be taken too short for reflection, and if he say but 'Yes,' ever so low, he's yours. That's *my* advice to you. It may seem a poor chance, but I fairly own I see no better one."

"I should have thought rank might be acceptable in such a quarter," said the Secretary, proudly.

"He has it, my Lord, – at least as much as would win all the respect any rank could confer; and besides, these new peerages have no prestige in their favor yet a while; we must wait for another generation. This claret is perfect now, but I should not say it were quite so delicate in flavor the first year it was bottled. The squibs and epigrams on the new promotions are remembered where the blazons of the Heralds' College are forgotten; that unlucky banker, for instance, that you made a Viscount the other day, both his character and his credit have suffered for it."

"What was that you allude to? – an epigram, was it?"

"Yes, very short, but scarcely sweet. Here it is: —

"'With a name that is borrowed, a title that's bought, – '

you, remember, my Lord, how true both allegations are, —

"'With a name that is borrow'd, a title that's bought, Sir William would fain be a gentleman thought; While his Wit is mere cunning, his Courage but vapor, His Pride is but money, his Money but paper.'"

"Very severe, certainly," said his Lordship, in the same calm tone he ever spoke. "Not your lines, Mr. Heffernan?"

"No, my Lord; a greater than Con Heffernan indited these, – one who did not scruple to reply to yourself in the House in an imitation of your own inimitable manner."

"Oh, I know whom you mean, – a very witty person indeed," said the Secretary, smiling; "and if we were to be laughed out of office, he might lead the Opposition. But these are very business-like, matter-of-fact days we 're fallen upon. The cabinet that can give away blue ribbons may afford to be indifferent to small jokers. But to revert to matters more immediate: you must start at once, Forester, for the West, see the Knight, and do whatever you can to bring him towards us. I say *carte blanche* for the terms; I only wish our other elevations to the peerage had half the pretension he has; and, whatever our friend Mr. Heffernan may say, I opine to the mere matter of compact, which says, so much for so much."

"Here's success to the mission, however its negotiations incline," said Heffernan, as he drained off his glass and rose to depart. "We shall see you again within ten days or a fortnight, I suppose?"

"Oh, certainly; I'll not linger in that wild district an hour longer than I must." And so, with good night and good wishes, the party separated, – Forester to make his preparations for a journey which, in those days, was looked on as something formidable.

CHAPTER II. A TRAVELLING ACQUAINTANCE

Whatever the merits or demerits of the great question, the legislative union between England and Ireland, – and assuredly we have neither the temptation of duty nor inclination to discuss such here, – the means employed by Ministers to carry the measure through Parliament were in the last degree disgraceful. Never was bribery practised with more open effrontery, never did corruption display itself with more daring indifference to public opinion; the Treasury office was an open mart, where votes were purchased, and men sold their country, delighted, as a candid member of the party confessed, – delighted "to have a country to sell."

The ardor of a political career, like the passion for the chase, would seem in its high excitement to still many compunctious murmurings of conscience which in calmer moments could not fail to be heard and acknowledged: the desire to succeed, that ever-present impulse to win, steels the heart against impressions which, under less pressing excitements, had been most painful to endure; and, in this way, honorable and high-minded men have often stooped to acts which, with calmer judgment to guide them, they would have rejected with indignation.

Such was Dick Forester's position at the moment. An aide-de-camp on the staff of the Viceroy, a near relative of the Secretary, he was intrusted with many secret and delicate negotiations, affairs in which, had he been a third party, he would have as scrupulously condemned the tempter as the tempted; the active zeal of agency allayed, however, all such qualms of conscience, and every momentary pang of remorse was swallowed up in the ardor for success.

Few men will deny in the abstract the cruelty of many field-sports they persist in following; fewer still abandon them on such scruples; and while Forester felt half ashamed to himself of the functions committed to him, he would have been sorely disappointed if he had been passed over in the selection of his relative's political adherents.

Of this nature were some of Dick Forester's reflections as he posted along towards the West; nor was the scene through which he journeyed suggestive of pleasanter thoughts. If any of our readers should perchance be acquainted with that dreary line of country which lies along the great western road of Ireland, they will not feel surprised if the traveller's impressions of the land were not of the brightest or fairest. The least reflective of mortals cannot pass through a dreary and poverty-stricken district without imbibing some of the melancholy which broods over the place. Forester was by no means such, and felt deeply and sincerely for the misery he witnessed on every hand, and was in the very crisis of some most patriotic scheme of benevolence, when his carriage arrived in front of the little inn of Kilbeggan. Resisting, without much violence to his inclinations, the civil request of the landlord to alight, he leaned back to resume the broken thread of his lucubrations, while fresh horses were put to. How long he thus waited, or what progress his benign devices accomplished in the mean while, this true history is unable to record; enough if we say that when he next became aware of the incidents then actually happening around him, he discovered that his carriage was standing fast in the same place as at the moment of his arrival, and the rain falling in torrents, as before.

To let down the glass and call out to the postilions was a very natural act; to do so with the addition of certain expletives not commonly used in good society, was not an extraordinary one. Forester did both; but he might have spared his eloquence and his indignation, for the postilions were both in the stable, and his servant agreeably occupied in the bar over the comforts of a smoking tumbler of punch. The merciful schemes so late the uppermost object of his thoughts were routed in a moment, and, vowing intentions of a very different purport to the whole household, he opened the door and sprang out. Dark as the night was, he could see that there were no horses to the carriage, and, with redoubled anger at the delay, he strode into the inn.

"Holloa, I say – house here! Linwood! Where the devil is the fellow?"

"Here, sir," cried a smart-looking London servant, as he sprang from the bar with his eyes bolting out of his head from the heat of the last mouthful, swallowed in a second. "I've been a trying for horses, sir; but they've never got 'em, though they 've been promising to let us have a pair this half-hour."

"No horses! Do you mean that they've not got a pair of posters in a town like this?"

"Yes, indeed, sir," interposed a dirty waiter in a nankeen jacket; for the landlord was too indignant at the rejection of his proposal to appear again, "we've four pair, besides a mare in foal; but there's a deal of business on the line this week past, and there's a gentleman in the parlor now has taken four of them."

"Taken four! Has he more than one carriage?"

"No, sir, a light chariot it is; but he likes to go fast."

"And so do I – when I can," muttered Forester, the last words being an addition almost independent of him. "Could n't you tell him that there's a gentleman here very much pressed to push on, and would take it as a great favor if he'd divide the team?"

"To be sure, sir, I'll go and speak to him," said the waiter, as he hurried away on the errand.

"I see how it is, sir," said Linwood, who, with true servant dexterity, thought to turn his master's anger into any other channel than towards himself, "they wants to get you to stop the night here."

"Confound this trickery! I'll pay what they please for the horses, only let us have them. – Well, waiter, what does he say?"

"He says, sir," said the waiter, endeavoring to suppress a laugh, "if you 'll come in and join him at supper, you shall have whatever you like."

"Join him at supper! No, no; I'm hurried, I'm anxious to get forward, and not the least hungry besides."

"Hadn't you better speak a word to him, anyhow?" said the waiter, half opening the parlor door. And Forester, accepting the suggestion, entered.

In the little low-ceilinged apartment of the small inn, at a table very amply and as temptingly covered, sat a large and, for his age, singularly handsome man. A forehead both high and broad surmounted two clear blue eyes, whose brilliancy seemed to defy the wear of time; regular and handsome teeth; and a complexion the very type of health appeared to vouch for a strength of constitution rare at his advanced age. His dress was the green coat so commonly worn by country gentlemen, with leather breeches and boots, nor, though the season was winter, did he appear to have any great-coat, or other defence against the weather. He was heaping some turf upon the fire as Forester entered, and, laughingly interrupting the operation, he stood up and bowed courteously.

"I have taken a great liberty, sir, first, to suppose that any man at this hour of the night is not the worse for something to eat and drink; and, secondly, that he might have no objection to partake of either in my company." Forester was not exactly prepared for a manner so palpably that of the best society, and, at once repressing every sign of his former impatience, replied by apologizing for a request which might inconvenience the granter. "Let me help you to this grouse-pie, and fill yourself a glass of sherry; and by the time you have taken some refreshment, the horses will be put to. I am most happy to offer you a seat."

"I am afraid there is a mistake somewhere," said Forester, half timidly. "I heard you had engaged the only four horses here, and as my carriage is without, my request was to obtain two if you – "

"But why not come with me? I 'm pressed, and must be up, if possible, before morning. Remember, we are forty-eight miles from Dublin."

"Dublin! But I'm going the very opposite road. I'm for Westport."

"Oh, by Jove! that is different. What a stupid fellow the waiter is! Never mind; sit down. Let us have a glass of wine together. You shall have two of the horses. Old Wilkins must only make his spurs supply the place of the leaders."

There was a hearty good-nature in every accent of the old man's voice, and Forester drew his chair to the table, by no means sorry to spend some time longer in his company.

There is a kind of conversation sacred to the occupations of the table, – a mixture of the culinary and the social, the gustatory with the agreeable. And the stranger led the way to this, with the art of an accomplished proficient, and while recommending the good things to Forester's attention, contrived to season their enjoyment by a tone at once pleasing and cordial.

"I could have sworn you were hungry," said he, laughing, as Forester helped himself for the second time to the grouse-pie. "I know you did not expect so appetizing a supper in such a place; but Rickards has always something in the larder for an old acquaintance, and I have been travelling this road close upon sixty years now."

"And a dreary way it is," said Forester, "except for this most agreeable incident. I never came so many miles before with so little to interest me."

"Very true; it is a flat, monotonous-looking country, and poor besides; but nothing like what I remember it as a boy."

"You surely do not mean that the people were ever worse off than they seem now to be?"

"Ay, a hundred times worse off. They may be rack-rented and over-taxed in some instances now, – not as many as you would suppose, after all, – but then, they were held in actual slavery, nearly famished, and all but naked; no roads, no markets; subject to the caprice of the landowners on every occasion in life, and the faction fights – those barbarous vestiges of a rude time – kept up and encouraged by those who should have set the better example of mutual charity and good feeling. These unhappy practices have not disappeared, but they are far less frequent than formerly; and however the confession may seem to you a sad one, to me there is a pride in saying, Ireland is improving."

"It is hard to conceive a people more miserably off than these," said Forester, with a sigh.

"So they seem to your eyes; but let me remark that there is a transition state between rude barbarism and civilization which always appears more miserable than either; habits of life which suggest wants that can rarely, if ever, be supplied. The struggle between poverty and the desire for better, is a bitter conflict, and such is the actual condition of this people. You are young enough to witness the fruits of the reformation; I am too old ever to hope to see them, but I feel assured that the day is coming."

"I like your theory well; it has Hope for its ally," said Forester, as he gazed on the benevolent features of the old squire.

"It has even better, sir, it has truth; and hence it is that the peasantry, as they approach nearer to the capital, – the seat of civilization, – have fewest of those traits that please or attract strangers; they are in the transition state I speak of; while down in *my* wild country, you can see them in their native freshness, reckless and improvident, but light-hearted and happy."

"Where may the country be you speak of, sir?" said Forester.

"The Far West, beside the Atlantic. You have heard of Mayo?"

"Oh, that is my destination at this moment; I am going beyond Westport, to visit one of the chieftains there. I have not the honor to know him, but I conclude that his style of living and habits will not be a bad specimen of the gentry customs generally."

"I know that neighborhood tolerably well. May I ask the name of your future host?"

"The Knight of Gwynne is his title – Mr. Darcy – "

"Oh! an old acquaintance, – I may almost say an old friend of mine," said the other, smiling. "And so you are going to pass some time at Gywnne?"

"A week or so; I scarcely think I can spare more."

"They 'll call that a very inhospitable visit at Gwynne, sir; the Knight's guests rarely stay less than a month. I have just left it, and there were some there who had been since the beginning of the partridge-shooting, and not the least welcome of the party."

"I am sorry I had not the good fortune to meet you there," said Forester.

"Make your visit a fortnight, and I 'll join you, then," said the old man, gayly. "I 'm going up to town to settle a wager, – a foolish excursion, you 'll say, at my time of life; but it's too late to mend."

"The horses is put to, sir," said the waiter, announcing the fact for something like the fourth time, without being attended to.

"Well, then, it is time to start. Am I to take it as a pledge that I shall find you at Gwynne this day fortnight?"

"I cannot answer for my host," said Forester, laughing.

"Oh! old Darcy is sure to ask you to stay. By the way, would you permit me to trouble you with five lines to a friend who is now stopping there?"

"Of course; I shall be but too happy to be of any service to you."

The old gentleman sat down, and, tearing a leaf from a capacious pocket-book, wrote a few hurried lines, which, having folded and sealed, he addressed, "Bagenal Daly, Esquire, Gwynne Abbey."

"There, that's my commission; pray add my service to the Knight himself, when you see him."

"Permit me to ask, how shall I designate his friend?"

"Oh! I forgot, you don't know me," said he, laughing. "I have half a mind to leave the identification with your own descriptive powers."

"I'd wager five guineas I could make the portrait a resemblance."

"Done, then; I take the bet," said the other; "and I promise you, on the word of a gentleman, I am known to every visitor in the house."

Each laughed heartily at the drollery of such a wager, and, with many a profession of the pleasure a future meeting would afford to both, they parted, less like casual acquaintances than as old and intimate friends.

CHAPTER III. GWYNNE ABBEY

When Forester parted with his chance companion at Kilbeggan, he pursued his way without meeting a single incident worth recording; nor, although he travelled with all the speed of posters, aided by the persuasive power of additional half-crowns, shall we ask of our reader to accompany him, but, at one bound, cross the whole island, and stand with us on the margin of that glorious sheet of water which, begirt with mountains and studded with its hundred islands, is known as Clue Bay.

At the southern extremity of the bay rises the great mountain of Croagh Patrick, its summit nearly five thousand feet above the sea; on the side next the ocean, it is bold and precipitous, crag rising above crag in succession, and not even the track of a mountain goat visible on the dangerous surface; landward, however, a gentle slope descends about the lower third of the mountain, and imperceptibly is lost in the rich and swelling landscape beneath. Here, sheltered from the western gales, and favored by the fertility of the soil, the trees are seen to attain a girth and height rarely met with elsewhere, while they preserve their foliage to a much later period than in other parts of the country.

The ruins of an ancient church, whose very walls are washed by the Atlantic, show that the luxuriant richness of the spot was known in times past. They who founded these goodly edifices were no mean judges of the resources of the land, and the rich woods and blossoming orchards that still shelter their ruined shrines evidence with what correctness they selected their resting-places.

The coast-road which leads from Westport skirts along the edge of the bay, and is diversified by many a pretty cottage whose trellised walls and rose-covered porches vouch for the mildness of the climate, and are in summer resorted to as bathing-lodges by numbers from the inland counties. The high-road has, however, a grander destiny than to such humble, though picturesque, dwellings, for it suddenly ceases at the gate of an immense demesne, whose boundary wall may be seen stretching away for miles, and at last is traced high up the mountain side, where it forms the enclosure of a deer park.

Two square and massive towers connected by an arch form the gateway, and though ivy and honeysuckle have covered many an architectural device which once were looked on with pride, a massive armorial escutcheon in yellow stone forms the key of the arch, while two leopards supporting a crown, with the motto, “Ne la touchez pas!” proclaim the territory of the Knight of Gwynne.

Within, an avenue wide enough for a high-road led through a park of great extent, dotted with trees single or in groups, and bounded by a vast wood, whose waving tops were seen for miles of distance. If a landscape-gardener would have deplored with uplifted hands the glorious opportunities of embellishment which neglect or ignorance had suffered to lie undeveloped within these grounds, a true lover of scenery would have felt delighted at the wild and picturesque beauty around him, as, sometimes, the road would dip into a deep glade, where the overhanging banks were clothed with the dog-rose and the sweet-brier, still and hushed to every sound save the song of the thrush or the not less sweet ripple of the little stream that murmured past; and again, emerging from the shade, it wound along some height whence the great mountain might be seen, or, between the dark foliage, the blue surface of the sea, swelling and heaving with ever-restless motion. All the elements of great picturesque beauty were here, and in that glorious profusion with which nature alone diffuses her wealth, – the mountain, the forest, and the ocean, the greensward, the pebbly shore, the great rocks, the banks blue with the violet and the veronica, – and all diversified and contrasted to produce effects the most novel and enchanting.

Many a road and many a pathway led through these woods and valleys, some grass-grown, as though disused, others bearing the track of recent wheels, still, as you went, the hares and the rabbits felt no terror, the wood-pigeon sat upon the branch above your head, nor was scared at your approach; for though the Knight was a passionate lover of sport, it was his fancy to preserve the demesne intact, nor would he suffer a shot to be fired within its precincts. These may seem small and insignificant

matters to record, but they added indescribably to the charms of the spot, completing, as they did, the ideas of tranquillity and peace suggested by the scene.

The approach was of some miles in extent, not needlessly prolonged by every device of sweep and winding, but in reality proceeding by its nearest way to the house, which, for the advantage of a view over the sea, was situated on the slope of the mountain. Nor was the building unworthy of its proud position: originally an abbey, its architecture still displayed the elaborate embellishment which characterized the erections of the latter part of the sixteenth century.

