

LEVER CHARLES JAMES

THE KNIGHT OF GWYNNE,
VOL. 2

Charles Lever

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Charles James Lever

The Knight Of Gwynne, Vol. 2 (of 2)

CHAPTER I. SOME CHARACTERS NEW TO THE KNIGHT AND THE READER

Soon after breakfast the following morning the Knight set out to pay his promised visit to Miss Daly, who had taken up her abode at a little village on the coast, about three miles distant. Had Darcy known that her removal thither had been in consequence of his own arrival at "The Corvy," the fact would have greatly added to an embarrassment sufficiently great on other grounds. Of this, however, he was not aware; her brother Bagenal accounting for her not inhabiting "The Corvy" as being lonely and desolate, whereas the village of Ballintray was, after its fashion, a little watering-place much frequented in the season by visitors from Coleraine, and other towns still more inland.

Thither now the Knight bent his steps by a little footpath across the fields which, from time to time, approached the seaside, and wound again through the gently undulating surface of that ever-changing tract.

Not a human habitation was in sight; not a living thing was seen to move over that wide expanse; it was solitude the very deepest, and well suited the habit of his mind who now wandered there alone. Deeply lost in thought, he moved onward, his arms folded on his breast, and his eyes downcast; he neither bestowed a glance upon the gloomy desolation of the land prospect, nor one look of admiring wonder at the giant cliffs, which, straight as a wall, formed the barriers against the ocean.

"What a strange turn of fortune!" said he, at length, as relieving his overburdened brain by speech. "I remember well the last day I ever saw her; it was just before my departure for England for my marriage. I remember well driving over to Castle Daly to say good-bye! Perhaps, too, I had some lurking vanity in exhibiting that splendid team of four grays, with two outriders. How perfect it all was! and a proud fellow I was that day! Maria was looking very handsome; she was dressed for riding, but ordered the horses back as I drove up. What spirits she had! – with what zest she seized upon the enjoyments her youth, her beauty, and her fortune gave her! – how ardently she indulged every costly caprice and every whim, as if revelling in the pleasure of extravagance even for its own sake! Fearless in everything, she did indeed seem like a native princess, surrounded by all that barbaric splendor of her father's house, the troops of servants, the equipages without number, the guests that came and went unceasingly, all rendering homage to her beauty. 'T was a gorgeous dream of life, and well she understood how to realize all its enchantment. We scarcely parted good friends on that same last day," said he, after a pause; "her manner was almost mordant. I can recall the cutting sarcasms she dealt around her, – strange exuberance of high spirits carried away to the wildest flights of fancy; and after all, when, having dropped my glove, I returned to the luncheon-room to seek it, I saw her in a window, bathed in tears; she did not perceive me, and we never met after. Poor girl! were those outpourings of sorrow the compensation nature exacted for the exercise of such brilliant powers of wit and imagination? or had she really, as some believed, a secret attachment somewhere? Who knows? And now we are to meet again, after years of absence, – so fallen too! If it were not for these gray hairs and this wrinkled brow, I could believe it all a dream; – and what is it but a dream, if we are not fashioned to act differently because of our calamities? Events are but shadows if they move us not."

From thoughts like these he passed on to others, – as to how he should be received, and what changes time might have wrought in her.

"She was so lovely, and might have been so much more so, had she but curbed that ever-rising spirit of mockery that made the sparkling lustre of her eyes seem like the scathing flash of lightning

rather than the soft beam of tranquil beauty. How we quarrelled and made up again! what everlasting treaties ratified and broken! and now to look back on this with a heart and a spirit weary, how sad it seems! Poor Maria! her destiny has been less happy than mine. She is alone in the world; I have affectionate hearts around me to make a home beneath the humble roof of a cabin.”

The Knight was aroused from his musings by suddenly finding himself on the brow of a hill, from which the gorge descended abruptly into a little cove, around which the village of Ballintray was built. A row of whitewashed cottages, in winter inhabited by the fishermen and their families, became in the summer season the residence of the visitors, many of whom deserted spacious and well-furnished mansions to pass their days in the squalid discomfort of a cabin. If beauty of situation and picturesque charms of scenery could ever atone for so many inconveniences incurred, this little village might certainly have done so. Landlocked by two jutting promontories, the bay was sheltered both east and westward, while the rising ground behind defended it from the sweeping storms which the south brings in its seasons of rain; in front the distant island of Isla could be seen, and the Scottish coast was always discernible in the clear atmosphere of the evening.

While Darcy stood admiring the well-chosen spot, his eye rested upon a semicircular panel of wood, which, covering over a short and gravelled avenue, displayed in very striking capitals the words “Fumbally’s Boarding-House.” The edifice itself, more pretentious in extent and character than the cabins around, was ornamented with green jalousies to the windows, and a dazzling brass knocker surmounting a plate of the same metal, whereupon the name “Mrs. Jones Fumbally” was legible, even from the road. Some efforts at planting had been made in the two square plots of yellowish grass in front, but they had been lamentable failures; and, as if to show that the demerit was of the soil and not of the proprietors, the dead shrubs were suffered to stand where they had been stuck down, while, in default of leaves or buds, they put forth a plentiful covering of stockings, nightcaps, and other wearables, which flaunted as gayly in the breeze as the owners were doing on the beach.

Across the high-road and on the beach, which was scarcely more than fifty yards distant, stood a large wooden edifice on wheels, whose make suggested some secret of its original destination, had not that fact been otherwise revealed, since, from beneath the significant name of “Fumbally,” an acute decipherer might read the still unerased inscription of “A Panther with only two spots from the head to the tail,” an unhappy collocation which fixed upon the estimable lady the epithet of the animal in question.

Various garden-seats and rustic benches were scattered about, some of which were occupied by lounging figures of gentlemen, in costumes ingeniously a cross between the sporting world and the naval service; while the ladies displayed a no less elegant negligé, half sea-nymph, half shepherdess.

So much for the prospect landward, while towards the waves themselves there was a party of bathers, whose flowing hair and lengthened drapery indicated their sex. These maintained through all their sprightly gambols an animated conversation with a party of gentlemen on the rocks, who seemed, by the telescopes and spy-glasses which lay around them, to be equally prepared for the inspection of near and distant objects, and alternately turned from the criticism of a fair naiad beneath to a Scotch collier working “north about” in the distance.

Darcy could not help feeling that if the cockneyism of a boarding-house and the blinds and the brass knocker were sadly repugnant to the sense of admiration the scene itself would excite, there was an ample compensation in the primitive simplicity of the worthy inhabitants, who seemed to revel in all the unsuspecting freedom of our first parents themselves; for while some stood on little promontories of the rocks in most Canova-like drapery, little frescos of naked children flitted around and about, without concern to themselves or astonishment to the beholders.

Never was the good Knight more convinced of his own prudence in paying his first visit alone, and he stood for some time in patient admiration of the scene, until his eye rested on a figure who, seated at some distance off on a little eminence of the rocky coast, was as coolly surveying

Darcy through his telescope. The mutual inspection continued for several minutes, when the stranger, deliberately shutting up his glass, advanced towards the Knight.