A long façade, interrupted at intervals by square towers, formed the front, the roof consisting of a succession of tall and pointed gables, in each of which some good saint stood enshrined in stone; the windows, throughout this long extent, were surmounted by pediments and figures not rudely chiselled, but with high pretension as works of art, and evidencing both taste and skill in the designer; while the great entrance was a miracle of tracery and carving, the rich architraves retreating one within another to the full depth of twelve feet, such being the thickness of the external wall.

Spacious and imposing as this great mass of building appeared at first sight, it formed but a fragment of the whole, and was in reality but the side of a great quadrangle, the approach to which led through one of the large towers, defended by fosse and drawbridge, while overhead the iron spikes of a massive portcullis might be seen; for the Abbot of Gwynne had been a “puissance” in days long past, and had his servitors in steel, as well as his followers in sackcloth. This road, which was excessively steep and difficult of access, was yet that by which carriages were accustomed to approach the house; for the stables occupied one entire wing of the quadrangle, the servants, of whom there were a goodly company, holding possession of the suite of rooms overhead, once the ancient dormitory of the monks of Gwynne.

In the middle of the courtyard was a large fountain, over which an effigy of St. Francis had formerly stood; but the saint had unhappily been used as a lay figure whereupon to brush hunting-coats and soiled leathers, and gradually his proportions had suffered grievous injury, till at last nothing remained of him save the legs, which were still profaned as a saddle-tree; for grooms and stable-boys are irreverent in their notions, and, probably, deemed it no disgrace for a saint to carry such honorable trappings.

The appearance of the abbey from within was even more picturesque than when seen from the outside, each side of the quadrangle displaying a different era and style of architecture; for they had been built with long intervals of time between them, and one wing, a low, two-storied range, with jail-like windows and a small, narrow portal, bore, on a three-cornered stone, the date 1304.

We shall not ask of our readers to accompany us further in our dry description, nor even cast a glance up at that myriad of strange beasts which, in dark gray stone, are frowning or grinning, or leaping or rearing, from every angle and corner of the building, – a strange company, whose representatives in real life it would puzzle the zoologist to produce; but there they were, some with a coat-of-arms between their paws, some supporting an ornamental capital, and others actually, as it seemed, cutting their uncouth capers out of pure idleness.

At the back of the abbey, and terraced on the mountain side, lay a perfect wilderness of flower-gardens and fishponds, amid which a taste more profane than that of the founders had erected sundry summer-houses in rockwork, hermitages without hermits, and shrines without worshippers, but all moss-grown, and old enough to make them objects of curiosity, while some afforded glorious points of view over the distant bay and the rich valley where stands the picturesque town of Westport.

The interior of this noble edifice was worthy of its appearance from without. Independent of the ample accommodation for a great household, there was a suite of state apartments running along the entire front and part of one wing, and these were fitted up and furnished with a luxury and costliness that would not have disgraced a royal palace. Here were seen velvet hangings and rich tapestries upon the walls, floors inlaid with tulip and sandal-wood, windows of richly stained glass threw a mysterious and mellow light over richly carved furniture, the triumphs of that art which the Netherlands once

boasted; cabinets, curiously inlaid with silver and tortoiseshell, many of them gifts of distinguished donors, few without their associations of story; while one chamber, the ancient hall of audience, was hung round with armor and weapons, the trophies of long-buried ancestors, the proud memorials of a noble line; dark suits of Milan mail, or richly inlaid cuirasses of Spanish workmanship, with great two-handed swords and battle-axes, and, stranger still, weapons of Eastern mould and fashion, for more than one of the house had fought against the Turks, and crossed his broadsword with the scimitar.

There were objects rare and curious enough within these walls to stay and linger over; but even if we dared to take such a liberty with our reader, our duty would not permit the dalliance, and it is to a very different part of the building, and one destined for far other uses, that we must now for a brief space conduct him.

In a small chamber of the ground-floor, whose curiously groined roof and richly stained window showed that its occupancy had once been held by those in station above the common, now sat two persons at a well-garnished table, while before them, on the wide hearth, blazed a cheerful fire of bog deal. On either side of the fireplace was a niche, in which formerly some saintly effigy had stood, but now – such are Time's chances – an earthenware pitcher, with a pewter lid, decorated each, of whose contents the boon companions drank jovially to each other. One of these was a short, fat old fellow of nigh eighty years; his bowed legs and wide round shoulders the still surviving signs of great personal strength in days gone by; his hair, white as snow, was carefully brushed back from his forehead, and tied into "queue" behind. Old as he was, the features were intelligent and pleasing, the hale and hearty expression of good health and good temper animated them when he spoke, nor were the words the less mellow to an Irish ear that they smacked of the "sweet south," for Tate Sullivan was a Kerry man, and possessed in full measure the attributes of that pleasant kingdom; he was courteous and obliging, faithful in his affections, and if a bit hasty in temper, the very first to discover and correct it. His failing was the national one, – the proneness to conceal a truth if its disclosure were disagreeable: he could not bring himself to bear bad tidings; and this tendency had so grown with years that few who knew his weakness could trust any version of a fact from his lips without making due allowance for blarney.

For eight-and-forty years he had been a butler in the Knight's family, and his reverence for his master went on increasing with his years; in his eyes he was the happy concentration of every good quality of humanity, nor could he bring himself to believe that his like would ever come again.

Opposite to him sat one as unlike him in form and appearance as he was in reality by character: a gaunt, thin, hollow-cheeked man of sixty-six or seven, rueful and sad-looking, with a greenish gray complexion, and a head of short, close gray hair, cut horseshoe fashion over the temples, his long thin nose, pointed chin, and his cold green eye only wanted the additional test of his accent to pronounce him from the North. So it was, Sandy M'Grane was from Antrim, and a keener specimen of the "cold countrie" need not have been looked for.

His dress was a wide-skirted, deep-cuffed brown coat, profusely studded with large silver buttons richly crested, one sleeve of which, armless and empty, was attached to his breast; a dark-crimson waistcoat, edged with silver lace, descended below the hips; black leather breeches and high black boots, – a strange costume, uniting in some respects the attributes of in-door life and the road. On the high back of his oaken chair hung a wide-brimmed felt hat and a black leather belt, from which a short straight sword depended, the invariable companion of his journeys; for Sandy had travelled in strange lands, where protective police were unknown, and his master, Mr. Bagenal Daly, was one who ever preferred his own administration of criminal law, when the occasion required such, to the slower process of impartial justice.

Meagre and fleshless as he looked, he was possessed of great personal strength, and it needed no acute physiognomist to pronounce, from the character of his head and features, that courage had not been omitted among the ingredients of his nature.

A word of explanation may be necessary as to how a western gentleman, as Bagenal Daly was, should have attached to his person for some forty years a native of a distant county, and one all whose habits and sympathies seemed so little in unison with his own part of the country. Short as the story is, we should not feel warranted in obtruding it on our readers if it did not to a certain extent serve to illustrate the characters of both master and man.

Mr. Daly when a very young man chanced to make an excursion to the northern part of the island, the principal object of which was to see the Giant's Causeway, and the scenery in the neighborhood. The visit was undertaken with little foresight or precaution, and happened at the very time of the year when severe gales from the north and west prevail, and a heavy sea breaks along that iron-bound coast. Having come so far to see the spot, he was unwilling to be baulked in his object; but still, the guides and boatmen of the neighborhood refused to venture out, and, notwithstanding the most tempting offers, would not risk their lives by an enterprise so full of danger.

Daly's ardor for the expedition seemed to increase as the difficulty to its accomplishment grew greater, and he endeavored, now by profuse offers of money, now by taunting allusions to their want of courage, to stimulate the men to accompany him; when, at last, a tall, hard-featured young fellow stood forward and offered, if Daly himself would pull an oar, to go along with him. Overjoyed at his success, Daly agreed to the proposal; and although a heavy sea was then running, and the coast for miles was covered with fragments of a wreck, the skiff was Boon launched, and stood out to sea.

"I'll ga wi'ye to the twa caves and Dunluce; but I 'll no engage to ga to Carrig-a-rede," said Sandy, as the sea broke in masses on the bow, and fell in torrents over them.

After about an hour's rowing, during which the boat several times narrowly escaped being swamped, and was already more than half full of water, they arrived off the great cave, and could see the boiling surf as, sent back with force, it issued beneath the rock, with a music louder than thunder, while from the great cliffs overhead the water poured in a thick shower, as each receding wave left a part behind it.

"The cobble" (so is the boat termed there) "is aye drawing in to shore," said Sandy; "I trow we 'd better pull back, noo."

"Not till we 've seen Carrig-a-rede, surely," said Daly, on whom danger acted like the most exciting of all stimulants.

"Ye may go there by yersel," said Sandy, "when ye put me ashore; I tauld you, I 'd no ga so far."

"Come, come, it's no time to flinch now," said Daly; "turn her head about, and lean down to your oar."

"I 'll no do it," said Sandy, "nor will I let you either." And as he spoke, he leaned forward to take the oar from Daly's hand. The young man, irritated at the attempt, rudely repulsed him, and Sandy, whose temper, if not as violent, was at least as determined, grappled with him at once.

"You'll upset the boat – curse the fellow!" said Daly, who now found that he had met his match in point of strength and daring.

"Let go the oar, man," cried Sandy, savagely.

"Never," said Daly, with a violent effort to free his hands.

"Then swim for it, if ye like better," said Sandy; and, placing one foot on the gunwale, he gave a tremendous push, and the next instant they were both struggling in the sea. For a long time they continued, almost side by side, to buffet the dark water; but at last Daly began to falter, his efforts became more labored, and his strength seemed failing; Sandy turned his head, and seized him in the very struggle that precedes sinking. They were still far from shore, but the hardy Northern never hesitated; he held him by the arm, and after a long and desperate effort succeeded in gaining the land.

"Ye got a bra wetting for your pains, anyhow," said Sandy; "but I 'm no the best off either: I 'll never see the cobble mair."

Such were the first words Bagenal Daly heard when consciousness returned to him; the rest of the story is soon told. Daly took Sandy into his service, not without all due thought and consideration

on the latter's part, for he owned a small fishing-hut, for which he expected and received due compensation, as well as for the cobble and the damage to his habiliments by salt water, – all matters of which, as they were left to his own uncontrolled valuation, he was well satisfied with the arrangement; and thus began a companionship which had lasted to the very moment we have presented him to our readers.

It is but fair to say that in all this time no one had ever heard from Sandy's lips one syllable of the adventure we have related, nor did he ever, in the remotest degree, allude to it in intercourse with his master. Sandy was little disposed to descant either on the life or the character of his master; the Scotch element of caution was mingled strongly through his nature, and he preferred any other topic of conversation than such as led to domestic events. Whether that he was less on his guard on this evening, or that, esteeming Tate's perceptions at no very high rate, so it is, he talked more freely and unadvisedly than was his wont.

"Ye hae a bra berth o' it here, Maister Sullivan," said he, as he smacked his lips after the smoking compound, whose odor pronounced it mulled port; "I maun say, that a man wha has seen a good deal of life might do far war' than settle down in a snug little nook like this; maybe, ye hae no journeyed far in your time either."

"Indeed, 'tis true for you, Mr. M'Grane, I had not the opportunities you had of seeing the world, and the strange people in foreign parts; they tell me you was in Jericho, and Jerusalem, and Gibraltar."

"Further than that, Maister Sullivan. I hae been in very curious places wi' Mr. Daly; this day nine years we were in the Rocky Mountains, among the Red Indians."

"The Red Indians! blood alive! them was dangerous neighbors."

"Not in our case. My master was a chief among them, I was the doctor of the tribe, – the 'Great Mystery Man,' they cau'd me; my master's name was the 'Howling Wind.'"

"Sorra doubt, but it was not a bad one, – listen to him now;" and Tate lifted his hand to enforce silence, while a cheer loud and sonorous rang out, and floated in rich cadence along the arched corridors of the old abbey; "'tis singing he is," added Tate, lower, while he opened the door to listen.

"That's no a sang, that's the war-cry of the Manhattas," said Sandy, gravely.

"The saints be praised it's no worse!" remarked Tate, with pious horror in every feature. "I thought he was going to raise the divil. And who was the man-haters, Mr. M'Grane?" added he, meekly.

"A vara fine set o' people; a leetle fond o' killing and eating their neighbors, but friendly and ceevil to strangers; I hae a wife amang them mysel."

"A wife! Is she a Christian, then?"

"Nae muck le o' that, but a douce, good-humored lassie for a' that."

"And she'sa black?"

"Na, na; she was a rich copper tint, something deeper than my waistcoat here, but she had twa yellow streaks over her forehead, and the tip o' her nose was blue."

"The mother of Heaven be near us! she was a beauty, by all accounts."

"Ay, that she was; the best-looking squaw of the tribe, and rare handy wi' a hatchet."

"Divil fear her," muttered Tate, between his teeth. "And what was her name, now?"

"Her name was Orroawaccanaboo, the 'Jumping Wild Cat.'"

"Oh, holy Moses!" exclaimed Tate, unable any longer to subdue his feelings, "I would n't be her husband for a mine of goold."

"You are no sae far wrong there, my auld chap," said Sandy, without showing any displeasure at this burst of feeling.

"And Mr. Daly, had he another – of these craytures?" said Tate, who felt scruples in applying the epithet of the Church in such a predicament.

"He had twa," said Sandy, "forbye anein the mountains, that was too auld to come down; puir lone body, she was unco' fond of a child's head and shoulders wi' fish gravy!"

"To ate it! Do you mane for ating, Mr. M'Grane?"

"Ay, just so; butchers' shops is no sae plenty down in them parts. But what's that! dinna ye hear a ringing o' the bell at the gate there?"

"I hear nothing, I can think of nothing! sorra bit! with the thought of that ould baste in my head, bad luck to her!" exclaimed Tate, ruefully. "A child's head and shoulders! Sure enough, that's the bell, and them that's ringing it knows the way, too." And with these words Tate lighted his lantern and issued forth to the gate tower, the keys of which were each night deposited in his care.

As the massive gates fell back, four splashed and heated horses drew forward a calèche, from which, disengaging himself with speed, Dick Forester descended, and endeavored, as well as the darkness would permit, to survey the great pile of building around him.

"Coming to stop, yer honor?" said Tate, courteously uncovering his white head.

"Yes. Will you present these letters and this card to your master?"

"I must show you your room first, – that's my orders always. – Tim, bring up this luggage to 27. – Will yer honor have supper in the hall, or in your own dressing-room?"

There is nothing more decisive as to the general tone of hospitality pervading any house than the manner of the servants towards strangers; and thus, few and simple as the old butler's words were, they were amply sufficient to satisfy Forester that his reception would be a kindly one, even though less ably accredited than by Lionel Darcy's introduction; and he followed Tate Sullivan with the pleasant consciousness that he was to lay his head beneath a friendly roof.

"Never mind the supper," said he; "a good night's rest is what I stand most in need of. Show me to my room, and to-morrow I 'll pay my respects to the Knight."

"This way then, sir," said Tate, entering a large hall, and leading the way up a wide oak staircase, at the top of which was a corridor of immense extent. Turning short at the head of this, Tate opened a small empanelled door, and with a gesture of caution moved forwards. Forester followed, not a little curious to know the meaning of the precaution, and at the same instant the loud sounds of merry voices laughing and talking reached him, but from what quarter he could not guess, when, suddenly, his guide drew back a heavy cloth curtain, and he perceived that they were traversing a long gallery, which ran along the entire length of a great room, in the lower part of which a large company was assembled. So sudden and unexpected was the sight that Forester started with amazement, and stood uncertain whether to advance or retire, while Tate Sullivan, as if enjoying his surprise, leaned his hands on his knees and stared steadily at him.

The scene below was indeed enough to warrant his astonishment. In the great hail, which had once been the refectory of the abbey, a party of about thirty gentlemen were now seated around a table covered with drinking vessels of every shape and material, as the tastes of the guests inclined their potations. Claret, in great glass jugs holding the quantity of two or three ordinary bottles; port, in huge square decanters, both being drunk from the wood, as was the fashion of the day; large china bowls of mulled wine, in which the oranges and limes floated fragrantly; and here and there a great measure made of wood and hooped with silver, called the "mether," contained the native beverage in all its simplicity, and supplied the hard drinker with the liquor he preferred to all, – "poteen." The guests were no less various than the good things of which they partook. Old, young, and middle-aged; some men stamped with the air and seeming of the very highest class; others as undeniably drawn from the ranks of the mere country squire; a few were dressed in all the accuracy of dinner costume; some wore the well-known livery of Daly's Club, and others were in the easy negligence of morning dress; while, scattered up and down, could be seen the red coat of a hunter, whose splashed and stained scarlet spoke rather for the daring than the dandyism of its wearer. But conspicuous above all was a figure who, on an elevated seat, sat at the head of the table and presided over the entertainment. He was a tall – a very tall – and powerfully built man, whose age might have been guessed at anything, from five-and-forty to seventy; for though his frame and figure indicated few touches of time, his seared and wrinkled forehead boded advanced life. His head was long and narrow, and had been

entirely bald, were it not for a single stripe of coal-black hair which grew down the very middle of it, and came to a point on the forehead, looking exactly like the scalplock of an Indian warrior. The features were long and melancholy in expression, – a character increased by a drooping moustache of black hair, the points of which descended below the chin. His eyes were black as a raven's wing, and glanced with all the brilliancy and quickness of youth, while the incessant motion of his arched eyebrows gave to their expression a character of almost demoniac intelligence. His voice was low and sonorous, and, although unmistakably Irish in accent, occasionally lapsed into traits which might be called foreign, for no one that knew him would have accused him of the vice of affectation. His dress was a claret-colored coat edged with narrow silver lace, and a vest of white satin, over which, by a blue ribbon, hung the medal of a foreign order; white satin breeches and silk stockings, with shoes fastened by large diamond buckles, completed a costume which well became a figure that had lost nothing of its pretension to shapeliness and symmetry. His hands, though remarkably large and bony, were scrupulously white and cared for, and more than one ring of great value ornamented his huge and massive fingers. Altogether, he was one whom the least critical would have pronounced not of the common herd of humanity, and yet whose character was by no means so easy to guess at from external traits.

Amid all the tumult and confusion of the scene, his influence seemed felt everywhere, and his rich, solemn tones could be heard high above the crash and din around. As Forester stood and leaned over the balcony, the noise seemed to have reached its utmost; one of the company – a short, square, bull-faced little squire – being interrupted in a song by some of the party, while others – the greater number – equally loud, called on him to proceed. It was one of the slang ditties of the time, – a lyric suggested by that topic which furnished matter for pamphlets and speeches and songs, dinners, debates, and even duels, – the Union.

"Go on, Bodkin; go on, man! You never were in better voice in your life," mingled with, "No, no; why introduce any party topic here?" – with a murmured remark: "It's unfair, too. Hickman O'Reilly is with the Government."

The tumult, which, without being angry, increased every moment, was at last stilled by the voice of the chairman, saying, —

"If the song have a moral, Bodkin – "

"It has, I pledge my honor it has, your 'Grandeur.'" said Bodkin.

"Then finish it. Silence there, gentlemen." And Bodkin resumed his chant: —

"'Trust me, Squire,' the dark man cried,
'I 'll follow close and mind you,
Nor however high the fence you ride,
I 'll ever be far behind you.'

"And true to his word, like a gentleman
He rode, there 'a no denying;
And though full twenty miles they ran,
He took all his ditches flying.

"The night now came, and down they sat,
And the Squire drank while he was able;
But though glass for glass the dark man took,
He left him under the table.

"When morning broke, the Squire's brains,
Though racking, were still much clearer.

‘I know you well,’ said he to his guest,
‘Now that I see you nearer.

‘“You ‘ve play’d me a d – d scurvy trick:
Come, what have I lost – don’t tease me.
Is it my soul?’ ‘Not at all,’ says Nick;
‘Just vote for the Union, to please me.’”

Amid the loud hurrahs and the louder laughter that fol-lowed this rude chant Forester hurried on to his room, fully convinced that his mission was not altogether so promising as he anticipated.

Undeniable in every respect as was the accommodation of his bed-chamber, Forester lay awake half the night, the singular circumstances in which he found himself occupied his thoughts, while at intervals came the swelling sounds of some loud cheers from the party below, whose boisterous gayety seemed to continue without interruption.

CHAPTER IV. THE DINNER-PARTY

It was late on the following day when Forester awoke, nor was it for some time that he could satisfy himself how far he had been an actor, or a mere spectator in the scene he had witnessed the preceding night. The room and the guests were vividly impressed upon his memory, and the excitement of the party, so different in its character from anything he had seen in his own country, convinced him that the sea, narrow as it was, separated two races very unlike in temperament.

What success should he have in this, his first, mission? was the question ever rising to his mind; how should he acquit himself among persons to whose habits of life, thought, and expression he felt himself an utter stranger? Little as he had seen of the party, that little showed him that the anti-Union feeling was in the ascendant, and that, if a stray convert to the Ministerial doctrines was here and there to be found, he was rather ashamed of his new convictions than resolute to uphold and defend them. From these thoughts he wandered on to others, about the characters of the party, and principally of the host himself, who in every respect was unlike his anticipations. He opened his friend Lionel's letter, and was surprised to find how filial affection had blinded his judgment, – keen enough when exercised without the trammels of prejudice. "If this," thought he, "be a fair specimen of Lionel's portrait-painting, I must take care to form no high-flown expectations of his mother and sister; and as he calls one somewhat haughty and reserved in manner, and the other a blending of maternal pride with a dash of his father's wilful but happy temperament, I take it for granted that Lady Eleanor is a cold, disagreeable old lady, and her daughter Helen a union of petted vanity and capriciousness, pretty much what my good friend Lionel himself was when he joined us, but what he had the good sense to cease to be very soon after."

Having satisfied himself that he fairly estimated the ladies of the house, he set himself, with all the ingenuity of true speculation, to account for the traits of character he had so good-naturedly conferred on them. "Living in a remote, half-civilized neighborhood," thought he, "without any intercourse save with some country squires and their wives and daughters, they have learned, naturally enough, to feel their own superiority to those about them; and possessing a place with such claims to respect from association, as well as from its actual condition, they, like all people who have few equals and no superiors, give themselves a license to think and act independent of the world's prescription, and become, consequently, very intolerable to every one unaccustomed to acknowledge their sovereignty. I heartily wish Lionel had left these worthy people to my own unassisted appreciation of them; his flourish of trumpets has sadly spoiled the effect of the scene for me;" and with this not over gracious reflection he proceeded to dress for the day.

"The squire has been twice at the door this morning, sir," said Lin wood, as he arranged the dressing apparatus on the table; "he would not let me awake you, however, and at last said, 'Present my cordial respects to Mr. Forester, and say, that if he should like to ride with the hounds, he'll find a horse ready for him, and a servant who will show him the way.'"

"And are they out already?" said Forester.

"Yes, sir, gone two hours ago; they breakfasted at eight, and I heard a whipper-in say they 'd twelve miles to go to the first cover."

"Why, it appeared to me that they were up all night."

"They broke up at four, sir, and except two gentlemen that are gone over to Westport on business, but to be back for dinner, they're all mounted to-day."

"And what is the dinner-hour, Linwood?"

"Six, sir, to the minute."

"And it's now only eleven," said Forester to himself, with a wearied sigh; "how am I to get through the rest of the day? Are the ladies in the drawing-room, Linwood?"

"Ladies! no, sir; there are no ladies in the house as I hear of."

"So much the better, then," thought his master; "passive endurance is better any day than active boredom, and with all respect for Lady Eleanor and her daughter, I 'd rather believe them such as Lionel paints them, than have the less flattering impression nearer acquaintance would as certainly leave behind it."

"The old butler wishes to know if you will breakfast in the library, sir?" asked Linwood.

"Yes, that will do admirably; delighted I am to hear there is such a thing here," muttered he; for already he had suffered the disappointment the host's appearance had caused him to tinge all his thoughts with bitterness, and make him regard his visit as an act of purgatorial endurance.

In a large and well-furnished library, with a projecting window offering a view over the entire of Clue Bay, Forester found a small breakfast-table laid beside the fireplace. From the aspect of comfort in everything around, to the elegance of the little service of Dresden, with its accompaniment of ancient silver, the most fastidious critic would not have withheld his praise, and the young Englishman fell into a puzzled revery how so much of taste for the refinements of daily life could consort with the strange specimen of society he had witnessed the preceding evening. The book-shelves, too, in all their later acquisitions, exhibited judgment in the works selected, and as Forester ran his eye over the titles, he was more than ever at fault to reconcile such readings with such habits. On the tables lay scattered the latest of those political pamphlets which the great contested question of the day evoked, many of them ably and powerfully written, and abounding in strong sarcasm; of these, the greater number were attacks on the meditated Union; some of them, too, bore pencil-marks and annotations, from which Forester collected that the Knight's party leanings were by no means to the Government side of the question.

"It will be hard, however," thought he, "but some inducement may be found to tempt a man whose house and habits evidence such a taste for enjoyment; he must have ambitions of one kind or other, and if not for himself, his son, at least, must enter into his calculations. Your ascetic or your anchorite may be difficult to treat with, but show me the man with a good cook, a good stable, a good cellar, and the odds are there is a lurking void somewhere in his heart, to discover which is to have the mastery over him forever." Such were the conclusions the young aide-de-camp came to after long and mature thought, nor were they very unnatural in one whose short experience of life had shown him few, if any, exceptions to his theory. He deemed it possible, besides, that, although the Knight's politics should incline to the side of Opposition, there might be no very determined or decided objection to the plans of Government, and that, while proof against the temptations of vulgar bribery, he might be won over by the flatteries and seductions of which a Ministry can always be the dispensers. To open the negotiation with this view was then the great object with Forester, to sound the depth of the prejudices with which he had to deal, to examine their bearings and importance, to avoid even to ruffle the slightest of national susceptibilities, and to make it appear that, while Government could have little doubt of the justice of their own views, they would not permit a possibility of misconstruction to interfere with the certainty of securing the adhesion of one so eminent and influential as the Knight of Gwynne.

The old adage has commemorated the facility of that arithmetic which consists in reckoning "without one's host," and there are few men of warm and generous temperament who have not fallen, some time or other, into the error. Forester was certainly not the exception; and so thoroughly was he imbued with the spirit of his mission, and so completely captivated by the force of his own argument, that he walked up and down the ample apartment, repeating aloud, in broken and disjointed sentences, some of those irrefutable positions and plausible inducements by which he speculated on success. It was already the dusk of the evening, the short hours of a wintry day had hurried to a close, and, except where the bright glare of the wood fire was reflected on the polished oaken floor, all was shrouded in shadow within that spacious library. Now pushing aside some great deep-cushioned chair, now removing from his path the projecting end of a table, Forester succeeded in clearing a space in which, as he walked, he occasionally gave vent to such reflections as these: —

"The necessities of the Empire, growing power and influence of England, demand a consolidation of her interests and her efforts – this only to be effected by the Act of Union – an English Parliament, the real seat of legislation, and, as such, the suitable position for you, Sir Knight, whose importance will now increase with the sphere in which you exercise your abilities. I do not venture," said he, aloud, and with a voice attuned to its most persuasive accents, – "I do not venture to discuss with you a question in which your opportunities and judgment have given you every advantage over me; I would merely direct your attention to those points on which my relative, Lord Castlereagh, founds the hopes of obtaining your support, and those views by which, in the success of the measure, a more extended field of utility will open before you. If I do not speak more fully on the gratitude which the Ministry will feel for your co-operation, and the pledges they are most ready and willing to advance, it is because I know – that is, I am certain that you – in fact, it is the conviction that – in short – "

"In short, it is because bribery is an ugly theme, sir, and, like a bad picture, only comes out the worse the more varnish you lay on it." These words, uttered in a low, solemn voice from a corner of the apartment, actually stunned Forester, who now stood peering through the gloom to where the indistinct figure of a man was seen seated in the recess of a large chair.

"Excuse me, Captain Forester," said he, rising, and coming forward with his hand out; "but it has so seldom been my fortune to hear any argument in defence of this measure that I could not bring myself to interrupt you before. Let me, however, perform a more pleasing task, in bidding you welcome to Gwynne Abbey. You slept well, I trust, for I left you in a happy unconsciousness of this world and its cares." It required all Forester's tact to subdue the uncomfortable sensations his surprise excited, and receive the proffered welcome with becoming cordiality. But in this he soon succeeded, not less from his own efforts than from the easy and familiar tone of the speaker. "I have to thank you for a very pleasant note you were kind enough to bring me," continued he, as he seated himself beside the fire. "And how have you left Dublin? Is the popular excitement as great as some weeks ago? or are the people beginning to see that they have nothing to say to a measure which, like venison and turtle, is a luxury only to be discussed by their betters?"

"I should say that there is more of moderation in the tone of all parties of late," said Forester, diffidently, for he felt all the awkwardness of alluding to a topic in which his own game had been so palpably discovered.

"In that case, your friends have gained the victory. Patriotism, as we call it in Ireland, requires to be fed by mob adulation; and when the 'canaille' get hoarse, their idols walk over to the Treasury benches. – But there 's the bell to dress; and I may as well tell you that we are the models of punctuality in this house, and you have only fifteen minutes for your toilet." With these words the old gentleman arose and strode out of the room, while Forester hastened, on his side, to prepare for the dinner-hour.

When the aide-de-camp had accomplished his dressing, he found the party at table, where a vacant place was left for himself at the right hand of the host.

"We gave you three minutes' grace, Captain Forester. I knew a candidate lose his election in the county by very little more," – and here he dropped his voice to a whisper, only audible to Forester, – "and I'd rather contract to keep the peace in a menagerie full of tigers than hold in check the passions of twenty hungry fox-hunters while waiting for dinner."

Forester cast his eyes over the table, and thought he perceived that his delay had not prepossessed the company in his favor. The glances which met his own round the board bore an expression of very unmistakable dissatisfaction, and although the conversation was free and unrestrained, he felt all the awkwardness of his position.

There was at the time we speak of – has it quite disappeared even yet? – a very prevalent notion in most Irish circles that Englishmen in general, and English officials in particular, assumed airs of superiority over the natives of the country, treating them as very subordinate persons in all the relations in which good-breeding and social intercourse are concerned; and this impression, whether

well or ill founded, induced many to suspect intentional insult in those chance occurrences which arise out of thoughtlessness and want of memory.

If the party now assembled manifested any portion of this feeling, it was not sufficient to interrupt the flow of conversation, which took its course in channels the most various and dissimilar. The individuals were intimate, or, at least, familiar with each other, and, through all the topics of hunting, farming, politics, and horse-racing, ran a tone of free and easy raillery that kept a laugh moving up and down the table, or occasionally occupying it entirely. The little chill which marked Forester's first entrance into the room wore off soon, and ere the dinner was over he had drunk wine with nearly every man of the party, and accepted invitations to hunt, course, and shoot in at least a dozen different quarters. Lionel Darcy's friend, as he was soon known to be, was speedily made the object of every attention and civility among the younger members of the company, while even the older and less susceptible reserved their judgments on one they had at first received with some distrust.

Forester had seen in the capital some specimens of those hard-drinking habits which characterized the period, but was still unprepared for the determined and resolute devotion to the bottle which at once succeeded to the dinner. The claret-jugs coursed round the table with a rapidity that seemed sleight of hand, and few refrained from filling a bumper every time. With all his determination to preserve a cool head and a calm judgment, Forester felt that, what between the noisy tumult of the scene, the fumes of wine, and the still more intoxicating excitement of this exaggerated conviviality, he could listen to tales of miraculous performances in the hunting-field, or feats of strength and activity more than mortal, with a degree of belief, or, at least, sufferance, he could scarcely have summoned a few hours earlier.

If wine expands the heart, it has a similar influence on the credulity; and belief, when divested of the trammels of cool judgment, takes a flight which even imagination might envy. It was in a frame of mind reduced to something like this, amid the loud voices of some, the louder laughter of others, strange and absurd bets as eagerly accepted as proffered, that he became suddenly mindful of his own wager made with the stranger at Kilbeggan, and the result of which he had pledged himself to test at the very first opportunity.

No sooner had he mentioned the fact than the interests of the company, directed before into so many different channels, became centred upon the circumstance, and questions and inquiries were rapidly poured in upon him to explain the exact nature of the wager, which in the then hallucination of the party was not an over-easy task.

"You are to describe the stranger, Captain Forester, and we are to guess his name: that I take it is the substance of the bet," said a thin-faced, dark-eyed man, with a soft silkiness of accent very unlike the others. This was Mr. Hickman O'Reilly, member for the county, and colleague of "the Knight" himself.

"Yes, that is exactly what I mean. If my portrait be recognized, I 've won my bet."

"May I ask another question?" said Mr. O'Reilly. "Are we to pronounce only from the evidence before us, or are we at liberty to guess the party from other circumstances known to ourselves?"

"Of course, from the evidence only," interrupted a red-faced man of about five-and-thirty, with an air and manner which boded no small reliance on his own opinion; then, mimicking the solemnity of a judge, he addressed the assembled party thus: "The gentlemen of the jury will dismiss from their minds everything they may hear touching the case outside this court, and base their verdict solely on the testimony they shall now hear." These few words were delivered in a pompous and snuffling tone, and, it was easy to see, from the laughter they excited, were an accurate imitation of some one well known to the company.

Mr. Alexander MacDonough was, however, a tolerably successful mimic, and had practised as an attorney until the death of an uncle enabled him to exercise his abilities in the not less crafty calling of a squireen gentleman; he was admitted by a kind of special favor into the best county

society, for no other reason, as it seemed, than that it never occurred to any one to exclude him. He was a capital horseman, never turned from a fence in his life, and a noted shot with the pistol, in which his prowess had been more than once tried on "the ground." Probably, however, these qualities would scarcely have procured him acceptance where he now sat, if it were not that he was looked upon as the necessary accompaniment of Mr. Hickman O'Reilly and his son Beecham, not indeed to illustrate their virtues and display their good gifts, but as a species of moral blister, irritating and maddening them eternally.

They had both more money and ambition than MacDonough, had taken higher and wider views of life, and were strenuously working up from the slough of a plebeian origin to the high and dry soil of patrician security. To them, MacDonough was a perfect curse; he was what sailors call "a point of departure," everlastingly reminding them of the spot from which they had sailed, and tauntingly hinting how, with all their canvas spread, they had scarcely gained blue water.