The gentleman was short, but stoutly knit, with a walk and a carriage of his head that, to Darcy's observant eye, bespoke an innate sense of self-importance; his dress was a greatcoat, cut jockey fashion, and ornamented with very large buttons, displaying heads of stags, foxes, and badgers, and other emblems of the chase, short Russia duck trousers, a wide-leaved straw hat, and a very loose cravat, knotted sailor-fashion on his breast. As he approached the Knight, he came to a full stop about half a dozen paces in front, and putting his hand to his hat, held it straight above his head, pretty much in the way stage imitators of Napoleon were wont to perform the salutation.

"A stranger, sir, I presume?" said he, with an insinuating smile and an air of dignity at the same moment. Darcy bowed a courteous assent, and the other went on: "Sweet scene, sir, – lovely nature, – animated and grand."

"Most impressive, I confess," said Darcy, with difficulty repressing a smile.

"Never here before, I take it?"

"Never, sir."

"Came from Coleraine, possibly? Walked all the way, eh?"

"I came on foot, as you have divined," said Darcy, dryly.

"Not going to make any stay, probably; a mere glance, and go on again. Is n't that so?"

"I believe you are quite correct; but may I, in return for your considerate inquiries, ask one question on my own part? You are, perhaps, sufficiently acquainted with the locality to inform me if a Miss Daly resides in this village, and where."

"Miss Daly, sir, did inhabit that cottage yonder, where you see the oars on the thatch, but it has been let to the Moors of Ballymena; they pay two-ten a week for the three rooms and the use of the kitchen; smart that, ain't it?"

"And Miss Daly resides at present –"

"She 's one of us," said the little man, with a significant jerk of his thumb to the blue board with the gilt letters; "not much of that, after all; but she lives under the sway of 'Mother Fum,' though, from one caprice or another, she don't mix with the other boarders. Do you know her yourself?"

"I had that honor some years ago."

"Much altered, I take it, since that; down in the world too! She was an heiress in those days, I 've heard, and a beauty. Has some of the good looks still, but lost all the shiners."

"Am I likely to find her at home at this hour?" said Darcy, moving away, and anxious for an opportunity to escape his communicative friend.

"No, not now; never shows in the morning. Just comes down to dinner, and disappears again. Never takes a hand at whist – penny points tell up, you know – seem a trifle at first, but hang me if they don't make a figure in the budget afterwards. There, do you see that fat lady with the black bathing-cap? – no, I mean the one with the blue baize patched on the shoulder, the Widow Mackie, – she makes a nice thing of it, – won twelve and fourpence since the first of the month. Pretty creature that yonder, with one stocking on, – Miss Boyle, of Carrick-maclash."

"I must own," said Darcy, dryly, "that, not having the privilege of knowing these ladies, I do not conceive myself at liberty to regard them with due attention."

"Oh! they never mind that here; no secrets among us."

"Very primitive, and doubtless very delightful; but I have trespassed too long on your politeness. Permit me to wish you a very good morning."

"Not at all; having nothing in the world to do. Paul Dempsey – that's my name – was always an idle man; Paul Dempsey, sir, nephew of old Paul Dempsey, of Dempsey Grove, in the county of Kilkenny; a snug place, that I wish the proprietor felt he had enjoyed sufficiently long. And your name, if I might make bold, is –"

"I call myself Gwynne," said Darcy, after a slight hesitation.

“Gwynne – Gwynne – there was a Gwynne, a tailor, in Ballyragget; a connection, probably?”

“I ‘m not aware of any relationship,” said Darcy, smiling.

“I ‘m glad of it; I owe your brother or your cousin there – that is, if he was either – a sum of seven-and-nine for these ducks. There are Gwynnes in Ross besides, and Quins; are you sure it is not Quin? Very common name Quin.”

“I believe we spell our name as I have pronounced it.” “Well, if you come to spend a little time here, I ‘ll give you a hint or two. Don’t join Leonard – that blue-nosed fellow, yonder, in whiskey. He ‘ll be asking you, but don’t – at it all day.” Here Mr. Dempsey pantomimed the action of tossing off a dram. “No whist with the widow; if you were younger, I ‘d say no small plays with Bess Boyle, – has a brother in the Antrim militia, a very quarrelsome fellow.”

“I thank you sincerely for your kind counsel, although not destined to profit by it. I have one favor to ask: could you procure me the means to enclose my card for Miss Daly, as I must relinquish the hope of seeing her on this occasion?”

“No, no, – stop and dine. Capital cod and oysters, – always good. The mutton *rayther* scraggy, but with a good will and good teeth manageable enough; and excellent malt-”

“I thank you for your hospitable proposal, but cannot accept it.”

“Well, I ‘ll take care of your card; you ‘ll probably come over again soon. You ‘re at M’Grotty’s, ain’t you?”

“Not at present; and as to the card, with your permission I’ll enclose it.” This Darcy was obliged to insist upon; as, if he left his name as Gwynne, Miss Daly might have failed to recognize him, while he desired to avoid being known as Mr. Darcy.

“Well, come in here; I ‘ll find you the requisites. But I wish you ‘d stop and see the ‘Panther.”” Had the Knight overheard this latter portion of Mr.

Dempsey’s invitation, he might have been somewhat surprised; but it chanced that the words were lost, and, preceded by honest Paul, he entered the little garden in front of the house.

When Darcy had enclosed his card and committed it to the hands of Mr. Dempsey, that gentleman was far too deeply impressed with the importance of his mission to delay a moment in executing it, and then the Knight was at last left at liberty to retrace his steps unmolested towards home. If he had smiled at the persevering curiosity and eccentric communicativeness of Mr. Dempsey, Darcy sorrowed deeply over the fallen fortunes which condemned one he had known so courted and so flattered once, to companionship like this. The words of the classic satirist came full upon his memory, and never did a sentiment meet more ready acceptance than the bitter, heart-wrung confession, “Unhappy poverty! you have no heavier misery in your train than that you make men seem ridiculous.” A hundred times he wished he had never made the excursion; he would have given anything to be able to think of her as she had been, without the detracting influence of these vulgar associations. “And yet,” said he, half aloud, “a year or so more, if I am still living, I shall probably have forgotten my former position, and shall have conformed myself to the new and narrow limits of my lot, doubtless as she does.”

The quick tramp of feet on the heather behind him roused him, and, in turning, he saw a person coming towards and evidently endeavouring to overtake him. As he came nearer, the Knight perceived it was the gentleman already alluded to by Dempsey as one disposed to certain little traits of conviviality, – a fact which a nose of a deep copper color, and two bloodshot, bleary eyes, corroborated. His dress was a blue frock with a standing collar, military fashion, and dark trousers; and, although bearing palpable marks of long wear, were still neat and clean-looking. His age, as well as appearances might be trusted, was probably between fifty and sixty.

“Mr. Gwynne, I believe, sir,” said the stranger, touching his cap as he spoke. “Miss Daly begged of me to say that she has just received your card, and will be happy to see you.”

Darcy stared at the speaker fixedly, and appeared, while unmindful of his words, to be occupied with some deep emotion within him. The other, who had delivered his message in a tone of easy

unconcern, now fixed his eyes on the Knight, and they continued for some seconds to regard each other. Gradually, however, the stranger's face changed; a sickly pallor crept over the features stained by long intemperance, his lip trembled, and two heavy tears gushed out and rolled down his seared cheeks.

"My G – d! can it be? It surely is not!" said Darcy, with almost tremulous earnestness.

"Yes, Colonel, it is the man you once remembered in your regiment as Jack Leonard; the same who led a forlorn hope at Quebec, – the man broke with disgrace and dismissed the service for cowardice at Trois Rivières."

"Poor fellow!" said Darcy, taking his hand; "I heard you were dead."

"No, sir, it's very hard to kill a man by mere shame: though if suffering could do it, I might have died."

"I have often doubted about that sentence, Leonard," said Darcy, eagerly. "I wrote to the commander-in-chief to have inquiry made, suspecting that nothing short of some affection of the mind or some serious derangement of health could make a brave man behave badly."

"You were right, sir; I was a drunkard, not a coward. I was unworthy of the service; I merited my disgrace, but not on the grounds for which I met it."

"Good Heaven! then I was right," said Darcy, in a burst of passionate grief; "my letter to the War Office was unanswered. I wrote again, and received for reply that an example was necessary, and Lieutenant Leonard's conduct pointed him out as the most suitable case for heavy punishment."

"It was but just, Colonel; I was a poltroon when I took more than half a bottle of wine. If I were not sober now, I could not have the courage to face you here where I stand."

"Poor Jack!" said Darcy, wringing his hand cordially; "and what have you done since?"

Leonard threw his eyes down upon his threadbare garments, his patched boots, and the white-worn seams of his old frock, but not a word escaped his lips. They walked on for some time side by side without speaking, when Leonard said, —

"They know nothing of me here, Colonel. I need not ask you to be – cautious." There was a hesitation before he uttered the last word.

"I do not desire to be recognized, either," said Darcy, "and prefer being called Mr. Gwynne to the name of my family; and here, if I mistake not, comes a gentleman most eager to learn anything of anybody."

Mr. Dempsey came up at this moment with a lady leaning on each of his arms.

"Glad to see you again, sir; hope you 've thought better of your plans, and are going to try Mother Fum's fare. Mrs. M'Quirk, Mr. Gwynne – Mr. Gwynne, Miss Drew. Leonard will do the honors till we come back." So saying, and with a princely wave of his straw hat, Mr. Dempsey resumed his walk with the step of a conqueror.

"That fellow must be a confounded annoyance to you," said Darcy, as he looked after him.

"Not now, sir," said the other, submissively; "I 'm used to him; besides, since Miss Daly's arrival he is far quieter than he used to be, he seems afraid of her. But I 'll leave you now, Colonel." He touched his cap respectfully, and was about to move away, when Darcy, pitying the confusion which overwhelmed him, caught his hand cordially, and said, —

"Well, Jack, for the moment, good-bye; but come over and see me. I live at the little cottage called 'The Corvy.'"

"Good Heaven, sir! and it is true what I read in the newspaper about your misfortunes?"

"I conclude it is, Jack, though I have not read it; they could scarcely have exaggerated."

"And you bear it like this!" said the other, with a stare of amazement; then added, in a broken voice, "Though, to be sure, there 's a wide difference between loss of fortune and ruined character."

"Come, Jack, I see you are not so good a philosopher as I thought you. Come and dine with me to-morrow at five."

"Dine with *you*, Colonel!" said Leonard, blushing deeply.

“And why not, man? I see you have not forgotten the injustice I once did you, and I am happier this day to know it was I was in the wrong than that a British officer was a coward.”

“Oh, Colonel Darcy, I did not think this poor broken heart could ever throb again with gratitude, but you have made it do so; you have kindled the flame of pride where the ashes were almost cold.” And with a burning blush upon his face he turned away. Darcy looked after him for a second, and then entered the house.

Darcy had barely time to throw one glance around the scanty furniture of the modest parlor into which he was ushered, when Miss Daly entered. She stopped suddenly short, and for a few seconds each regarded the other without speaking. Time had, indeed, worked many changes in the appearance of each for which they were unprepared; but no less were they unprepared for the emotions this sudden meeting was to call up.

Miss Daly was plainly but handsomely dressed, and wore her silvery hair beneath a cap in two long bands on either cheek, with something of an imitation of a mode she followed in youth; the tones of her voice, too, were wonderfully little changed, and fell upon Darcy’s ears with a strange, melancholy meaning.

“We little thought, Knight,” said she, “when we parted last, that our next meeting would have been as this, so many years and many sorrows have passed over us since that day!”

“And a large measure of happiness, too, Maria,” said Darcy, as, taking her hand, he led her to a seat; “let us never forget, amid all our troubles, how many blessings we have enjoyed.”

Whether it was the words themselves that agitated her, or something in his manner of uttering them, Miss Daly blushed deeply and was silent. Darcy was not slow to see her confusion, and suddenly remembering how inapplicable his remark was to her fortunes, though not to his own, added hastily, “I, at least, would be very ungrateful if I could not look back with thankfulness to a long life of prosperity and happiness; and if I bear my present reverses with less repining, it is, I hope and trust, from the sincerity of this feeling.”

“You have enjoyed the sunny path in life,” said Miss Daly, in a low, faint voice, “and it is, perhaps, as you say, reason for enduring altered fortunes better.” She paused, and then, with a more hurried voice, added: “One does not bear calamity better from habit; that is all a mistake. When the temper is soured by disappointment, the spirit of endurance loses its firmest ally. Your misfortunes will, however, be short-lived, I hope; my brother writes me he has great confidence in some legal opinions, and certain steps he has already taken in chancery.”

“The warm-hearted and the generous are always sanguine,” said Darcy, with a sad smile; “Bagenal would not be your brother if he could see a friend in difficulty without venturing on everything to rescue him. What an old friendship ours has been! class fellows at school, companions in youth, we have run our race together, to end with fortune how similar! I was thinking, Maria, as I came along, of Castle Daly, and remembering how I passed my holidays with you there. Is your memory as good as mine?”

“I scarcely like to think of Castle Daly,” said she, almost pettishly, “it reminds me so much of that wasteful, reckless life which laid the foundation of our ruin. Tell me how Lady Eleanor Darcy bears up, and your daughter, of whom I have heard so much, and desire so ardently to see; is she more English or Irish?”

“A thorough Darcy,” said the Knight, smiling, “but yet with traits of soft submission and patient trust our family has been but rarely gifted with; her virtues are all the mother’s, every blemish of her character has come from the other side.”

“Is she rash and headstrong? for those are Darcy failings.”

“Not more daring or courageous than I love her to be,” said Darcy, proudly, “not a whit more impetuous in sustaining the right or denouncing the wrong than I glory to see her; but too ardent, perhaps, too easily carried away by first impressions, than is either fashionable or frequent in the colder world.”

“It is a dangerous temper,” said Miss Daly, thoughtfully.

“You are right, Maria; such people are for the most part like the gamester who has but one throw for his fortune, if he loses which, all is lost with it.”

“Too true, too true!” said she, in an accent whose melancholy sadness seemed to come from the heart. “You must guard her carefully from any rash attachment; a character like hers is strong to endure, but not less certain to sink under calamity.”

“I know it, I feel it,” said Darcy; “but my dear child is still too young to have mixed in that world which is already closed against her; her affections could never have strayed beyond the limits of our little home circle; she has kept all her love for those who need it most.”

“And Lady Eleanor?” said Miss Daly, as if suddenly desirous to change the theme: “Bagenal tells me her health has been but indifferent; how does she bear our less genial climate here?”