Of the O'Reillys a few words are necessary. Three generations were still living, each depicting most strikingly the gradations by which successful thrift and industry transmute the man of humble position into the influential grade of an estated gentleman: the grandfather was an apothecary of Loughrea; the son, an agent, a money-lender, and an M. P.; and the grandson, an Etonian and a fellow-commoner of Balliol, emerging into life with the prospect of a great estate, unencumbered with debt, considerable county influence, and, not least of all, the *ricochet* of that favor with which the Government regarded his pliant parent.

To all of these, MacDonough was insupportable, nor was there any visible escape from the insolent familiarity of his manner. Flattery had been tried in vain; all their blandishments could do nothing with one who well knew that his own acceptance into society depended on his powers of annoying; if not performing the part of torturer, he had no share in the piece; a quarrel with him was equally out of the question, for even supposing such an appeal safe, – which it was very far from being, – it would have reflected most disadvantageously on the O'Reillys to have been mixed up in altercation with a man so much beneath themselves as Alexander MacDonough of "The Tenement;" for such, in slang phrase, did he designate his country residence.

Let us now return from this long but indispensable digression to the subject which suggested it.

So many questions were put, explanations demanded, doubts suggested, and advices thrown out to Forester that it was not until after a considerable lapse of time he was enabled to commence his description of the unknown traveller, nor even then was he suffered to proceed without interruption, a demand being made by MacDonough that the absent individual was entitled to counsel, who should look after his interests, and, if necessary, cross-examine the evidence. All this was done in that style of comic seriousness to which Forester was so little accustomed that, what with the effect of wine, heat, and noise, combined with the well-assumed gravity of the party, he really forgot the absurdity of the whole affair, and became as eager and attentive as though the event were one of deep importance.

It was at last decided that MacDonough should act as counsel for the unknown, and the company should vote separately, each writing down on a slip of paper their impression of the individual designated, the result being tested by the majority in favor of any one person.

"Gentlemen of the jury," said the host, in a voice of deep solemnity, "you will hear and well weigh the evidence before you touching this case, and decide with truth and conscience on its merits; so fill a bumper and let us begin. Make your statement, Captain Forester."

The sudden silence succeeding to the tumultuous uproar, the directed gaze of so many eager faces, and the evident attention with which his statement was awaited, conspired to make Forester nervous and uneasy; nor was it without something of an effort that he began the recital of his adventure at Kilbeggan. Warming as he proceeded, he told of the accident by which his acquaintance with the unknown traveller was opened, and at length, having given so much of preliminary, entered upon the description of the individual.

Whatever Forester's own impression of the stranger, he soon felt how very difficult a task portrait-painting was, and how very unlike was his representation of the individual in question. The sure way to fail in any untried career is to suspect a failure; this he soon discovered, and cut short a most imperfect description by abruptly saying, "If you guess him now, gentlemen, I acknowledge the merit is far more in *your* perspicuity than in *my* powers of description."

"Only a few questions before you leave the table, sir," said MacDonough, addressing him with the mock sternness of a cross-examining barrister. "You said the unknown was gifted with a most courteous and prepossessing manner: pray what is the exact meaning of your phrase? for we uncouth inhabitants of a remote region have very imperfect notions on such subjects. My friend Dan Mahon here would call any man agreeable who could drink fourteen tumblers, and not forget the whiskey in mixing the fifteenth; Tom Callaghan, on the other hand, would test his breeding by what he knew of a wether or a 'short-horn;' Giles, my neighbor here, would ask, Did he lend you any money? and Mr. Hickman O'Reilly would whisper a hope that he came of an old family."

The leer by which these words were accompanied gave them an impertinence even greater than their simple signification; but however coarse the sarcasm, it suited well the excited tone of the party, who laughed loud and vociferously as he uttered it.

Strange as he was to the party, Forester saw that the allusion had a personal application, and was very far from relishing a pleasantry whose whole merit was its coarseness; he therefore answered in a tone of rather haughty import, "The person I met, sir, was a gentleman; and the word, so far as I know, has an easy signification, at least to all who have had opportunities to learn it."

"I have no doubt of that, Captain Forester," replied MacDonough; "but if we divided the house on it here, some of us might differ about the definition. Your neighbor there, Mr. Beecham O'Reilly, thinks his own countrymen very far down in the scale."

"A low fellow, – nobody pays attention to him," muttered young O'Reilly in Forester's ear, as, with a cheek pale as death, he affected to seem totally indifferent to the continued insolence of his tormentor.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Beecham O'Reilly," interposed MacDonough, with a significant smile, "but your observation was, I think, meant to apply to me."

The young man made no answer, but proceeded to fill his glass with claret, while his hand trembled so much that he spilled the wine about the table. Forester stared at him, expecting each instant to hear his reply to this appeal; but not a word escaped him, nor did he even look towards the quarter from which the taunt proceeded.

"Didn't I tell you so, sir?" exclaimed MacDonough, with a triumphant laugh. "There are various descriptions of gentlemen: some are contented with qualities of home growth, and satisfied to act, think, and deport themselves like their neighbors; others travel for this improvement, and bring back habits and customs that seem strange in their own country; now, I don't doubt but in England that young gentleman would be thought all that was spirited and honorable."

"I have nothing to say to that, sir!" replied Forester, sternly; "but if you would like to hear the opinion my fellow-countrymen would have of yourself, I could perhaps favor you."

"Stop, stop! where are you hurrying to? No more of this nonsense," cried the host, who had suddenly caught the last few words, while conversing with a person on his left.

"I beg your pardon most humbly, sir," said MacDonough, whose faced was flushed with passion, and whose lip trembled, notwithstanding all his efforts to seem calm and collected, "but the gentleman was about to communicate a trait of English society. I know you misunderstood him."

"Perhaps so," said the host; "what was it, Captain Forester? I believe I did not hear you quite accurately."

"A very simple fact, sir," said Forester, coolly, "and one that can scarcely astonish Mr. MacDonough to hear."

"And which is – ?" said MacDonough, affecting a bland smile.

"Perhaps you 'd ask for a definition, if I employ a single word."

"Not this time," said MacDonough, still smiling in the same way.

"You are right, sir, it would be affectation to do so; for though you may feel very natural doubts about what constitutes a gentleman, you ought to be pretty sure what makes a blackguard."

The words seemed to fall like a shell in the company; one burst of tumultuous uproar broke forth, voices in every tone and accent of eagerness and excitement, when suddenly the host cried out, "Lock the doors; no man leaves the room till this matter is settled; there shall be no quarrelling beneath this roof so long as Bagenal Daly sits here for his friend."

The caution came too late – MacDonough was gone.

CHAPTER V. AN AFTER-DINNER STORY

The unhappy event which so suddenly interrupted the conviviality of the party scarcely made a more than momentary impression. Altercations which ended most seriously were neither rare nor remarkable at the dinner-tables of the country gentlemen, and if the present instance caused an unusual interest, it was only because one of the parties was an Englishman.

As for Forester himself, his first burst of anger over, he forgot all in his astonishment that the host was not "the Knight" himself, but only his representative and friend, Bagenal Daly.

"Come, Captain Forester," said he, "I owe you an *amende* for the mystification I have practised upon you. You shall have it. Your travelling acquaintance at Kilbeggan was the 'Knight of Gwynne;' and the few lines he sent through your hands contained an earnest desire that your stay here might be sufficiently prolonged to admit of his meeting you at his return."

"I shall be extremely sorry," said Forester, in a low voice, "if anything that has occurred to-night shall deprive me of that pleasure."

"No, no – nothing of the kind," said Daly, with a significant nod of his head. "Leave that to me." Then, raising his voice, he added: "What do you say to that claret, Conolly?"

"I agree with you," replied a rosy-cheeked old squire in a hunting-dress, "it 's too old, – there's little spirit left in it."

"Quite true, Tom. Wine has its dotage, like the rest of us. All that the best can do is to keep longest; and, after all, we scarcely can complain of the vintage that has a taste of its once flavor at our age. It's a long time since we were schoolfellows."

"It is not an hour less than – "

"Stop, Tom, – no more of that. Of all scores to go back upon, that of years past is the saddest."

"By Jove! I don't think so," said the hearty old squire, as he tossed off a bumper. "I never remember riding better than I did to-day. Ask Beecham O'Reilly there which of us was first over the double ditch at the red barn."

"You forget, sir," said the young gentleman referred to, "that I was on an English-bred mare, and she doesn't understand these fences."

"Faith, she wasn't worse off, in that respect, than the man on her back," said old Conolly, with a hearty chuckle. "If to look before you leap be wisdom, you ought to be the shrewdest fellow in the country."

"Beecham, I believe, keeps a good place in Northamptonshire," said his father, half proudly.

"Another argument in favor of the Union, I suppose," whispered a guest in Conolly's ear.

"Well, well," sighed the old squire, "when I was a young man, we 'd have thought of bringing over a dromedary from Asia as soon as an English horse to cross the country with."

"Dick French was the only one I ever heard of backing a dromedary," said a fat old farmer-like man, from the end of the table.

"How was that, Martin?" said Daly, with a look that showed he either knew the story or anticipated something good.

"And by all accounts, it 's the devil to ride," resumed the old fellow; "now it's the head down and the loins up, and then a roll to one side, and then to the other, and a twist in the small of your back, as if it were coming in two. Oh, by the good day! Dick gave me as bad as a stitch in the side just telling me about it."

"But where did he get his experience, Martin? I never heard of it before," said Daly.

"He was a fortnight in Egypt, sir," said the old farmer. "He was in a frigate, or a man-of-war of one kind or another, off – the devil a one o' me knows well where it was, but there was a consul there, a son of one of his father's tenants – indeed, ould French got him the place from the Government – and when he found out that Dick was on board the ship, what does he do but writes him an invitation

to pass a week or ten days with him at his house, and that he 'd show him some sport. 'We 've elegant hunting,' says he; 'not foxes or hares, but a big bird, bigger nor a goose, they call – 'By my conscience, I 'll forget my own name next, for I heard Dick tell the story at least twenty times."

"Was it an ostrich?" said Tom.

"No; nor an oyster either, Mr. Conolly," said the old fellow, who thought the question was meant to quiz him.

"'T was an ibis, Martin," cried Daly, – "an ibis."

"The devil a doubt of it, – that's the name. A crayture with legs as long as Mr. Beecham O'Reilly's, and a way of going – half-flying, half-walking – almost impossible to catch; and they hunt him on dromedaries. Dick liked the notion well, and as he was a favorite on board, he got lave for three days to go on shore and have his fun; though the captain said, at parting, 'It's not many dromedaries you'll see, Dick, for the Pasha has them all up the country at this time.' This was true enough; sorra a bit of a camel or dromedary could be seen for miles round. But however it was, the consul kept his word, and had one for Dick the next morning, – a great strapping baste, all covered with trappings of one kind or other; elegant shawls and little hearthrugs all over him.

"The others were mounted on mules or asses, any way they could, and away they went to look after the goose – the 'ibis,' I mean. Well, to be short with it, they came up with one on the bank of the river, and soon gave chase; he was a fine strong fellow, and well able to run. I wish you heard Dick tell this part of it; never was there such sport in the world, blazing away all together as fast as they could prime and load, at one time at the goose, more times at each other; the mules kicking, the asses braying, and Dick cantering about on his dromedary, upsetting every one near him, and shouting like mad. At last he pinned the goose up in a narrow corner among some old walls, and Dick thought he 'd have the brush; but sorra step the dromedary would stir; he spurred and kicked, and beat away with a stick as hard as he could, but it was all no good, – it was the carpets maybe, that saved him; for there he stood fast, just for all the world as if he was made of stone.

"Dick pulled out a pistol and fired a shot in his ear, but all to no use; he minded it no more than before. 'Bad luck to you for a baste,' says Dick, 'what ails you at all – are you going to die on me? Get along now.' The divil receave the step I 'll go till I get some spirits and wather!' says the dromedary, 'for I 'm clean smothered with them b – y blankets;' and with them same words the head of the baste fell off, and Dick saw the consul's own man wiping the perspiration off his face, and blowing like a porpoise. 'How the divil the hind legs bears it I can't think,' says he; 'for I 'm nigh dead, though I had a taste of fresh air.'

"The murther was out, gentlemen, for ye see the consul could n't get a raal dromedary, and was obliged to make one out of a Christian and a black fellow he had for a cook, and sure enough in the beginning of the day Dick says he went like a clipper; 'twas doubling after the goose destroyed him."

Whether the true tale had or had not been familiar to most of the company before, it produced the effect Bagenal Daly desired, by at first creating a hearty roar of laughter, and then, as seems the consequence in all cases of miraculous narrative, set several others upon recounting stories of equal credibility. Daly encouraged this new turn of conversation with all the art of one who knew how to lead men's thoughts into a particular channel without exciting suspicion of his intentions by either abruptness or over zeal: to any ordinary observer, indeed, he would have now appeared a mere enjoyer of the scene, and not the spirit who gave it guidance and direction.

In this way passed the hours long after midnight, when, one by one, the guests retired to their rooms; Forester remaining at the table in compliance with a signal which Daly had made him, until at length Hickman O'Reilly stood up to go, the last of all, save Daly and the young guardsman.

Passing round the table, he leaned over Forester's chair, and in a low, cautious whisper, said, "You have put down the greatest bully in this country, Captain Forester; do not spoil your victory by being drawn into a disreputable quarrel! Good night, gentlemen both," said he, aloud, and with a polite bow left the room.

"What was that he whispered?" said Daly, as the door closed and they were left alone together.

Forester repeated the words.

"Ah, I guessed why he sat so late; he sees the game clearly enough. You, sir, have taken up the glaive that was thrown down for his son's acceptance, and he knows the consequence – clever fellow that he is! Had you been less prompt, Beecham's poltroonery might have escaped notice; and even now, if you were to decline a meeting – "

"But I have no intention of doing any such thing."

"Of course, I never supposed you had; but were you to be swayed by wrong counsels and do so, Master Beecham would be saved even yet. Well, well, I am sorry, Captain Forester, you should have met such a reception amongst us, and my friend Darcy will be deeply grieved at it. However, we have other occupation now than vain regret, so to bed as fast as you can, and to sleep; the morning is not very far off, and we shall have some one from MacDonough here by daybreak."

With a cordial shake-hands, like men who already knew and felt kindly towards each other, they separated for the night.

While Forester was thus sensible of the manliness and straightforward resolution that marked Bagenal Daly's character, he was very far from feeling satisfied with the position in which he found himself placed. A duel under any circumstances is scarcely an agreeable incident in one's life; but a meeting whose origin is at a drinking-bout, and where the antagonist is a noted fire-eater, and by that very reputation discreditable, is still a great aggravation of the evil.

To have embroiled himself in a quarrel of this kind would, he well knew, greatly prejudice him in the estimation of his cold-tempered relative, Lord Castlereagh, who would not readily forgive an indiscretion that should mar his own political views. As he sat in his dressing-room revolving such unpleasant reflections, there came a gentle tap at the door; he had but time to say, "Come in," when Mr. Hickman O'Reilly entered.

"Will you excuse this intrusion, Captain Forester?" said he, with an accent in which the blandest courtesy was mingled with a well-affected cordiality; "but I really could not lay my head on a pillow in tranquillity until I had seen and spoken to you in confidence. This foolish altercation – "

"Oh, pray don't let that give you a moment's uneasiness! I believe I understand the position the gentleman you allude to occupies in your country society: that license is accorded him, and freedoms taken with him, not habitually the case in the world at large."

"You are quite right, your views are strictly accurate. MacDonough is a low fellow of very small fortune, no family, – indeed, what pretension he has to associate with the gentry I am unable to guess, nor would you have ever seen him under this roof had the Knight been at home; Mr. Daly, however, who, being an old schoolfellow and friend of Darcy's, does the honors here in his absence, is rather indiscriminate in his hospitalities. You may have remarked around the table some singular-looking guests, – in fact, he not only invites the whole hunting-field, but half the farmers over whose ground we 've ridden, and, were it not that they have sense and shame enough to see their own place with truer eyes, we should have an election mob here every day of the week; but this is not exactly the topic which led to my intruding upon you. I wished, in the first place, to rest assured that you had no intention of noticing the man's impertinence, or of accepting any provocation on his part; in fact, were he admissible to such a privilege, my son Beecham would have at once taken the whole upon himself, it being more properly his quarrel than yours."

Forester, with all his efforts, was unable to repress a slight smile at these words. O'Reilly noticed it, and colored up, while he added: "Beecham, however, knew the impossibility of such a course, – in fact, Captain Forester, I may venture to say, without any danger of being misunderstood by you, that my son has imbibed more correct notions of the world and its habits at *your* side of St. George's Channel than could have fallen to him had his education been merely Irish."

This compliment, if well meant, was scarcely very successful, for Forester bit his lip impatiently, but never made any answer. Whether O'Reilly perceived the cause of this, or that, like a skilful painter,

he knew when to take his brush off the canvas, he arose at once and said, “I leave you, then, with a mind much relieved. I feared that a mistaken estimate of MacDonough’s claims in society, and probably some hot-brained counsels of Mr. Bagenal Daly – ”

“You are quite in error there; let me assure you, sir, his view of the matter is exactly my own,” interrupted Forester, calmly.