“She ‘s better than for many years past; I could even say she ‘s happier. Strange it is, Maria, but the course of prosperity, like the calms in the ocean, too frequently steep the faculties in an apathy that becomes weariness; but when the clouds are drifted along faster, and the waves rustle at the prow, the energies of life are again excited, and the very occasion of danger begets the courage to confront it. We cannot be happy when devoid of self-esteem, and there is but little opportunity to indulge this honest pride when the world goes fairly with us, without any effort of our own; reverses of fortune – ”

“Oh, reverses of fortune!” interrupted Miss Daly, rapidly, “people think much more about them than they merit; it is the world itself makes them so difficult to bear; one can think and act as freely beneath the thatch of a cabin as the gilded roof of a palace. It is the mock sympathy, the affected condolence for your fallen estate, that tortures you; the never-ending recurrence to what you once were, contrasted with what you are; the cruelty of that friendship that is never content save when reminding you of a station lost forever, and seeking to unfit you for your humble path in the valley because your step was once proudly on the mountain-top.”

“I will not concede all this,” said the Knight, mildly; “my fall has been too recent not to remind me of many kindnesses.”

“I hate pity,” said Miss Daly; “it is like a recommendation to mercy after the sentence of an unjust judge. Now tell me of Lionel.”

“A fine, high-spirited soldier, as little affected by his loss as though it touched him not; and yet, poor boy! to all appearance a bright career was about to open before him, – well received by the world, honored by the personal notice of his Prince.”

“Ha! now I think of it, why did you not vote against the Minister?”

“It was on that evening,” said Darcy, sorrowfully, – “on that very evening – I heard of Gleeson’s flight.”

“Well,” – then suddenly correcting herself, and restraining the question that almost trembled on her lip, she added, “And you were, doubtless, too much shocked to appear in the House?”

“I was ill,” said Darcy, faintly; “indeed, I believe I can say with truth, my own ruin preyed less upon my mind than the perfidy of one so long confided in.”

“And they made this accidental illness the ground of a great attack against your character, and sought to discover in your absence the secret of your corruption. How basely minded men must be, when they will invent not only actions, but motives to calumniate!” She paused, and then muttered to herself, “I wish you had voted against that Bill.”

“It would have done little good,” said the Knight, answering her soliloquy; “my vote could neither retard nor prevent the measure, and as for myself, personally, I am proud enough to think I have given sufficient guarantees by a long life of independent action, not to need this crowning test of honesty. Now to matters nearer to us both: when will you come and visit my wife and daughter? or shall I bring them here to you?”

“No, no, not here. I am not ashamed of this place for myself, though I should be so if they were once to see it.”

“But you feel less lonely,” said Darcy, in a gentle tone, as if anticipating the reason of her choice of residence.

“Less lonely!” replied she, with a haughty laugh; “what companionship or society have I with people like these? It is not that, – it is my poverty compels me to live here. Of them and of their habits I know nothing; from me and from mine they take good care to keep aloof. No, with your leave I will visit Lady Eleanor at your cottage, – that is, if she has no objection to receive me.”

“She will be but too happy,” said Darcy, “to know and value one of her husband’s oldest and warmest friends.”

“You must not expect me soon, however,” said she, hastily; “I have grown capricious in everything, and never can answer for performing a pledge at any stated time, and therefore never make one.”

Abrupt and sudden as had been the changes of her voice and manner through this interview, there was a tone of unusual harshness in the way this speech was uttered; and as Darcy rose to take his leave, a feeling of sadness came over him to think that this frame of mind must have been the slow result of years of heart-consuming sorrow.

“Whenever you come, Maria,” said he, as he took her hand in his, “you will be most welcome to us.”

“Have you heard any tidings of Forester?” said Miss Daly, as if suddenly recalling a subject she wished to speak on.

“Forester of the Guards? Lionel’s friend, do you mean?”

“Yes; you know that he has left the army, thrown up his commission, and gone no one knows where?”

“I did not know of that before. I am sincerely sorry for it. Is the cause surmised?”

Miss Daly made no answer, but stood with her eyes bent on the ground, and apparently in deep thought; then looking up suddenly, she said, with more composure than ordinary, “Make my compliments to Lady Eleanor, and say that at the first favorable moment I will pay my personal respects to her – kiss Helen for me – good-bye.” And, without waiting for Darcy to take his leave, she walked hastily by, and closed the door after her.

“This wayward manner,” said Darcy, sorrowfully, to himself, “has a deeper root than mere capriciousness; the heart has suffered so long that the mind begins to partake of the decay.” And with this sad reflection he left the village, and turned his solitary steps towards home.

If Darcy was grieved to find Miss Daly surrounded by such unsuitable companionship, he was more than recompensed at finding that her taste rejected nearer intimacy with Mrs. Fumbally’s household. More than once the fear crossed his mind that, with diminished circumstances, she might have lapsed into habits so different from her former life, and he could better look upon her struggling as she did against her adverse fortune than assimilating herself to those as much below her in sentiment as in station. He was happy to have seen his old friend once more, he was glad to refresh his memory of long-forgotten scenes by the sight of her who had been his playfellow and his companion, but he was not free of a certain dread that Miss Daly would scarcely be acceptable to his wife, while her wayward, uncertain temper would form no safe companionship for his daughter. As he pondered on these things, he began to feel how altered circumstances beget suspicion, and how he, who had never known the feeling of distrust, now found himself hesitating and doubting, where formerly he had acted without fear or reserve.

“Yes,” said he, aloud, “when wealth and station were mine, the consciousness of power gave energy to my thoughts, but now I am to learn how narrow means can fetter a man’s courage.”

“Some truth in that,” said a voice behind him; “would cut a very different figure myself if old Bob Dempsey, of Dempsey Grove, were to betake himself to a better world.”

Darcy’s cheek reddened between shame and anger to find himself overheard by his obtrusive companion, and, with a cold salute, he passed on. Mr. Dempsey, however, was not a man to be

so easily got rid of; he possessed that happy temper that renders its owner insensible to shame and unconscious of rebuke; besides that, he was always “going your way,” quite content to submit to any amount of rebuff rather than be alone. If you talked, it was well; if you listened, it was better; but if you affected open indifference to him, and neither exchanged a word nor vouchsafed the slightest attention, even that was supportable, for he could give the conversation a character of monologue or anecdote, which occupied himself at least.

CHAPTER II. A TALE OF MR. DEMPSEY'S GRANDFATHER

The Knight of Gwynne was far too much occupied in his own reflections to attend to his companion, and exhibited a total unconcern to several piquant little narratives of Mrs. Mackie's dexterity in dealing the cards, of Mrs. Fumbally's parsimony in domestic arrangements, of Miss Boyle's effrontery, of Leonard's intemperance, and even of Miss Daly's assumed superiority.

"You 're taking the wrong path," said Mr. Dempsey, suddenly interrupting one of his own narratives, at a spot where the two roads diverged, – one proceeding inland, while the other followed the line of the coast.

"With your leave, sir," said Darcy, coldly, "I will take this way, and if you 'll kindly permit it, I will do so alone."

"Oh, certainly!" said Dempsey, without the slightest sign of umbrage; "would never have thought of joining you had it not been from overhearing an expression so exactly pat to my own condition, that I thought we were brothers in misfortune; you scarcely bear up as well as I do, though."

Darcy turned abruptly round, as the fear flashed across him, and he muttered to himself, "This fellow knows me; if so, the whole county will soon be as wise as himself, and the place become intolerable." Oppressed with this unpleasant reflection, the Knight moved on, nor was it till after a considerable interval that he was conscious of his companion's presence; for Mr. Dempsey still accompanied him, though at the distance of several paces, and as if following a path of his own choosing.

Darcy laughed good-humoredly at the pertinacity of his tormentor; and half amused by the man, and half ashamed of his own rudeness to him, he made some casual observation on the scenery to open a reconciliation.

"The coast is much finer," said Dempsey, "close to your cottage."

This was a home-thrust for the Knight, to show him that concealment was of no use against so subtle an adversary.

"The Corvy' is, as you observe, very happily situated," replied Darcy, calmly; "I scarcely know which to prefer, – the coast-line towards Dunluce, or the bold cliffs that stretch away to Bengore."

"When the wind comes north-by-west," said Dempsey, with a shrewd glance of his greenish gray eyes, "there 's always a wreck or two between the Skerries and Portrush."

"Indeed! Is the shore so unsafe as that?"

"Oh, yes. You may expect a very busy winter here when the homeward-bound Americans are coming northward."

"D – n the fellow! does he take me for a wrecker?" said Darcy to himself, not knowing whether to laugh or be angry.

"Such a curiosity that old 'Corvy' is, they tell me," said Dempsey, emboldened by his success; "every species of weapon and arm in the world, they say, gathered together there."

"A few swords and muskets," said the Knight, carelessly; "a stray dirk or two, and some harpoons, furnish the greater part of the armory."

"Oh, perhaps so! The story goes, however, that old Daly – brother, I believe, of our friend at Mother Fum's – could arm twenty fellows at a moment's warning, and did so on more than one occasion too."

"With what object, in Heaven's name?"

"Buccaneering, piracy, wrecking, and so on," said Dempsey, with all the unconcern with which he would have enumerated so many pursuits of the chase.

A hearty roar of laughter broke from the Knight; and when it ceased he said, "I would be sincerely sorry to stand in your shoes, Mr. Dempsey, so near to yonder cliff, if you made that same remark in Mr. Daly's hearing."

"He 'd gain very little by me," said Mr. Dempsey; "one and eightpence, an old watch, an oyster-knife, and my spectacles, are all the property in my possession – except, when, indeed," added he, after a pause, "Bob remits the quarter's allowance."

"It is only just," said Darcy, gravely, "to a gentleman who takes such pains to inform himself on the affairs of his neighbors, that I should tell you that Mr. Bagenal Daly is not a pirate, nor am I a wrecker. I am sure you will be generous enough for this unasked information not to require of me a more lengthened account either of my friend or myself."

"You 're in the Revenue, perhaps?" interrupted the undaunted Dempsey; "I thought so when I saw you first."

Darcy shook his head in dissent.

"Wrong again. Ah! I see it all; the old story. Saw better days – you have just come down here to lie snug and quiet, out of the way of writs and latitats – went too fast – by Jove, that touches myself too! If I hadn't happened to have a grandfather, I 'd have been a rich man this day. Did you ever chance to hear of Dodd and Dempsey, the great wine-merchants? My father was son of Dodd and Dempsey, – that is Dempsey, you know; and it was his father-Sam Dempsey – ruined him."

"No very uncommon circumstance," said the Knight, sorrowfully, "for an Irish father."

"You 've heard the story, I suppose? – of course you have; every one knows it."

"I rather think not," said the Knight, who was by no means sorry to turn Mr. Dempsey from cross-examination into mere narrative.

"I 'll tell it to you; I am sure I ought to know it well, I 've heard my father relate it something like a hundred times."

"I fear I must decline so pleasant a proposal," said Darcy, smiling. "At this moment I have an engagement."

"Never mind. To-morrow will do just as well," interrupted the inexorable Dempsey. "Come over and take your mutton-chop with me at five, and you shall have the story into the bargain."

"I regret that I cannot accept so very tempting an invitation," said Darcy, struggling between his sense of pride and a feeling of astonishment at his companion's coolness.

"Not come to dinner!" exclaimed Dempsey, as if the thing was scarcely credible. "Oh, very well, only remember" – and here he put an unusual gravity into his words – "only remember the *onus* is now on you."

The Knight burst into a hearty laugh at this subtle retort, and, willing as he ever was to go with the humor of the moment, replied, —

"I am ready to accept it, sir, and beg that you will dine with me."

"When and where?" said Dempsey.

"To-morrow, at that cottage yonder: five is your hour, I believe – we shall say five."

"Booked!" exclaimed Dempsey, with an air of triumph; while he muttered, with a scarcely subdued voice, "Knew I'd do it! – never failed in my life!"

"Till then, Mr. Dempsey," said Darcy, removing his hat courteously, as he bowed to him, – "till then –"

"Your most obedient," replied Dempsey, returning the salute; and so they parted.

"The Corvy," on the day after the Knight's visit to Port Ballintra, was a scene of rather amusing bustle; the Knight's dinner-party, as Helen quizzingly called it, affording occupation for every member of the household. In former times, the only difficult details of an entertainment were in the selection of the guests, – bringing together a company likely to be suitable to each other, and endowed with those various qualities which make up the success of society; now, however, the question was the more material one, – the dinner itself.

It is always a fortunate thing when whatever absurdity our calamities in life excite should be apparent only to ourselves. The laugh which is so difficult to bear from the world is then an actual relief from our troubles. The Darcys felt this truth, as each little embarrassment that arose was food for mirth; and Lady Eleanor, who least of all could adapt herself to such contingencies, became as eager as the rest about the little preparations of the day.

While the Knight hurried hither and thither, giving directions here and instructions there, he explained to Lady Eleanor some few circumstances respecting the character of his guests. It was, indeed, a new kind of company he was about to present to his wife and daughter; but while conscious of the disparity in every respect, he was not the less eager to do the hospitalities of his humble house with all becoming honor. It is true his invitation to Mr. Dempsey was rather forced from him than willingly accorded; he was about the very last kind of person Darcy would have asked to his table, if perfectly free to choose; but, of all men living, the Knight knew least how to escape from a difficulty the outlet to which should cost him any sacrifice of feeling.

“Well, well, it is but once and away; and, after all, the talkativeness of our little friend Dempsey will be so far a relief to poor Leonard, that he will be brought less prominently forward himself, and be suffered to escape unremarked, – a circumstance which, from all that I can see, will afford him sincere pleasure.”

At length all the preparations were happily accomplished: the emissary despatched to Kilrush at daybreak had returned with a much-coveted turkey; the fisherman had succeeded in capturing a lordly salmon; oysters and lobsters poured in abundantly; and Mrs. M’Kerrigan, who had been left as a fixture at “The Corvy,” found her only embarrassment in selection from that profusion of “God’s gifts,” as she phrased it, that now surrounded her. The hour of five drew near, and the ladies were seated in the hall, the doors of which lay open, as the two guests were seen making their way towards the cottage.

“Here they come, papa,” said Helen; “and now for a guess. Is not the short man with the straw hat Mr. Dempsey, and his tall companion Mr. Leonard?”