“I am delighted to hear it, and have now only one request: will you favor us with a few days’ visit at Mount O’Reilly? I may say, without vanity, that my son is more likely to be a suitable companion to you than the company here may afford; we ‘ve some good shooting and – ”

“I must not suffer you to finish the catalogue of temptations,” said Forester, smiling courteously; “my hours are numbered already, and I must be back in Dublin within a few days.”

“Beecham will be sorely disappointed; in fact, we came back here to-day for no other reason than to meet you at dinner. Daly told us of your arrival. May we hope to see you at another opportunity? are your engagements formed for Christmas yet?”

“I believe so, – Dorsetshire, I think,” muttered Forester, with a tone that plainly indicated a desire to cushion the subject at once; and Mr. O’Reilly, with a ready tact, accepted the hint, and, wishing him a most cordial goodnight, departed.

CHAPTER VI. A MESSAGE

While Forester slept soundly and without a dream, his long, light breathing scarce audible within the quiet chamber, a glance within the room of Bagenal Daly would have shown that, whatever the consequences of the past night's troubles, he, at least, was not likely to be taken unprepared. On the table in the middle of the apartment two wax candles burned, two others, as yet unlighted, stood ready on the chimney-piece, a pistol case lay open, displaying the weapons, whose trim and orderly appearance denoted recent care, a fact attested by certain cloths and flannels which lay about; a mould for bullets, and about a dozen newly-cast balls most carefully filed and rubbed smooth with sandpaper, were flanked by a small case of surgical instruments, with an ample supply of lint and ligatures such as are used to secure bleeding vessels, in the use of which few unprofessional persons could vie with Bagenal Daly. A few sheets of paper lay also there, on which appeared some recent writing; and in a large, deep armchair, ready dressed for the day, sat Daly himself, sound asleep; one arm hung listlessly over the chair, the other was supported in the breast of his waistcoat. The strong, stern features, unrelaxed by repose, had the same impassive expression of cold defiance as when awake, and if his lips muttered, the accents were not less determined and firm than in his moments of self-possession. He awoke from time to time and looked at his watch, and once threw open the sash, and held out his hand to ascertain if it were raining; but these interruptions did not interfere with his rest, for, the minute after, he slept as soundly as before. Nor was he the only one within that house who counted the hours thus anxiously. A lantern in the stable beamed brightly, showing three horses ready saddled, the bridles on the neck of each, and ready at a moment's notice to be bitted; while pacing slowly to and fro, like a sentinel on his post, was the tall figure of Sandy M'Grane, wrapped in a long cloth cloak, and his head covered by a cap, whose shape and material spoke of a far-off land and wild companionship; for it was the skin of a black fox, and the workmanship the product of a squaw's fair fingers.

Sandy's patrol was occasionally extended to the gateway, where he usually halted for a few seconds to listen, and then resumed his path as leisurely as before. At last, he remained somewhat longer at the gate, and bent his head more cautiously to hear; then, noiselessly unbarring and unlocking the door, he leaned out. To an ear less practised than his own the silence would have been complete. Not so with Sandy, whose perceptions had received the last finish of an Indian education. He retired hastily, and, approaching that part of the court beneath his master's window, gave a long, low whistle. The next moment the casement was opened, and Daly's head appeared.

"What now, Sandy? It is but a quarter past five."

"It may be so; but there 's a horse coming fast up the lower road."

"Listen again, and try if you hear it still."

Sandy did so, and was back in a few moments. "He's crossing the bridge at 'the elms' now, and will be here in less than three minutes more."

"Watch the gate, then – let there be no noise – and come up by the back stairs." With these words Daly closed the sash, and Sandy returned to his post.

Ere many minutes elapsed, the door of Mr. Daly's chamber was opened, and Sandy announced Major Hackett of Brough. As Bagenal Daly rose to meet him, an expression of more than ordinary sternness was stamped upon his bold features.

"Your servant informed me that I should find you in readiness to receive me, Mr. Bagenal Daly," said the Major, a coarse-looking, carbuncled-face man of about forty; "but perhaps the object of my visit would be better accomplished if I could have a few minutes' conversation with a Captain Forester who is here."

"If you can show me no sufficient cause to the contrary, sir," replied Daly, proudly, "I shall act for him on this occasion."

"I beg pardon," said Hackett, smiling dubiously. "The business I came upon induced me to suspect that, at your time of life – "

"Go on, sir, – finish your speech," said Daly, with' a fixed and steady stare which, very far from reassuring, seemed only to increase the Major's confusion.

"After all, Mr. Daly," resumed he, more hurriedly, "I have nothing whatever to do with that. My duty is to convey a message from Mr. Alexander MacDonough to a gentleman named Forester, here. If you will accept the proposition, and assist in the necessary arrangements – "

"We are ready, sir, – quite ready. One of the consequences of admitting dubious acquaintances to the intimacy of the table is such a case as the present. I was guilty of one fault in this respect, but I shall show you I was not unprepared for what might follow it." And as he spoke he threw open the window and called out, "Sandy! awaken Captain Forester. I suppose you are ready, Major Hackett, with your friend?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. MacDonough expects us at Cluan Point."

"And bridle the horses, Sandy," continued Daly, speaking from the window.

"I conclude, from what I see," said Hackett, "that your friend is not only decided against offering an apology for his offence, but desirous of a meeting."

"Who said so, sir? – or what right have you to suppose that any gentleman of good family and good prospects should indulge such an unnatural caprice as to wish to risk character and life in a quarrel with Mr. Alexander MacDonough?"

"Circumstanced as that gentleman is at this moment, your observations are unsuitable, sir," replied the Major.

"So they are," said Daly, hastily; "or, rather, so they would have been, if not provoked by your remark. But, hang me! if I think it signifies much; if it were not that some of our country neighbors were good-natured enough to treat this same Mr. MacDonough on terms of equality before, I 'd have advised Captain Forester not to mind him. *My* maxim is, there are always low fellows enough to shoot one another, and never come trespassing among the manors of their betters."

"I must confess myself unprepared, sir, to hear language like this," said Hackett, sternly.

"Not a whit more than I feel at seeing myself negotiating a meeting with a man turned out of the army with disgrace," said Daly, as his face grew purple with anger. "Were it not that I would not risk a hint of dishonor on this young Englishman's fame, I 'd never interchange three words with Major Hackett."

"You shall answer for this, sir, and speedily too, by G – d!" said Hackett, moving towards the door.

Daly burst into an insolent laugh, and said, "Your friend waits us at Cluan?" The other bowed. "Well, within an hour we'll be there also," continued the old man; and Hackett retired without adding a syllable.

"We 've about five miles to ride, Captain Forester," said Daly, as they issued forth beneath the deeply arched gate of the abbey; "but the road is a mountain one, and will not admit of fast riding. A fine old place it is," said he, as, halting his horse, he bestowed a gaze of admiration on the venerable building, now dimly visible in the gray of the breaking dawn. "The pious founders little dreamt of men leaving its portals on such an errand as ours." Then, suddenly, with a changed voice, he added, "Men are the same in every age and country; what our ancestors did in steel breastplates, we do now in broadcloth; the law, as they call it, must always be subservient to human passions, and the judge and the jury come too late, since their function is penalty, and not prevention."

"But surely you do not think the world was better in the times when might was right?" said Forester.

"The system worked better than we suspect," said the old man, gravely; "there was such a thing as public opinion among men in those days, although its exponents were neither pamphlets nor scurrilous newspapers. The unjust and the cruel were held in reprobation, and the good and the

charitable had a fame as pure, although their deeds were not trumpeted aloud or graven on marble. Believe me, sir, we are not by any means so much wiser or better than those who went before us, and even if we were both, we certainly are not happier. This eternal warfare, this hand to hand and foot to foot straggle for rank, apd wealth, and power, that goes on amongst us now, had no existence then, when a man's destiny was carved out for him, and he was all but powerless to alter or control it."

"That alone was no small evil," said Forester, interrupting him; "the humbly born and the lowly were debarred from all the prizes of life, no matter how great their deserts or how shining their abilities."

"Every rank and class had wherewithal to supply its own requirements," answered Daly, proudly, "and the menial had more time to indulge affection for his master, when removed from the temptation to rival him. That strong bond of attachment has all but disappeared from amongst us." As he spoke, he turned in his saddle and called out, "Can we cross the sands now, or is the tide making, Sandy?"

"It's no just making yet," said the servant, cautiously; "but when the breakers are so heavy off the Point, it's aye safer to keep the road."

"The road be it, then," muttered Daly to himself; "men never are so chary of life as when about to risk it."

The observation, although not intended, reached Forester's ears, and he smiled and said, "Naturally enough, perhaps we ought not to be too exacting with fortune."

Daly turned suddenly round, and, after a brief pause, asked, "What skill have you with the pistol?"

"When the mark is a shilling I can hit it, three times out of four, at twenty paces; but I never fired at a man."

"That does make a difference," said Daly, musingly; "nothing short of an arrant coward could look calmly on a fellow-creature while he pointed a loaded pistol at his heart. A brave man will always have self-possession enough to feel the misery of his position. Had the feat been one of vengeance, and not of love, Tell had never hit the apple, sir. But there, – is not that a fire yonder?"

"Yes, I see a red glare through the mist."

"There's a fire on Cluan Point," said Sandy, riding up to his master's side; "I trow it's a signal."

"Ah! meant to quicken us, perhaps; some fear of being surprised," said Daly, hastily; "let us move on faster." And they spurred their horses to a sharp trot as they descended the gentle slope, which, projecting far out to sea, formed the promontory of Cluan.

It was at this moment the glorious panorama of Clue Bay broke forth before Forester's astonished eyes. He looked with rapture on that spacious sheet of water, which, in all the majesty of the great ocean, came heaving and swelling against the rocky coast, or pouring its flood of foam through the narrow channels between the islands. Of these, the diversity seemed endless, some rich and verdant, teeming with abundance and dotted with cottages; others, less fertile, were covered with sheep or goats; while some, rugged and barren, frowned gloomily amid the watery waste, and one, far out to sea, a bold and lofty cliff, showed a faint twinkling star upon its side, the light for the homeward-bound ships over the Atlantic.

"That's Clare Island yonder," said Bagenal Daly, as he observed the direction of Forester's gaze; "I must show you the great cliff there. What say you if we go to-morrow?"

"To-morrow!" repeated Forester, smiling faintly; "perhaps so."

CHAPTER VII. A MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

When speaking of Gwynne Abbey to our readers, we omitted to mention a very beautiful portion of the structure, – a small building which adjoined the chapel, and went, for some reason or other, by name of the "Sub-Prior's house." More recent in date than the other parts of the abbey, it seemed as if here the architect had expended his skill in showing of how much ornament and decoration the Gothic was capable. The stone selected was of that pinkish hue that is seen in many of the cathedrals in the North of England, – a material peculiarly favorable to the labors of the chisel, and when protected from the rude influence of weather possessing qualities of great endurance. This building was surrounded on three sides by a flower-garden, which descended by successive terraces to the edge of a small river pursuing its course to the sea, into which it emerged about a mile distant. A very unmindful observer would have been struck at once with the aspect of greater care and cultivation bestowed here than on other portions of the abbey grounds. The trim and orderly appearance of everything, from the flowering shrubs that mingled their blossoms with the rich tracery of the architraves, to the bright gravel of the walks, denoted attention, while flowers of rare beauty, and plants of foreign growth, were seen blending their odors with the wild heaths that shed their perfume from the mountain side. The brilliant beauty of the spot was, indeed, heightened by the wild and rugged grandeur of the scene, like a diamond glittering brighter amid the dark dross of the mine.

On the side nearest to the bay, and with a view extending to the far-off Island of Achill, an apartment opened by three large windows, the upper compartments of which exhibited armorial bearings in stained glass. If the view without presented a scene of the most grand and varied loveliness, within this chamber art seemed to have vied in presenting objects the most strange and beautiful. It was furnished in all the gorgeous taste of the time of Louis XV. The ceiling, a deep mass of carving relieved by gold, presented masses of fruit and flowers fantastically interwoven, and hanging, as though suspended, above the head. The walls were covered with cabinet pictures of great price, the very frames objects of wonder and admiration. Large vases of Dresden and Sèvres porcelain stood on brackets of massive silver, and one great cabinet of ebony, inlaid with gold and tortoiseshell, displayed an inscription that showed it was a present from the great Louis XIV. himself.

It is not, however, to linger over the objects of rare and costly excellence which here abounded that we have conducted our reader to this chamber, and whither we would beg of him to accompany us about two hours later than the events we have narrated in our last chapter.

At a breakfast-table whose equipage was, in price and elegance, in exact keeping with all around, were two ladies. The elder of the two was advanced in life, and although her hair was perfectly white, her regular features and finely pencilled brow bore, even yet, great marks of beauty. If the expression of the face was haughty, it was so without anything of severity; it was a look of pride that denoted rather a conscious sense of position and its duties, than any selfish assumption of personal importance. Habitual delicacy of health contributed to strengthen this expression, lending to it a character which, to an incautious observer, might convey the notion of weariness or ennui. The tones of her voice were low and measured, and perfectly devoid of any peculiar accent. If to those more familiar with the cordial familiarity of Irish manner, Lady Eleanor Darcy might seem cold and frigid, such as knew more of the world at large, and were more conversant with the general habits of society, could detect, through all the seeming impassive-ness of her air, that desire to please, that anxiety to make a favorable impression, which marked the character of one who in early life had been the beauty of her circle. Even now, as she lay back indolently within the deep recess of a cushioned chair, her attitude evinced a gracefulness and ease which long habit seemed to have identified with her nature.

At the opposite side of the table, and busy in the preparation of the breakfast, stood a young girl whose age could not have been more than eighteen. So striking was the resemblance between them that the least acute of physiognomists must have pronounced her the daughter. She was dressed with

remarkable simplicity; but not all the absence of ornament could detract from the first impression her appearance conveyed, that she was one of birth and station. Her beauty was of that character which, although attributed peculiarly to the Celtic race, seems strangely enough to present its most striking examples among the Anglo-Irish. Rich auburn hair, the color varying from dark brown to a deep golden hue as the light falls more or less strongly on it, was braided over a brow of classic beauty; her eyes were of blue, that deep color which, in speaking or in moments of excitement, looks like dark hazel or even black; these were fringed with long dark lashes which habitually hung heavily over the eyes, giving them a character of sleepy, almost indolent, beauty. The rest of her features, in unison with these, were of that Greek mould which our historians attribute to the Phoenician origin of our people, – a character by no means rare to be seen to this day among the peasantry. If the mild and gentle indications of womanly delicacy were told in every lineament of her face, there were traits of decision and determination when she spoke not less evident. From her mother she inherited the placid tenderness of English manner, while from her father her nature imbibed the joyous animation and buoyant light-heartedness of the Irish character.

"And there are but two letters, Mamma," said Helen, "in the bag this morning?"

"But two," said Lady Eleanor; "one of them from Lionel."

"Oh, from Lionel!" cried the young girl, eagerly; "let me see it."

"Read this first," said Lady Eleanor, as she handed across the table a letter bearing a large seal impressed with an Earl's coronet; "if I mistake not very much, Helen, that's my cousin Lord Netherby's writing; but what eventful circumstance could have caused his affectionate remembrance of me, after something nigh twenty years' silence, is beyond my power of divination."

Helen Darcy well knew that the theme on which her mother now touched was the sorest subject on her mind, and, however anxiously she might, under other circumstances, have pressed for a sight of her brother's letter, she controlled all appearance of the wish, and opened the other without speaking.

"It is dated from Carlton House, Mamma, the 2d – "

"He is in waiting, I suppose," said Lady Eleanor, calmly; and Helen began.

"'My dear cousin – '"

"Ah! so he remembers the relationship at least," muttered the old lady to herself.

"'My dear cousin, it would be a sad abuse of the small space a letter affords, to inquire into the cause of our long silence; faults on both sides might explain much of it. I was never a brilliant correspondent, you were always an indolent one; if I wrote stupid letters, you sent me very brief answers; and if you at last grew weary of giving gold for brass, I can scarcely reproach you for stopping the exchange. Still, at the risk of remaining unanswered, once more – '"

"This is intolerable," broke in Lady Eleanor; "he never replied to the letter in which I asked him to be your godfather."

"'Still, at the risk of remaining unanswered, once more I must throw myself on your mercy. In the selfishness of age, – don't forget, my dear coz, I am eleven years your senior, – in the selfishness of age – '"

The old lady smiled dubiously at these words, and Helen read on: —

"'I desire to draw closer around me those ties of kindred and family which, however we may affect to think lightly of, all our experiences in life tend to strengthen and support. Yes, my dear Eleanor, we are the only two remaining of all those light-hearted boys and bright-eyed girls that once played upon the terrace at Netherby. Poor Harry, your old sweetheart at Eton, fell at Mysore. Dudley, with ability for anything, would not wait patiently for the crowning honors of his career, took a judgeship in Madras, and he, too, sleeps in the land of the stranger! And our sweet Catherine! your only rival amongst us, how short-lived was her triumph! – for so the world called her marriage with the Margrave: she died of a broken heart at two-and-twenty! I know not why I have called up these sad memories, except it be in the hope that, as desolation deals heavily around us, we may draw more closely to each other.'"

Lady Eleanor concealed her face with her handkerchief, and Helen, who had gradually dropped her voice as she read, stopped altogether at these words.