“Of course it is,” said Lady Eleanor; “who could mistake the garrulous pertinacity of that little thing that gesticulates at every step, or the plodding patience of his melancholy associate?”

The next moment the Knight was welcoming them in front of the cottage. The ceremony of introduction to the ladies being over, Mr. Dempsey, who probably was aware that the demands upon his descriptive powers would not be inconsiderable when he returned to “Mother Fum’s,” put his glass to his eye, and commenced a very close scrutiny of the apartment and its contents.

“Quite a show-box, by Jove!” said he, at last, as he peered through a glass cabinet, where Chinese slippers, with models in ivory and carvings in box, were heaped promiscuously together; “upon my word, sir, you have a very remarkable collection. And who may be our friend in the boat here?” added he, turning to the grim visage of Bagenal Daly himself, who stared with a bold effrontery that would not have disgraced the original.

“The gentleman you see there,” said the Knight, “is the collector himself, and the other is his servant. They are represented in the costumes in which they made their escape from a captivity among the red men.”

“Begad!” said Dempsey, “that fellow with the tortoise painted on his forehead has a look of our old friend, Miss Daly; should n’t wonder if he was a member of her family.”

“You have well guessed it; he is the lady’s brother.”

“Ah, ah!” muttered Dempsey to himself, “always thought there was something odd about her, – never suspected Indian blood, however. How Mother Fum will stare when I tell her she’s a Squaw! Didn’t they show these things at the Rooms in Mary’s Street? I think I saw them advertised in the papers.”

“I think you must mistake,” said the Knight; “they are the private collection of my friend.”

“And where may Woc-woc – confound his name! – the ‘Howling Wind,’ as he is pleased to call himself, be passing his leisure hours just now?”

“He is at present in Dublin, sir; and if you desire, he shall be made aware of your polite inquiries.”

“No, no – hang it, no! – don’t like the look of him. Should have no objection, though, if he ‘d pay old Bob Dempsey a visit, and frighten him out of this world for me.”

“Dinner, my lady,” said old Tate, as he threw open the doors into the dining-room, and bowed with all his accustomed solemnity.

“Hum!” muttered Dempsey, “my lady won’t go down with me, – too old a soldier for that!”

“Will you give my daughter your arm?” said the Knight to the little man, for already Lady Eleanor had passed on with Mr. Leonard.

As Mr. Dempsey arranged his napkin on his knee, he endeavored to catch Leonard’s eye, and telegraph to him his astonishment at the elegance of the table equipage which graced the board. Poor Leonard, however, seldom looked up; a deep sense of shame, the agonizing memory of what he once was, recalled vividly by the sight of those objects, and the appearance of persons which reminded him of his past condition, almost stunned him. The whole seemed like a dream; even though intemperance had degraded him, there were intervals in which his mind, clear to see and reflect, sorrowed deeply over his fallen state. Had the Knight met him with a cold and repulsive deportment, or had he refused to acknowledge him altogether, he could better have borne it than all the kindness of his present manner. It was evident, too, from Lady Eleanor’s tone to him, that she knew nothing of his unhappy fortune, or that if she did, the delicacy with which she treated him was only the more benevolent. Oppressed by such emotions, he sat endeavoring to eat, and trying to listen and interest himself in the conversation around him; but the effort was too much for his strength, and a vague, half-whispered assent, or a dull, unmeaning smile, were about as much as he could contribute to what was passing.

The Knight, whose tact was rarely at fault, saw every straggle that was passing in Leonard’s mind, and adroitly contrived that the conversation should be carried on without any demand upon him, either as talker or listener. If Lady Eleanor and Helen contributed their aid to this end, Mr. Dempsey was not backward on his part, for he talked unceasingly. The good things of the table, to which he did ample justice, afforded an opportunity for catechizing the ladies in their skill in household matters; and Miss Darcy, who seemed immensely amused by the novelty of such a character, sustained her part to admiration, entering deeply into culinary details, and communicating receipts invented for the occasion. At another time, perhaps, the Knight would have checked the spirit of *persiflage* in which his daughter indulged; but he suffered it now to take its course, well pleased that the mark of her ridicule was not only worthy of the sarcasm, but insensible to its arrow.

“Quite right, – quite right not to try Mother Fum’s when you can get up a little thing like this, – and such capital sherry; look how Tom takes it in, – slips like oil over his lip!”

Leonard looked up. An expression of rebuking severity for a moment crossed his features; but his eyes fell the next instant, and a low, faint sigh escaped him.

“I ought to know what sherry is, – ‘Dodd and Dempsey’s’ was the great house for sherry.”

“By the way,” said the Knight, “did not you promise me a little narrative of Dodd and Dempsey, when we parted yesterday?”

“To be sure, I did. Will you have it now?”

Lady Eleanor and Helen rose to withdraw; but Mr. Dempsey, who took the movement as significant, immediately interposed, by saying, —

“Don’t stir, ma’am, – sit down, ladies, I beg; there’s nothing broad in the story, – it might be told before the maids of honor.”

Lady Eleanor and Helen were thunderstruck at the explanation, and the Knight laughed till the tears came.

“My dear Eleanor,” said he, “you really must accept Mr. Dempsey’s assurance, and listen to his story now.”

The ladies took their seats once more, and Mr. Dempsey, having filled his glass, drank off a bumper; but whether it was that the narrative itself demanded a greater exertion at his hands, or that the cold quietude of Lady Eleanor’s manner abashed him, but he found a second bumper necessary before he commenced his task.

“I say,” whispered he to the Knight, “couldn’t you get that decanter out of Leonard’s reach before I begin? He’ll not leave a drop in it while I am talking.”

As if he felt that, after his explanation, the tale should be more particularly addressed to Lady Eleanor, he turned his chair round so as to face her, and thus began: —

“There was once upon a time, ma’am, a Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland who was a Duke. Whether he was Duke of Rutland, or Bedford, or Portland, or any other title it was he had, my memory does n’t serve me; it is enough, however, if I say he was immensely rich, and, like many other people in the same way, immensely in debt. The story goes that he never travelled through England, and caught sight of a handsome place, or fine domain, or a beautiful cottage, that he did n’t go straightway to the owner and buy it down out of the face, as a body might say, whether he would or no. And so in time it came to pass that there was scarcely a county in England without some magnificent house belonging to him. In many parts of Scotland he had them too, and in all probability he would have done the same in Ireland, if he could. Well, ma’am, there never was such rejoicings as Dublin saw the night his Grace arrived to be our Viceroy. To know that we had got a man with one hundred and fifty thousand a year, and a spirit to spend double the money, was a downright blessing from Providence, and there was no saying what might not be the prosperity of Ireland under so auspicious a ruler.