"Read on, dear," said the old lady, in a tone whose firmness was slightly shaken.

"'A heart more worldly than yours, my dear Eleanor, would exclaim that the *parti* was unequal, – that I, grown old and childless, with few friends left, and no ambitions to strive for, stood in far more need of *your* affectionate regard, than you, blessed with every tie to existence, did of *mine*; and the verdict would be a just one, for, by the law of that Nemesis we all feel more or less, even in this world, *you*, whom we deemed rash and imprudent, have alone amongst us secured the prize of that happiness we each sought by such different paths.'"

A heavy sigh that broke from her mother made Helen cease reading, but at a motion of her hand she resumed: "'For all our sakes, then, my dear cousin, only remember so much of the past as brings back pleasant memories. Make my peace with your kind-hearted husband. If I can forgive *him* all the pangs of jealousy he inflicted on *me, he* may well pardon any slight transgressions on *my* part, and Lionel, too. – But, first, tell me how have I offended my young kinsman? I have twice endeavored to make his acquaintance, but in vain. Two very cold and chilling answers to my invitations to Netherby are all I have been able to obtain from him: the first was a plea of duty, which I could easily have arranged; but the second note was too plain to be mistaken: "I'll none of you," was the tone of every line of it. But I will not be so easily repulsed: I am determined to know him, and, more still, determined that he shall know me. If you knew, my dear Eleanor, how proudly my heart beat at hearing his Royal Highness speak of him! – he had seen him at Hounslow at a review. It was a slight incident, but I am certain your son never told it, and so I must. Lionel, in passing with his company, forgot to lower the regimental flag before the Prince, on which Lord Maxwell, the colonel, the most passionate man in England, rode up, and said something in an angry tone. "I beg pardon, Colonel," said the Prince, "if I interfere with the details of duty, but I have remarked that young officer before, and, trust me, he 'll come off 'with flying colors,' on more occasions than the present." The *mot* was slight, but the flattery was perfect; indeed, there is not another man in the kingdom can compete with his Royal Highness on this ground. Fascination is the only word that can express the charm of his manner. To bring Lionel more particularly under the Prince's notice, has long been a favorite scheme of mine; and I may say, without arrogance, that my opportunities are not inferior to most men's in this respect; I am an old courtier now, – no small boast for one who still retains his share of favor. If the son have any of his father's gifts, his success with the Prince is certain. The manner of the highly-bred Irish gentleman has been already pronounced by his Royal Highness as the type of what manner should be, and, with your assistance, I have little doubt of seeing Lionel appointed on the staff, here.

"'Now, I must hazard my reputation a little, and ask what is the name of your second boy, and what is he doing?'"

Helen burst into a fit of laughter at these words, nor could Lady Eleanor's chagrin prevent her joining in the emotion.

"This, he shall certainly have an answer to," said the old lady, recovering her self-possession and her pride; "he shall hear that my second boy is called Helen."

"After all, Mamma, is it not very kind of him to remember even so much?"

"I remember even more, Helen," interrupted Lady Eleanor; "and no great kindness in the act either."

"Shall I read all the possible and impossible chances of pushing my fortune in the Army or Navy, Mamma?" said Helen, archly, "for I see that his Lordship is most profuse in offers for my advancement, – nay, if I have a clerical vocation, here is a living actually waiting my acceptance."

"Let us rather look for something that may explain the riddle, my dear," said Lady Eleanor, taking the letter in her own hand, while she lightly skimmed over the last page. "No, I can find no clew to it here – Stay, what have we in this corner? – 'Politically speaking, there is no news here; indeed, in that respect, *your* side of the Channel engrosses all the interest; the great question of the "Union" still

occupies all attention. Virtually, *we* know the ministry have the majority, but there will be still a very respectable fight, to amuse the world withal. How does the Knight vote? With us, I hope and trust, for although I may tell you, in confidence, the result is certain, his support would be very grateful to the Government, and, while he himself can afford to smile at ministerial flatteries, Lionel is a young fellow whom rapid promotion would well become, and who would speedily distinguish himself, if the occasion were favorable. At all events, let the Knight not vote *against* the minister; this would be a crime never to be forgiven, and personally offensive to his Royal Highness; and I trust Darcy is too good a sportsman to prefer riding the last horse, even should he not wish to mount the winner.'"

Here the letter concluded, amid protestations of regard most affectionately worded, and warm wishes for a renewal of intimacy, only to cease with life. Across this was written, with a different ink, and in a hurried hand: "I have this moment seen Mr. Pitt; the Knight's vote is very important. He may make any terms he pleases, – Pitt spoke of a peerage; but I suppose that would not be thought advisable. Let me hear *your* opinion. Lionel has been gazetted to a company this morning, *en attendant* better."

Lady Eleanor, who had read these last lines to herself, here laid down the letter without speaking, while the slight flush of her cheek and the increased brilliancy of her eyes showed that her feelings were deeply and powerfully excited.

"Well, Mamma, have you found the solution to this mystery?" said Helen, as she gazed with affectionate solicitude on her mother's features.

"How unchangeable a thing is nature!" muttered Lady Eleanor, unconsciously, aloud; "that boy was a crafty tuft-hunter at Eton."

"Of whom are you speaking, Mamma?"

"Lord Netherby, my dear, who would seem to have cultivated his natural gift with great success; but," added she, after a pause, and in a voice scarcely above a whisper, "I am scarcely as easy a dupe now as when he persuaded me to take ash-berries in exchange for cherries. Let us hear what Lionel says."

"As usual, Mamma, four lines in each page, and the last a blank," said Helen, laughing: – "'My dear mother, what blandishments have you been throwing over the War Office? They have just given me my company, which, by the ordinary rules of the service, I had no pretension to hope for, these five years to come! Our colonel, too, a perfect Tartar, overwhelms me with civilities, and promises me a leave of absence on the first vacancy. Have you seen Forester, of ours? and how do you like him? A little cold or so at first, but *you* will not dislike that. His riding will please my father. Get him to sing, if you can; his taste and voice are both first-rate. Your worthy relative, Lord Netherby, bores me with invitations to his houses, town and country. I say "No;" but he won't be denied. Was he not rude, or indifferent, or something or other, once upon a time, to the ancient house of Darcy? Give me the *consigne*, I pray you, for I hear he has the best cock-shooting in England; and let my virtue, if possible, be rewarded by a little indulgence. Tell Helen they are all giving up powder here, and wear their hair as she does; but not one of them half as good-looking.

Yours, as ever,

Lionel Darcy.

Hounslow, January 1st, 1800'"

"Is that Sullivan, there?" said Lady Eleanor, as her daughter finished the reading of this brief epistle. "What does he mean by staring so at the window? The old man seems to have lost his senses!"

"Ochone arie! ochone! ochone!" cried Tate, wringing his hands with the gestures of violent grief, as he moved up and down before the windows.

"What has happened, Tate?" said Helen, as she threw open the sash to address him.

"Ochone! he's kilt – he's murthered – cut down like a daisy in a May morning. And he, the iligant, fine young man!"

"Whom do you mean? Speak plainly, Sullivan," said the commanding voice of Lady Eleanor. "What is it?"

"'Tis the young officer from England, my lady, that came down the night before last to see the master. Oh, murther! murther! if his honor was here, the sorra bit of this grief we 'd have to-day – ochone!"

"Well, go on," said his mistress, sternly.

"And if he came down for joy, 't is sorrow he supped for it,' the young crayture! They soon finished him."

"Once for all, sir, speak out plainly, and say what has occurred."

"It's Mr. Bagenal Daly done it all, my lady, – divil a one of me cares who hears me say it. He's a cruel man, ould as he is. He made him fight a duel, the darling young man, – the 'moral' of Master Lionel himself; and now he's kilt – ochone! ochone!"

"Can this dreadful story be true, Helen?" said Lady Eleanor, as the faint color left her features. "Call Margaret; or, stay – Sullivan, is Mr. Daly here?"

"That he is, never fear him. He's looking at his morning's work – he's in the room where they carried the corpse; and the fine corpse it is."

"Go tell Mr. Daly that Lady Eleanor desires to see him at once."

"Go, and lose no time, Tate," said Helen, as, almost fainting with terror, she half pushed the old man on his errand.

The mother and daughter sat silently gazing on each other for several minutes, terror and dismay depicted in the face of each, nor were they conscious of the lapse of time, when the door opening presented Mr. Bagenal Daly before them. He was dressed in his usual suit of dark brown, and with all his accustomed neatness. His long cravat, which, edged with deep lace, hung negligently over his waistcoat, was spotless in color and accurate in every fold, while his massive features were devoid of the slightest signs of emotion or excitement.

For an instant Lady Eleanor was deceived by all these evidences of tranquillity, but a glance at old Tate's face, as he stood near the door, assured her that from such signs she had nothing to hope. Twice had Mr. Bagenal Daly performed his courteous salutations, which, in the etiquette of a past time, he made separately to each lady, and still Lady Eleanor had not summoned courage to address him. At last he said, —

"Have I been mistaken, and must I apologize for a visit at an hour so unseemly? But I heard that your Ladyship wished to see me."

"Quite true, Mr. Daly," interrupted Lady Eleanor, her habitual tact supplying a courage her heart was far from feeling. "Will you be seated? Leave the room, Sullivan. My daughter and I," continued she, speaking with increased rapidity, to cover the emotion of the moment, "have just heard something of a dreadful event which is said to have occurred this morning. Old Sullivan so often exaggerates that we indulge the hope that there may be little or no foundation for the story. Is it true, sir, there has been a duel fought near this?" Her voice grew fainter as she spoke, and at last became a mere whisper.

"Yes, madam," replied Daly, with an air of perfect calmness. "Two gentlemen met this morning at Cluan Point, and both were wounded."

"Neither of them killed?"

"Wounded, madam," reiterated Daly, as if correcting a misconstruction.

"Are the wounds deemed dangerous, sir?"

"Mr. MacDonough's, madam, is not so. The inconvenience of using his left hand on any similar occasion, in future, will be probably the extent of the mishap. The other gentleman has not been equally fortunate, – his life is in peril." Mr. Daly paused for a second, and then, perceiving that Lady Eleanor still awaited a further explanation, added, with gravity, "When taking his position on the ground, madam, instead of standing half-front, as I took pains to point out to him, Captain Forester – "

"Forester! – is that his name, sir?" interrupted Helen, as, in a hand trembling with terror, she held out Lionel's letter towards her mother.

"A friend of my son's, – is he in the same regiment with Lionel?" asked Lady Eleanor, eagerly.

Daly bowed, and answered, "The same, madam."

A low, faint sigh broke from Lady Eleanor, and, covering her eyes with her hand, she sat for some moments without speaking.

"Has any one seen him, sir?" asked Helen, suddenly, and in a voice that showed energy of character had the mastery over every feeling of grief, – "is there a surgeon with him?"

"No, Miss Darcy," said Daly, with a certain haughtiness of manner. "I believe, however, that, although not a professional person, my knowledge of a gunshot wound is scarcely inferior to most men's. I have sent in two directions for a surgeon; meanwhile, with my servant's aid, I have succeeded in extracting the ball – I beg pardon, ladies, I think I heard the noise of wheels; it is probably the doctor." And, with a deep bow and a measured step, Mr. Bagenal Daly withdrew, leaving Lady Eleanor and her daughter speechless, between grief and terror.

CHAPTER VIII. THE "HEAD" OF A FAMILY

When Bagenal Daly reached the courtyard, he was disappointed at finding that, instead of the surgeon whose arrival was so anxiously looked for, the visitor was no other than old Dr. Hickman, the father of Hickman O'Reilly, M. P. for the county, and grandfather of that very promising young gentleman slightly presented to our reader in an early chapter.

If the acorn be a very humble origin for the stately oak of the forest, assuredly Peter Hickman, formerly of Loughrea, "Apothecary and Surgeon," was the most unpretending source for the high and mighty house of O'Reilly. More strictly speaking, the process was only a "graft," and it is but justice to him to say, that of this fact no one was more thoroughly convinced than old Peter himself. Industry and thrift had combined to render him tolerably well off in the world, when the death of a brother who had sought his fortunes in the East – when fortunes were to be found in that region – put him in possession of something above two hundred thousand pounds. Even before this event, he had been known as a shrewd contriver of small speculations, a safe investor of little capital, was conversant, from the habits of his professional life, with the private circumstances of every family of the country where money was wanting, and where repayment was sure; the very temperament of his patients suggested to him the knowledge by which he guided his operations, and he could bring his skill as a medical man into his service, and study his creditors with the eye of a physiologist. When this great accession of wealth so suddenly occurred, far from communicating his good fortune to his friends and neighbors, he merely gave out that poor Tom had left him "his little savings," "though God knows, in that faraway country, if he'd ever see any of it." His guarded caution on the subject, and the steady persistence with which he maintained his former mode of life, gave credence to the story, and the utmost estimate of his wealth would not have gone beyond being a snug old fellow "that might give up his business any day." This was, however, the very last thing in his thoughts; the title of "Doctor," so courteously bestowed in Ireland on the humbler walks of medicine, was a "letter of marque" enabling him to cruise in latitudes otherwise inaccessible. Any moneyed embarrassment of the country gentry, any severe pressure to be averted by an opportune loan or the sale of landed property, was speedily made available by him as a call to see whether "the cough was easier;" or "how was the gouty ankle;" if the "mistress was getting better of the nerves," "and the children gaining strength by the camomile." And in this way he made one species of gain subservient to another, while his character for kindness and benevolence was the theme of the whole neighborhood.

For several years long he pursued this course without deviating, and in that space had become the owner of estated property to a very great extent, not only in his own, but in three neighboring counties. How much longer he might have persisted in growing rich by stealth it is difficult to say, when accident compelled him to change his *tactique*. A very large property had been twice put up for sale in the county Mayo, under the will of its late owner, the trustees being empowered to make a great reduction in the price to any purchaser of the whole, – a condition which, from the great value of the estates, seemed of little avail, no single individual being supposed able to make such a purchase.

At last, and as a final effort to comply with the wishes of the testator, the estate was offered at ten thousand pounds below the original demand, when a bidder made his appearance, the offer was accepted, and the apothecary of Lough-rea became the owner of one of the most flourishing properties of the West, with influence sufficient to return a member for the county.

The murder was now out, and the next act was to build a handsome but unpretentious dwelling-house on a part of the estate, to which he removed with his son, a widower with one child. The ancient family of O'Reilly had been the owners of the property, and the name was still retained to grace the new demesne, which was called Mount O'Reilly, while Tom Hickman became Hickman O'Reilly, under the plea of some relationship to the defunct, – a point which gained little credence in the county, and drew from Bagenal Daly the remark "that he trusted that they had a better title

to the acres than the arms of the O'Reillys." When old Peter had made this great spring, he would gladly have retired to Loughrea once more, and pursued his old habits; but, like a blackleg who has accidentally discovered his skill at the game, no one would play with him again, and so he was fain to put up with his changed condition, and be a "gentleman," as he called it, in spite of himself.

He it was who, under the pretence of a friendly call to see the Knight, now drove into the courtyard of Gwynne Abbey. His equipage was a small four-wheeled chair close to the ground, and drawn by a rough mountain pony which, in size and shape, closely resembled a water-dog. The owner of this unpretending conveyance was a very diminutive, thin old man, with a long, almost transparent nose, the tip of which was of a raspberry red; a stiff queue, formed of his wiry gray hair carefully brushed back, even from the temples, made a graceful curve on his back, or occasionally appeared in front of his left shoulder. His voice was a feeble treble, with a tremulous quiver through all he said, while he usually finished each sentence with a faint effort content with his opinion; and this, on remarkable occasions, at a laugh, a kind of acknowledgment to himself that he was would be followed by the monosyllable "ay," – a word which, brief as it was, struck terror into many a heart, intimating, as it did, that old Peter had just satisfied himself that he had made a good bargain, and that the other party was "done."

The most remarkable circumstance of his appearance was his mode of walking, and even here was displayed his wonted ingenuity. A partial paralysis had for some years affected his limbs, and particularly the muscles which raise and flex the legs; to obviate this infirmity, he fastened a cord with a loop to either foot, and by drawing them up alternately he was enabled to move forward, at a slow pace, to be sure, and in a manner it was rather difficult to witness for the first time with becoming gravity. This was more remarkable when he endeavored to get on faster, for then the flexion, a process which required a little time, was either imperfectly performed or altogether omitted, and consequently he remained stationary, and only hopped from one leg to the other after the fashion of a stage procession. His dress was a rusty black coat with a standing collar, black shorts, and white cotton stockings, over which the short black gaiters reached half way up the leg; on the present occasion he also wore a spencer of light gray cloth, as the day was cold and frosty, and his hat was fastened under his chin by a ribbon.

"And so he is n't at home, Tate," said he, as he sat whipping the pony from habit, – a process which the beast seemed to regard with a contemptuous indifference.

"No, Docther," for by this title the old man was always addressed by preference, "the Knight's up in Dublin; he went on Monday last."

"And this is the seventh of the month," muttered the other to himself. "Faith, he takes it easy, anyhow! And you don't know when he'll be home?"

"The sorra know I know, Docther; 't is maybe to-night he 'd come – maybe to-morrow – maybe it would be three weeks or a month; and it's not but we want him badly this day, if it was God's will he was here!" These words were uttered in a tone that Tate intended should provoke further questioning, for he was most eager to tell of the duel and its consequences; but the "doctor" never noticed them, but merely muttered a short "Ay."

"How do you do, Hickman?" cried out the deep voice of Bagenal Daly at the same moment. "You did n't chance to see Mulville on the road, did you?"

"How d'ye do, Mister Daly? I hope I see you well. I did n't meet Dr. Mulville this morning, – is there anything that's wrong here? Who is it that's ill?"

"A young fellow, a stranger, who has been burning powder with Mr. MacDonough up at Cluan, and has been hit under the rib here."

"Well, well, what folly it is, and all about nothing, I 'll engage."

"So your grandson would tell you," said Daly, sternly; "for if he felt it to be anything, this quarrel should have been his."

"Faix, and I'm glad he left it alone," said the other, complacently; "'t is little good comes of the same fighting. I 'll be eighty-five if I live to March next, and I never drew sword nor trigger yet against any man."

"One reason for which forbearance is, sir, that you thereby escaped a similar casualty to yourself. A laudable prudence, and likely to become a family virtue."

The old doctor felt all the severity of this taunt against his grandson, but he merely gave one of his half-subdued laughs, and said, in a low voice, "Did you get a note from me, about a fortnight ago? Ay!"

"I received one from your attorney," said Daly, carelessly, "and I threw it into the fire without reading it."

"That was hasty, that was rash, Mr. Daly," resumed the other, calmly; "it was about the bond for the four thousand six hundred – "

"D – n me if I care what was the object of it! I happened to have some weightier things to think of than usury and compound interest, as I, indeed, have at this moment. By the by, if you have not forgotten the old craft, come in and see this poor fellow. I 'm much mistaken, or his time will be but short."

"Ay, ay, that's a debt there's no escaping!" muttered the old man, combining his vein of moralizing with a sly sarcasm at Daly, while he began the complicated series of manouvres by which he usually effected his descent from the pony carriage.

In the large library, and on a bed hastily brought down for the purpose, lay Forester, his dress disordered, and his features devoid of all color. The glazed expression of his eye, and his pallid, half-parted lips showed that he was suffering from great loss of blood, for, unhappily, Mr. Daly's surgery had not succeeded in arresting this symptom. His breathing was short and irregular, and in the convulsive movement of his fingers might be seen the evidence of acute suffering. At the side of the bed, calm, motionless, and self-possessed, with an air as stern as a soldier at his post, stood Sandy M'Grane; he had been ordered by his master to maintain a perfect silence, and to avoid, if possible, even a reply to Forester's questions, should he speak to him. The failure of the first few efforts on Forester's part to obtain an infraction of this rule ended in his submitting to his destiny, and supplying by signs the want of speech; in this way he had just succeeded in procuring a drink of water, when Daly entered, followed by Hickman. As with slow and noiseless steps they came forward, Forester turned his head, and, catching a glance of the mechanism by which old Peter regulated his progression, he burst into a fit of uncontrollable laughter.

"Ye mauna do it, ye mauna do it, sir," said Sandy, sternly; "ye are lying in a pool of blood this minute, and it's no time for a hearty laugh. Ech! ech! sir," continued he, turning towards his master, "if we had that salve the Delawares used to put on their wounds, I wadna say but we 'd stap it yet."

By this time old Peter had laid his hand on the sick man's wrist, and, with a large watch laid before him on the bed, was counting his pulse aloud.

"It's a hundred and fifty," said he, in a whisper, which, although intended for Daly's ear, was overheard by Forester; "but it's thin as a thread, and looks like inward bleeding."

"What's to be done, then? have you anything to advise?" said Daly, almost savagely.

"Very little," said Hickman, with a malignant grin, "except writing to his friends. I know nothing else to serve him."

A brief shudder passed over Daly's stern features, rather like the momentary sense of cold than proceeding from any mental emotion, and then he said, "I spoke to you as a doctor, sir; and I ask you again, is there nothing can be done for him?"

"Well, well, we might plug up the wound, to be sure, and give him a little wine, for he's sinking fast. I 've got a case of instruments and some lint in the gig – never go without the tools, Mr. Daly – there's no knowing when one may meet a little accident like this."

"In Heaven's name, then, lose no time!" said Daly. "Whatever you can do, do it at once."

The tone of command in which he spoke seemed to act like a charm on the old doctor, for he turned at once to hobble from the room.

"My servant will bring what you want," said Daly, impatiently.

"No, no," said Peter, shaking his head, "I have them under lock and key in the driving-box; there's no one opens that but myself."

Daly turned away with a muttered execration at the miser's suspicions, and then, fixing his eyes steadily on Sandy's face, he gave a short and significant nod. The servant instinctively looked after the doctor; then, slowly moving across the floor, the nod was repeated, and Sandy, wheeling round, made three strides, and, catching the old man round the body with his remaining arm, carried him out of the room with the same indifference to his struggles or his cries as a nurse would bestow on a misbehaving urchin.

When Sandy deposited his burden beside the pony-carriage, old Peter's passion had reached its climax, and assuredly, if the will could have prompted the act, he would have stamped as roundly as he swore.

"It's an awfu' thing," observed Sandy, quaintly, "to see an auld carle, wi' his twa legs in the grave, blaspheming that gate; but come awa', tak' your gimcracks, and let's get back again, or, by the saul of my body, I 'll pit you in the fountain!"

Reasoning on that excellent principle of analogy, that what had happened might happen again even in a worse form, old Hickman unlocked the box and delivered into Sandy's hands a black leather case, bearing as many signs of long years and service as his own.

"Let me walk I let me walk!" cried he, in a supplicating tone.

"Av you ca' it walking," said Sandy, grimly; "but it's mair, far mair, like the step o' a goose than a Christian man."

What success might have attended Peter's request it is difficult to say, for at this moment the noise of a horse was heard galloping up the avenue, and, immediately after, Mulville, the surgeon sent for by Mr. Daly, entered the courtyard. Without deigning a look towards Hickman, or paying even the slightest attention to his urgent demands for the restoration of his pocket-case, Sandy seized Mulville by the arm and hurried him away to the house.

The newly arrived doctor was an army surgeon, and proceeded, with all the readiness experience had taught him, to examine Forester's wound; while Sandy, to save time, opened old Hickman's case on the bed, and arranged the instruments.

"Look here, Mr. Daly," said the doctor, as he drew some lint from the antiquated leather pocket, – "look here, and see how our old friend practises the art of medicine." He took up, as he spoke, a roll of paper, and held it towards Daly: it was a packet of bill stamps of various value, for old Peter could never suffer himself to be taken short, and was always provided with the ready means of transacting money affairs with his patients.

"Here's my d – d old bond," said Daly, laughing, as he drew forth a much-crumpled and time-discolored parchment; "I'd venture to say the man would deserve well of his country who would throw this confounded pocket-book, and its whole contents, into that fire."

"Ye maybe want some o' the tools yet," said Sandy, dryly, for, taking his master's observations in the light of a command, he was about to commit the case and the paper to the flames.

"Take care! take care!" said Mulville, in a whisper; "it might be a felony."

"It's devilish little Sandy would care what name they would give it," replied Daly; "he 'd put the owner on the top of them, and burn all together, on a very brief hint;" then, lowering his voice, he added, "What's his chance?"

"The chance of every young fellow of two or three-and-twenty to live through what would kill any man of my time of life. With good care and quiet, but quiet above all, he may rub through it. We must leave him now."

"You 'll remain here," said Daly; "you 'll not quit this, I hope?"

"For a day or two at least, I 'll not leave him." And with this satisfactory assurance Daly closed the door, leaving Sandy on guard over the patient.

"Here's your case of instruments, Hickman," said Daly, as the old doctor sat motionless in his gig, awaiting their reappearance; for, in his dread of further violence, he had preferred thus patiently to await their return, than venture once more into the company of Sandy M'Grane. "We 've robbed you of nothing except some lint; and," added he in a whisper to Muiville, "I very much doubt if that case were ever opened and closed before with so slight an offence against the laws of property."

Old Hickman by this time had opened the pocket-book, and was busily engaged inspecting its contents.

"Ay, that's the bond!" said Daly, laughing; "you may well think how small the chance of repayment is, when I did not think it worth while burning it."

"It will be paid in good time," said Hickman, in a low cackle, "and the interest too, maybe – ay!" And with sundry admonitions from the whip, and successive chucks of the rein, the old pony threw up his head, shook his tail crossly, and, with a step almost as measured as that of his master, moved slowly out of the courtyard.

"So much for our century and our civilization!" said Daly, as he looked after him; "the old miser that goes there has more power over our country and its gentry than ever a feudal chief wielded in the days of vassalage."

CHAPTER IX. “DALY’S.”

It was upon one of the very coldest evenings of the memorably severe January of 1800 that the doors of Daly’s Club House were besieged by carriages of every shape and description: some brilliant in all the lustre of a perfect equipage; others more plainly denoting the country gentleman or the professional man; and others, again, the chance occupants of the various coach-stands, displayed every variety of that now extinct family whose members went under the denominations of “whiskeys,” “jingles,” and “noddies.”

A heavy fall of sleet, accompanied with a cutting north wind, did not prevent the assemblage of a considerable crowd, who, by the strange sympathy of gregarious curiosity, were drawn up in front of the building, satisfied to think that something unusual, of what nature they knew not, was going forward within, and content to gaze on the brilliant glare of the lustres as seen through the drawn curtains, and mark the shadowy outlines of figures as they passed and repassed continually.

Leaving the mob, for it was in reality such, to speculate on the cause of this extraordinary gathering, we shall at once proceed up the ample stair and enter the great saloon of the Club, which, opening by eight windows upon College Green, formed the conversation-room of the members.

Here were now assembled between three and four hundred persons, gathered in groups and knots, and talking with all the eagerness some engrossing topic could suggest. In dress, air, and manner they seemed to represent sections of every social circle of the capital: some, in full Castle costume, had just escaped from the table of the Viceroy; others, in military uniform or the dress of the Club, contrasted with coats of country squires or the even more ungainly quaintness of the lawyers’ costume. They were of every age, from the young man emerging into life, to the old frequenter of the Club, who had occupied his own place and chair for half a century, and in manner and style as various, many preserving the courteous observances of the old school in all its polished urbanity, and the younger part of the company exhibiting the traits of a more independent, but certainly less graceful, politeness. Happily for the social enjoyments of the time, political leanings had not contributed their bitterness to private life, and men of opinions the most opposite, and party connections most antagonistic, were here met, willing to lay aside for a season the arms of encounter, or to use them with only the sportive pleasantry of a polished wit. If this manly spirit of mutual forbearance did not characterize the very last debates of the Irish Parliament, it may in a great measure be attributed to the nature of that influence by which the measure of the Union was carried; for bribery not only corrupted the venal, but it soured and irritated the men who rejected its seductions; and in this wise a difference was created between the two parties, wider and more irreconcilable than all which political animosity or mere party dislike could effect.

On the present occasion, however, the animating spirit of the assemblage seemed to partake of nothing less than a feature of political acrimony; and amid the chance phrases which met the ear, and the hearty bursts of laughter that every moment broke forth, it was easy to collect that no question of a party nature occupied their attention.

At the end of the room a group of some twenty persons stood or sat around a chair in which a thin elderly gentleman was seated, his fine and delicately marked features far more unequivocally proclaiming rank than even the glittering star he wore on his breast. Without being in reality very old, Lord Drogheda seemed so, for, partly from delicacy of health, and partly, as some affirmed, from an affectation of age (a more frequent thing than is expected), he had contracted a stoop, and walked with every sign of debility.

“Well, gentlemen, how does time go?” said he, with an easy smile. “Are we not near the hour?”

“Yes; it wants but eleven minutes of ten now, my Lord,” said one of the group. “Do you mean to hold him sharp to time?”

"Egad, I should think so," interrupted a red-whiskered squire, in splashed top-boots. "I've ridden in from Kildare to-night to see the match, and I protest against any put-off."

Lord Drogheda turned his eyes towards the speaker with a look in which mildness was so marked, it could not be called reproof, but it evidently confused him, as he added, "Of course, if the gentlemen who have heavy wagers on it are content I must be also."

"I, for one, say 'sharp time,'" cried out a dapperly dressed young fellow, with an open pocket-book in his hand; "play or pay is the only rule in these cases."

"I 've backed my Lord at eight to ten, in hundreds," said another, "and certainly I 'll claim my bet if the Knight is one minute late."

"Then you have just three to decide that question," said one at his side. "My watch is with the Post-office."

"Quite, time enough left to order my carriage," said Lord Drogheda, rising with an energy very different from his ordinary indolent habit. "If the Knight of Gwynne should be accidentally delayed, gentlemen, I, for my part, prefer being also absent. It will then be a matter of some difficulty for the parties betting to say who is the delinquent." He took his hat as he spoke, and was moving through the crowd, when a sudden cheer from without was heard, and then, almost the instant after, a confused sound of acclamation as the Knight of Gwynne entered, leaning on the arm of Con Heffernan. Making his way with difficulty through the crowd of welcoming friends and acquaintances, the Knight approached the end of the room where Lord Drogheda now awaited him, standing.

"Not late, my Lord, though very near it," said he, extending his hand. "If I should apologize, however, I have an excuse you will not reject, – Con Heffernan's Burgundy is hard to part with."

"Very true, Knight," said his Lordship, smiling. "With a friend one sees so seldom, a little dalliance is most pardonable."

This sarcasm was met by a ready laugh, for Heffernan was better known as a guest at other tables than a host at his own; nor did he, at whose expense the jest was made, refrain from joining in the mirth, while he added, —

"The Burgundy, like one of your Lordship's *bons mots*, is perhaps appreciated the more highly because of its rarity."

"Very true, Heffernan," replied Lord Drogheda; "we should keep our wit and wine only for our best friends."

"Faith, then," whispered the red-whiskered squire who spoke before, "if the liquor does not gain more by keeping than the wit, I'd recommend Con to drink it off a little faster."

"Or, better still," interposed the Knight, "only give it to those who understand its flavor. But we are, if I mistake not, losing very valuable time. What say you to the small room off the library, or will your Lordship remain here?"

"Here, if equally agreeable to you. We are both of us too old in the harness to care much for being surrounded by spectators."

"Is it true, Con," said a friend in Heffernan's ear, "that Darcy has laid fifty thousand on this party?"

"I believe you are rather under than over the mark," whispered Heffernan. "The wager has been off and on these last eight or ten years. It was made at Hutchinson's one evening when we all had drunk a good deal of wine. At first, whist was talked of; but Drogheda objected to Darcy's naming Vicars as his partner."

"More fool he! Vicars is a first-rate player, but confoundedly unlucky."

"Be that as it may, they fixed on piquet as the game, and, if accounts be true, all the better for Darcy. They say he has beaten the best players in France."

"And what is really the stake? One hears so many absurd versions of it."

"The Ballydermot property."

"The whole of it?"

"Every acre, with the demesne, house, plate, pictures, carriages, wine, – begad! I 'm not sure if the livery servants are not included, – against fifty thousand pounds. You know Drogheda has lent him a very large sum on a mortgage of that property already, and this will make the thing about double or quits."

"Well, Heffernan," cried the Knight, "are you making your book there? When you've quite finished, let me have a pinch of that excellent snuff of yours."

"Why not try mine?" said Lord Drogheda, pushing a magnificently jewelled box, containing a miniature, across the table.

"'T would be a bad augury, my Lord," said Darcy, laughing. "If I remember aright, you won this handsome box from the Duke de Richelieu."

"Ah! you know that story, then?"

"I was present at the time, and remember the circumstance perfectly. The King was leaning over the Duke's chair, watching the game – "

"Quite true. The Duke affected not to know that his Majesty was there, and when he placed the box on the table, cried, 'A thousand louis against the portrait of the King!' There was no declining such a wager at such a moment, although, intrinsically, the box was not worth half the sum. I accepted, and won it."

"And the Duke then offered to give you twice the money for it back again?"

"He did so, and I refused. I shall not readily forget the sweet, sad smile of the King as he tapped the wily courtier on the shoulder, and said, 'Ah! Monsieur le Duc, do you only value your King when you've lost him?' They were prophetic words! Well, well! we 've got upon a sorrowful theme; let's change it."

"Here are the cards, at last," said the Knight, taking a sealed packet from the waiter's hand, and breaking it open on the table. "Now, Heffernan, order me a glass of claret negus, and take care that no one comes to worry us with news of the House."

"It's a sugar bill, or a new clause in the Corporation Act, or something of that kind, they 're working at," said Lord Drogheda, negligently.

"No, my Lord," interposed Heffernan, slyly, "it's a bill to permit your Lordship's nephew to hold the living of Ardragh with his deanery."

"All right and proper," said his Lordship, endeavoring to hide a rising flush on his cheek by an opportune laugh. "Tom is a capital fellow, and a good parson too."

"And ought never to omit the prayer for the Parliament!" muttered Heffernan, loud enough to be heard by the bystanders, who relished the allusion heartily.

"The deal is with you, Knight," said Lord Drogheda, pushing the cards across the table.