“To do him justice, he did n’t balk public expectation. Open house at the Castle, ditto at the Lodge in the Park, a mansion full of guests in the county Wicklow, a pack of hounds in Kildare, twelve horses training at the Curragh, a yacht like a little man-of-war in Dunleary harbor, large subscriptions to everything like sport, and a pension for life to every man that could sing a jolly song, or write a witty bit of poetry. Well, ma’am, they say, who remember those days, that they saw the best of Ireland; and surely I believe, if his Grace had only lived, and had his own way, the peerage would have been as pleasant, and the bench of bishops as droll, and the ladies of honor as – Well, never mind, I ‘ll pass on.” Here Mr. Dempsey, to console himself for the abruptness of his pause, poured out and drank another bumper of sherry. “Pleasant times they were.” said he, smacking his lips; “and faith, if Tom Leonard himself was alive then, the color of his nose might have made him Commander of the Forces; but, to continue, it was Dodd and Dempsey’s house supplied the sherry, – only the sherry, ma’am; old Stewart, of Belfast, had the port, and Kinnahan the claret and lighter liquors. I may mention, by the way, that my grandfather’s contract included brandy, and that he would n’t have given it up for either of the other two. It was just about this time that Dodd died, and my grandfather was left alone in the firm; but whether it was out of respect for his late partner, or that he might have felt himself lonely, but he always kept up the name of Dodd on the brass plate, and signed the name along with his own; indeed, they say that he once saluted his wife by the name of Mrs. Dodd and Dempsey. But, as I was saying, it was one of those days when my grandfather was seated on a high stool in the back office of his house in Abbey Street, that a fine, tall young fellow, with a blue frock-coat, all braided with gold, and an elegant cocked-hat, with a plume of feathers in it, came tramping into the room, his spurs jingling, and his brass sabre clinking, and his sabretash banging at his legs.

“Mr. Dempsey?” said he.

“D. and D.,’ said my grandfather, – ‘that is, Dodd and Dempsey, your Grace,’ for he half suspected it was the Duke himself.

“I am Captain M’Claverty, of the Scots Greys,’ said he, ‘first aide-de-camp to his Excellency.’

“I hope you may live to be colonel of the regiment,’ said my grandfather, for he was as polite and well-bred as any man in Ireland.

“That’s too good a sentiment,’ said the captain, ‘not to be pledged in a glass of your own sherry.’

“And we’ll do it too,’ said old Dempsey. And he opened the desk, and took out a bottle he had for his own private drinking, and uncorked it with a little pocket corkscrew he always carried about with him, and he produced two glasses, and he and the captain hobnobbed and drank to each other.

“Begad!’ said the captain, ‘his Grace sent me to thank you for the delicious wine you supplied him with, but it’s nothing to this, – not to be compared to it.’

“I ‘ve better again,’ said my grandfather. ‘I ‘ve wine that would bring the tears into your eyes when you saw the decanter getting low.’

“The captain stared at him, and maybe it was that the speech was too much for his nerves, but he drank off two glasses one after the other as quick as he could fill them out.

“Dempsey,’ said he, looking round cautiously, ‘are we alone?’

“We are,’ said my grandfather.

“Tell me, then,’ said M’Claverty, ‘how could his Grace get a taste of this real sherry – for himself alone, I mean? Of course, I never thought of his giving it to the Judges, and old Lord Dunboyne, and such like.’

“Does he ever take a little sup in his own room, of an evening?’

“I am afraid not, but I ‘ll tell you how I think it might be managed. You ‘re a snug fellow, Dempsey, you ‘ve plenty of money muddling away in the bank at three-and-a-half per cent; could n’t you contrive, some way or other, to get into his Excellency’s confidence, and lend him ten or fifteen thousand or so?’

“Ay, or twenty,’ said my grandfather, – ‘or twenty, if he likes it’

“I doubt if he would accept such a sum,’ said the captain, shaking his head; ‘he has bags of money rolling in upon him every week or fortnight; sometimes we don’t know where to put them.’

“Oh, of course,’ said my grandfather; ‘I meant no offence, I only said twenty, because, if his Grace would condescend, it is n’t twenty, but a fifty thousand I could give him, and on the nail too.’

“You’re a fine fellow, Dempsey, a devilish fine fellow; you ‘re the very kind of fellow the Duke likes, – open-handed, frank, and generous.’

“Do you really think he’d like me?’ said my grandfather; and he rocked on the high stool, so that it nearly came down.

“Like you! I’ll tell you what it is,’ said he, laying his hand on my grandfather’s knee, ‘before one week was over, he could n’t do without you. You ‘d be there morning, noon, and night; your knife and fork always ready for you, just like one of the family.’

“Blood alive!’ said my grandfather, ‘do you tell me so?’

“I ‘ll bet you a hundred pounds on it, sir.’

“Done,’ said my grandfather, ‘and you must hold the stakes;’ and with that he opened his black pocket-book, and put a note for the amount into the captain’s hand.

“This is the 31st of March,’ said the captain, taking out his pencil and tablets. ‘I ‘ll just book the bet.’

“And, indeed,” added Mr. Dempsey, “for that matter, if it was a day later it would have been only more suitable.

“Well, ma’am, what passed between them afterwards I never heard said; but the captain took his leave, and left my grandfather so delighted and overjoyed that he finished all the sherry in the drawer, and when the head clerk came in to ask for an invoice, or a thing of the kind, he found old Mr. Dempsey with his wig on the high stool, and he bowing round it, and calling it your Grace. There ‘s no denying it, ma’am, he was blind drunk.

“About ten days or a fortnight after this time, my grandfather received a note from Teesum and Twist, the solicitors, stating that the draft or the bond was already drawn up for the loan he was about to make his Grace, and begging to know to whom it was to be submitted.

“‘The captain will win his bet, devil a lie in it,’ said my grandfather; ‘he’s going to bring the Duke and myself together.’

“Well, ma’am, I won’t bother you with the law business, though if my father was telling the story he would not spare you one item of it all, – who read this, and who signed the other, and the objections that was made by them thieving attorneys! and how the Solicitor-General struck out this and put in that clause; but to tell you the truth, ma’am, I think that all the details spoil, what we may call, the poetry of the narrative; it is finer to say he paid the money, and the Duke pocketed it.

“Well, weeks went over and months long, and not a bit of the Duke did my grandfather see, nor M’Claverty either; he never came near him. To be sure, his Grace drank as much sherry as ever; indeed, I believe out of love to my grandfather they drank little else. From the bishops and the chaplain, down to the battle-axe guards, it was sherry, morning, noon, and night; and though this was very pleasing to my grandfather, he was always wishing for the time when he was to be presented to his Grace, and their friendship was to begin. My grandfather could think of nothing else, daylight and dark. When he walked, he was always repeating to himself what his Grace might say to him, and what he would say to his Grace; and he was perpetually going up at eleven o’clock, when the guard was relieved in the Castle-yard, suspecting that every now and then a footman in blue and silver would come out, and, touching his elbow, whisper in his ear, ‘Mr. Dempsey, the Duke ‘s waiting for you.’ But, my dear ma’am, he might have waited till now, if Providence had spared him, and the devil a taste of the same message would ever have come near him, or a sight of the same footman in blue! It was neither more nor less than a delusion, or an illusion, or a confusion, or whatever the name of it is. At last, ma’am, in one of his prowlings about the Phoenix Park, who does he come on but M’Claverty? He was riding past in a great hurry; but he pulled up when he saw my grandfather, and called out, ‘Hang it! who’s this? I ought to know *you*.’

“‘Indeed you ought,’ said my grandfather. ‘I ‘m Dodd and Dempsey, and by the same token there’s a little bet between us, and I ‘d like to know who won and who lost.’

“‘I think there’s small doubt about that,’ said the captain. ‘Did n’t his Grace borrow twenty thousand of you?’