The moment afterwards, a pin could not have fallen unheard in that crowded assembly. Even they who were not themselves bettors felt the deepest interest in the game where the stake was so great, and all who could set value on skill and address were curious to watch the progress of the contest. Not a word was spoken on either side as the cards fell upon the table, and although many of the bystanders displayed looks of more eager anxiety, the players showed by their intentness how strenuously each struggled for the victory.

After the lapse of about half an hour, a low, murmuring noise spread through the room, and the news was circulated that the first game was over, and the Knight was the winner. The players, however, were silent as before, and the deal went over without a word.

"One moment, my Lord," said Darcy, as he gently interposed his hand to prevent Lord Drogheda taking up his cards, – "a single moment. You will call me faint-hearted for it, but I do not care. I beseech you, let the party cease here. It is a great favor; but as I could not ask it if I had lost the game, give me, I pray, so much of advantage for my good luck."

"You forget, Knight, that I, as a loser, could not accede to your proposal; what would be said of any man who, with such a stake at issue, accepted an offer like this?"

"My dear Lord, don't you think that you and I might afford to have our actions canvassed, and yet be very little afraid of criticism?" said Darcy, proudly.

"No, no, my dear Darcy, I really could not do this; besides, you must concede something to mortified vanity. Now, I am anxious to have my revenge."

"Be it so, my Lord," said the Knight, with a sigh, and the game began.

The looks and glances which were interchanged by those about during this brief colloquy showed how little sympathy there was felt with the generosity of either side. The bettors had set their hearts on gain, and cared little for the feelings of the players.

"You see he was right," whispered the red-whiskered squire to his neighbor; "my Lord has won the game in one hand." And so it was; in less than five minutes the party was over.

"Now for the conqueror," cried the Knight of Gwynne, who, somewhat nettled at a success which seemed to lessen the generous character of his own proposal, dealt the cards hastily, as if anxious to conclude.

"Now, Darcy, we have a better opportunity," said Lord Drogheda, smiling; "what say you to draw stakes as we stand?"

"Willingly, most willingly, my Lord. If a bad cause saps courage, I have reason to be low at heart. This foolish wager has cost me the loss of three nights' sleep, and if you are content – "

"But are these gentlemen here satisfied?" said Lord Drogheda; and an almost universal cry of "No" was the reply.

"Then if we are to play for the bystanders, my Lord, let us not delay them," said the Knight, as he took up his cards and began to arrange them.

"Darcy has it, by Jove! – the game is his," was muttered from one to another in the crowd behind his chair, and the report, gaining currency, was soon circulated in the larger room without.

"Have you anything heavy on it, Con?" said a fashionably dressed man to Heffernan, who endeavored to force his way through the crowd to where the Knight sat.

"Look at Heffernan!" said another. "They say he never bets; but mark the excitement of his face now!"

"What is it, Heffernan?" said the Knight, as the other leaned over his chair and tried to whisper something in his ear. "Is that a queen, my Lord? In that case I believe the game is mine. – What is it, Heffernan?" and he bent his ear to listen; then, suddenly dashing the cards upon the table, cried out, "Great Heaven! is this true? – the young fellow I met at Kilbeggan?"

"The same," whispered Heffernan, rapidly; "a brother officer of your son Lionel's – a cousin of Lord Castle-reagh's – a fine, dashing fellow, too."

"Where is he wounded?" asked Darcy, eagerly.

"Finish your game – I must tell you all about it," said Heffernan, folding up a letter which he had taken from his pocket a few minutes before.

"Your pardon, my Lord," said Darcy, with a look full of agitation; "I have just heard very bad news. – I play the knave." A murmur ran through the crowd behind him.

"You meant the king, I know, Knight," said Lord Drogheda, restoring the card to his hand as he spoke, but a loud expression of dissatisfaction arose from those at his side.

"You are right, my Lord, I did intend the king," said the Knight; "but these gentlemen insist upon the knave, and, if you 'll permit me, I 'll play it."

The whole fortune of the game hung upon the card, and, after a brief struggle, the Knight was beaten.

"Even so, my Lord," said the Knight, smiling calmly, "you have beaten me against luck; Fortune will not do everything. The Roman satirist goes even further, and says she can do nothing." He rose as he said these words, and looked around for Heffernan.

"If you want Con Heffernan, Knight," said one of the party, "I think he has gone down to the House."

"The very man," said Darcy. "Good-night, my Lord, – good-night, gentlemen all."

"I did not believe that anything could shake Darcy's nerve, but he certainly played that game ill," said a bystander.

"Heffernan could tell us more about it," said another; "rely on it, Master Con and the devil knew why that knave was played."

CHAPTER X. AN INTRIGUE DETECTED

Of all the evil influences which swayed the destinies of Ireland in latter days, none can compare, in extent of importance, with the fatal taste for prodigality that characterized the habits of the gentry. Reckless, wasteful extravagance, in every detail of life, suggested modes of acting and thinking at variance with all individual and, consequently, all national prosperity. Hospitality was pushed to profusion, liberality became a spendthrift habit. The good and the bad qualities of the Irish temperament alike contributed to this passion; there was the wish to please, the desire to receive courteously, and entertain with splendor within doors, and to appear with proportionate magnificence without.

A proud sense of what they deemed befitting their station induced the gentry to vie in expenditure with the richly endowed officials of the Government, and the very thought of prudence or foresight in matters of expense would have been stigmatized as a meanness by those who believed they were sustaining the honor of their country while sapping the foundation of its prosperity.

If we have little to plead in defence or in palliation of such habits, we can at least affirm that in many cases they were practised with a taste and elegance that shed lustre over the period. Unlike the vulgar displays of newly acquired wealth, they exhibited in a striking light the generous and high-spirited features of the native character, which deemed that nothing could be too good for the guest, nor any expenditure for his entertainment either too costly or too difficult. The fatal facility of Irish nature, and the still more ruinous influence of example, hurried men along on this road to ruin; and as political prospects grew darker, a reckless indifference to the future succeeded, in which little care was taken for the morrow, until, at last, thoughtless extravagance became a habit, and moneyed difficulties the lot of almost every family of Ireland.

That a gentry so embarrassed, and with such prospects of ruin before them, should have been easy victims to Ministerial seduction, is far less surprising than that so many were to be seen who could prefer their integrity to the rich bribes of Government patronage; and it is a redeeming feature of the day that amid all the lavish and heedless course of prodigality and excess there were some who could face poverty with stouter hearts than they could endure the stigma of gilded corruption: nor is it the history of every Parliament that can say as much.

Let us leave this theme, even at the hazard of being misunderstood, for the moment, by our reader, and turn to the Knight of Gwynne, who now was seated at his breakfast in a large parlor of his house in Henrietta Street. Sad and deserted as it seems now, this was in those days the choice residence of Irish aristocracy, and the names of peers and baronets on every door told of a class which, now, should be sought for in scattered fragments among the distant cities of the Continent.

The Knight was reading the morning papers, in which, amid the fashionable news, was an account of his own wager with Lord Drogheda, when a carriage drove up hastily to the door, and, immediately after, the loud summons of a footman resounded through the street.

While the Knight was yet wondering who this early visitor should prove, the servant announced Mr. Con Heffernan.

“The very man I wished to see,” cried Darcy, eagerly; “tell me all about this unfortunate business. But, first of all, is he out of danger?”

“Quite safe. I understand, for a time, it was a very doubtful thing; Daly’s surgery, it would seem, rather increased the hazard. He began searching for the ball regardless of the bleeding, and the young fellow was very near sinking under loss of blood.”

“The whole affair was his doing!” said the Knight, impatiently. “How Mr. MacDonough could have found himself at *my* table is more than I can well imagine; that when he got there, something like this would follow, does not surprise me. Daly is really too bad. Well, well, I hoped to have set

off for the abbey to-day, but I must stay here, I find; Drogheda is kind enough to let me redeem Ballydermot, and I must see Gleeson about it. It's rather a heavy blow just now."

"I am afraid I am not altogether blameless," said Heffernan, timidly. "I ought not to have mentioned that unlucky business till the game was over; but I thought your nerve was proof against anything."

"So it was, Heffernan," said the Knight, laughing, "some five-and-twenty years ago; but this shattered wreck has little remains of the old three-decker. I should have won that game."

"It's all past and over now, so never think more about it."

"Yes, I should have won the game. Drogheda saw my advantage: he went on with the very suit in my hand, and when he reached over for his snuff-box, his hand trembled like in an ague-fit."

"Come, don't let the thing dwell in your mind. There is another and a heavier game to play, and you 're certain to win there, if you do but like it."

"I don't clearly understand you," said Darcy, doubtingly.

"I'll be explicit enough, then," said Heffernan, taking a chair and seating himself directly in front of the Knight. "You know the position of the Government at this moment. They have secured a safe and certain majority, – the 'Union' is carried. When I say 'carried,' I mean that there is not a doubt on any reasonable mind but that the bill will pass. The lists show a majority of seven, perhaps eight, for the Ministry; and if they had but one in their favor, Pitt is determined to go through with it. Now, we all very well know how this has been done. Our people have behaved infamously, disgracefully, – there's no mincing the matter. You heard of Fox – ?"

"No. What of him?"

"He has just accepted the escheatorship of – I forget what or where, but he vacates his seat to make room for Courtenay."

"Sam Courtenay? – Scrub, as we used to call him?"

"Scrub, – exactly so. Well, he comes in for Roscommon, and is to have a place under the new commission of twelve hundred a year. But to go back to what I was saying: Castlereagh has bought these fellows at his price or their own; some were dear enough, some were cheap. Barton, for instance, takes it out in Castle dinners, and has sold his birthright for the Viceroy's venison."

"May good digestion wait on appetite!" repeated Darcy, laughing.

"Well, let's not waste more time on them, but come to what I mean. Castlereagh wants to know how you mean to vote: some have told him you would be on his side; others, myself among the number, say the reverse. In fact, little as you may think about the matter, heavy bets are laid at this moment on the question, and – But I won't mention names; enough if I say a friend of ours – an old friend, too – has a thousand on it."

The Knight tapped his snuff-box calmly, and with his blandest smile begged Heffernan to proceed.

"Faith! I 've nearly told all I had to say. Every one well knows that, whatever decision you come to, it will be unbiassed by everything save your own conscientious sense of right; and as arguments are pretty nearly equal on the question, – for, in truth, after having heard and read most of what has been written or spoken on the point, – I 'm regularly nonplussed on which side to see the advantage. The real question seems to be, Can we go on as we are?"

"I think not," observed the Knight, gravely. "A Parliament which has exhibited its venality so openly can have little pretension to public confidence."

"The very remark I made myself," cried Heffernan, triumphantly.

"The men who sell themselves to-day to the Crown will, if need be, sell themselves to-morrow to the mob."

"My own words, by Jove! – my very words."

"A dependent Parliament, attempting separate and independent legislation, means an absurdity."

"There is no other name for it," cried Heffernan, in ecstasy.

"I have known Ireland for something more than half a century now," said the Knight, with a touch of melancholy in his voice, "and yet never before saw so much of social disorder as at present, and perhaps we are only at the beginning of it. The scenes we have witnessed in France have been more bloody and more cruel, but they will leave less permanent results behind them than our own revolution; for such, after all, it is. The property of the country is changing hands, the old aristocracy are dying out, if not dead; their new successors have neither any hold on the affection of the people, nor a bond of union with each other. See what will come of it; the old game of feudalism will be tried by these men of yesterday, and the peasantry, whose reverence for birth is a religion, will turn on them, and the time is not very distant, perhaps, when the men who would not harm the landlord's dog will have little reverence for the landlord's self."

"You have drawn a sad picture," said Heffernan, either feeling or affecting to feel the truthfulness of the Knight's delineation.

"Our share in the ruin," said the Knight, rising, and pacing the room with rapid strides, – "our share is not undeserved. We had a distinct and defined duty to perform, and we neglected it; instead of extending civilization, we were the messengers of barbarism among the people."

"Your own estates, I have heard, are a refutation of your theory," interposed Heffernan, insinuatingly.

"My estates – " repeated the Knight; and then, stopping suddenly, with a changed voice, he said, "Heffernan, we have got into a long and very unprofitable theme; let us try back, if we can, and see whence we started: we were talking of the Union."

"Just so," said Heffernan, not sorry to resume the subject which induced his visit.

"I have determined not to vote on the measure," said the Knight, solemnly; "my reasons for the course I adopt I hope to be able to justify when the proper time arrives; meanwhile, it will prevent unnecessary speculation, and equally unnecessary solicitation, if I tell you frankly what I mean to do. Such is my present resolve."

The word "solicitation" fell from the Knight's lips with such a peculiar expression that Heffernan at once saw his own game was detected, and, like a clever tactician, resolved to make the best of his forced position.

"You have been frank with me, Knight; I'll not be less candid with *you*, I came here to convey to you a distinct offer from the Government, – not of any personal favor or advantage, *that*, they well knew, you would reject, – but, in the event of your support, to take any suggestion you might make on the new Bill into their serious and favorable consideration; to advise with you how, in short, the measure might be made to meet your views, and, so to say, admit you into conclave with the Cabinet."

"All this is very flattering," said the Knight, with a smile of evident satisfaction, "but I scarcely see how the opinions of a very humble country gentleman can weigh in the grave councils of a Government."

"The best proof is the fact itself," replied Heffernan, artfully. "Were I to tell you of other reasons, you might suspect me of an intention to canvass your support on very different grounds."

"I confess I'm in the dark; explain yourself more fully."

"This is a day for sincerity," said Heffernan, smiling, "and so, here it is: the Prince has taken a special liking to your son Lionel, and has given him his company."

"His company! I never heard of it."

"Strange enough that he should not have written to you on the subject, but the fact is unquestionable; and, as I was saying, he is a frequent guest at Carlton House, and admitted into the choice circle of his Royal Highness's parties: if, in the freedom of that intimacy with which he is honored by the Prince, the question should have arisen, how his father meant to vote, the fact was not surprising, no more than that Captain Darcy should have replied – "

"Lionel never pledged himself to control *my* vote, depend upon that, Mr. Heffernan," said the Knight, reddening.

"Nor did I say so," interposed Heffernan. "Hear me out: your son is reported to have answered, 'My father's family have been too trained in loyalty, sire, not to give their voice for what they believe the best interests of the empire: your Royal Highness may doubt his judgment, his honor will, I am certain, never be called in question.' The Prince laughed good-naturedly, and said, 'Enough, Darcy, – quite enough; it will give me great satisfaction to think as highly of the father as I do of the son; there is a vacancy on the staff, and I can offer you the post of an extra aide-de-camp.'"

"This is very good news, – the best I 've heard for many a day, Heffernan; and for its accuracy – "

"Lord Castlereagh is the guarantee," added Heffernan, hastily; "I had it from his own lips."

"I 'll wait on him this morning. I can at least express my gratitude for his Royal Highness's kindness to my boy."

"You 'll not have far to go," said Heffernan, smiling.

"How so? – what do you mean?"

"Lord Castlereagh is at the door this moment in that carriage;" and Hefifernan pointed to the chariot which, with its blinds closely drawn, stood before the street door.

The Knight moved hastily towards the door, and then, turning suddenly, burst into a hearty laugh, – a laugh so racy and full of enjoyment that Heffernan himself joined in it, without knowing wherefore.

"You are a clever fellow, Hefifernan!" said the Knight, as he lay back in a deep-cushioned chair, and wiped his eyes, now streaming with tears of laughter, – "a devilish clever fellow! The whole affair reminds me of poor Jack Morris."

"Faith! I don't see your meaning," said Hefifernan, half fearful that all was not right.

"You knew Jack, – we all knew him. Well, poor Morris was going home one night, – from the theatre, I believe it was, – but, just as he reached Ely Place, he saw, by the light of a lamp, a gentlemanlike fellow trying to make out an address on a letter, and endeavoring, as well as he could, to spell out the words by the uncertain light. 'Devilish provoking!' said the stranger, half aloud; 'I wrote it myself, and yet cannot read a word of it.' 'Can I be of any service?' said Jack. Poor fellow! he was always ready for anything kind or good-natured. 'Thank you,' said the other; 'but I 'm a stranger in Dublin, – only arrived this evening from Liverpool, – and cannot remember the name or the street of my hotel, although I noted both down on this letter.' 'Show it to me,' said Jack, taking the document. But although he held it every way, and tried all manner of guesses, he never could hit on the name the stranger wanted. 'Never mind,' said Jack; 'don't bother yourself about it. Come home with, me and have an oyster, – I 'll give you a bed; 't will be time enough after breakfast to-morrow to hunt out the hotel.' To make short of it, the stranger complied; after all the natural expressions of gratitude and shame, home they went, supped, finished two bottles of claret, and chatted away till past two o'clock. 'You 'd like to get to bed, I see,' said Jack, as the stranger seemed growing somewhat drowsy, and so he rang the bell and ordered the servant to show the gentleman to his room. 'And, Martin,' said he, 'take care that everything is comfortable, and be sure you have a nightcap.' 'Oh! I 've a nightcap myself,' said the stranger, pulling one, neatly folded, out of his coat pocket. 'Have you, by G – d!' said Jack. 'If you have, then, you 'll not sleep here. A man that's so ready for a contingency has generally some hand in contriving it.' And so he put him out of doors, and never saw more of him. Eh, Heffernan, was Jack right?" And again the old man broke into a hearty laugh, in which Heffernan, notwithstanding his discomfiture, could not refrain from participating.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.