“‘He did, no doubt of it.’

“‘And was n’t it *my* doing?’

“‘Upon my conscience, I can’t deny it.’

“‘Well, then, I won the wager, that’s clear.’

“‘Oh! I see now,’ said my grandfather; ‘that was the wager, was it? Oh, bedad! I think you might have given me odds, if that was our bet.’

“‘Why, what did you think it was?’

“‘Oh, nothing at all, sir. It’s no matter now; it was another thing was passing in my mind. I was hoping to have the honor of making his acquaintance, nattered as I was by all you told me about him.’

“‘Ah! that’s difficult, I confess,’ said the captain; ‘but still one might do something. He wants a little money just now. If you could make interest to be the lender, I would n’t say that what you suggest is impossible.’

“Well, ma’am, it was just as it happened before; the old story, – more parchment, more comparing of deeds, a heavy check on the bank for the amount.

“When it was all done, M’Claverty came in one morning and in plain clothes to my grandfather’s back office.

“‘Dodd and Dempsey,’ said he, ‘I ‘ve been thinking over your business, and I’ll tell you what my plan is. Old Vereker, the chamberlain, is little better than a beast, thinks nothing of anybody that is n’t a lord or a viscount, and, in fact, if he had his will, the Lodge in the Phoenix would be more like Pekin in Tartary than anything else? but I ‘ll tell you, if he won’t present you at the levee, which he flatly refuses at present, I ‘ll do the thing in a way of my own. His Grace is going to spend a week up at Ballyrigan House, in the county of Wicklow, and I ‘ll contrive it, when he ‘s taking

his morning walk through the shrubbery, to present you. All you 've to do is to be ready at a turn of the walk. I 'll show you the place, you 'll hear his foot on the gravel, and you 'll slip out, just this way. Leave the rest to me.'

"It's beautiful,' said my grandfather. 'Begad, that's elegant.'

"There 's one difficulty,' said M'Claverty, – 'one infernal difficulty.'

"What's that?" asked my grandfather.

"I may be obliged to be out of the way. I lost five fifties at Daly's the other night, and I may have to cross the water for a few weeks.'

"Don't let that trouble you,' said my grandfather; 'there's the paper.' And he put the little bit of music into his hand; and sure enough a pleasanter sound than the same crisp squeak of a new note no man ever listened to.

"It 's agreed upon now?" said my grandfather.

"All right,' said M'Claverty; and with a jolly slap on the shoulder, he said, 'Good-morning, D. and D. and away he went.

"He was true to his word. That day three weeks my grandfather received a note in pencil; it was signed J. M'C, and ran thus: 'Be up at Ballyriggeran at eleven o'clock on Wednesday, and wait at the foot of the hill, near the birch copse, beside the wooden bridge. Keep the left of the path, and lie still.' Begad, ma'am, it's well nobody saw it but himself, or they might have thought that Dodd and Dempsey was turned highwayman.

"My grandfather was prouder of the same note, and happier that morning, than if it was an order for fifty butts of sherry. He read it over and over, and he walked up and down the little back office, picturing out the whole scene, settling the chairs till he made a little avenue between them, and practising the way he 'd slip out slyly and surprise his Grace. No doubt, it would have been as good as a play to have looked at him.

"One difficulty preyed upon his mind, – what dress ought he to wear? Should he be in a court suit, or ought he rather to go in his robes as an alderman? It would never do to appear in a black coat, a light gray spencer, punch-colored shorts and gaiters, white hat with a strip of black crape on it, – mere Dodd and Dempsey! That wasn't to be thought of. If he could only ask his friend M'Hale, the fishmonger, who was knighted last year, he could tell all about it. M'Hale, however, would blab. He 'd tell it to the whole livery; every alderman of Skinner's Alley would know it in a week. No, no, the whole must be managed discreetly; it was a mutual confidence between the Duke and 'D. and D.' 'At all events,' said my grandfather, 'a court dress is a safe thing;' and out he went and bespoke one, to be sent home that evening, for he could n't rest till he tried it on, and felt how he could move his head in the straight collar, and bow, without the sword tripping him up and pitching him into the Duke. I 've heard my father say that in the days that elapsed till the time mentioned for the interview, my grandfather lost two stone in weight. He walked half over the county Dublin, lying in ambush in every little wood he could see, and jumping out whenever he could see or hear any one coming, – little surprises which were sometimes taken as practical jokes, very unbecoming a man of his age and appearance.

"Well, ma'am, Wednesday morning came, and at six o'clock my grandfather was on the way to Ballyriggeran, and at nine he was in the wood, posted at the very spot M'Claverty told him, as happy as any man could be whose expectations were so overwhelming. A long hour passed over, and another; nobody passed but a baker's boy with a bull-dog after him, and an old woman that was stealing brushwood in the shrubbery. My grandfather remarked her well, and determined to tell his Grace of it; but his own business soon drove that out of his head, for eleven o'clock came, and now there was no knowing the moment the Duke might appear. With his watch in his hand, he counted the minutes, ay, even the seconds; if he was a thief going to be hanged, and looking out over the heads of the crowd for a fellow to gallop in with a reprieve, he could n't have suffered more: his heart was in his mouth. At last, it might be about half-past eleven, he heard a footstep on the gravel, and then a loud, deep

cough, – ‘a fine kind of cough,’ my grandfather afterwards called it. He peeped out; and there, sure enough, at about sixty paces, coming down the walk, was a large, grand-looking man, – not that he was dressed as became him, for, strange as you may think it, the Lord-Lieutenant had on a shooting-jacket, and a pair of plaid trousers, and cloth boots, and a big lump of a stick in his hand, – and lucky it was that my grandfather knew him, for he bought a picture of him. On he came nearer and nearer; every step on the gravel-walk drove out of my grandfather’s head half a dozen of the fine things he had got off by heart to say during the interview, until at last he was so overcome by joy, anxiety, and a kind of terror, that he could n’t tell where he was, or what was going to happen to him, but he had a kind of instinct that reminded him he was to jump out when the Duke was near him; and ‘pon my conscience so he did, clean and clever, into the middle of the walk, right in front of his Grace. My grandfather used to say, in telling the story, that he verily believed his feelings at that moment would have made him burst a blood-vessel if it wasn’t that the Duke put his hands to his sides and laughed till the woods rang again; but, between shame and fright, my grandfather did n’t join in the laugh.

“‘In Heaven’s name!’ said his Grace, ‘who or what are you? – this isn’t May-day.’

“My grandfather took this speech as a rebuke for standing so bold in his Grace’s presence; and being a shrewd man, and never deficient in tact, what does he do but drops down on his two knees before him? ‘My Lord,’ said he, ‘I am only Dodd and Dempsey.’

“Whatever there was droll about the same house of Dodd and Dempsey I never heard, but his Grace laughed now till he had to lean against a tree. ‘Well, Dodd and Dempsey, if that’s your name, get up. I don’t mean you any harm. Take courage, man; I am not going to knight you. By the way, are you not the worthy gentleman who lent me a trifle of twenty thousand more than once?’

“My grandfather could n’t speak, but he moved his lips, and he moved his hands, this way, as though to say the honor was too great for him, but it was all true.

“‘Well, Dodd and Dempsey, I ‘ve a very high respect for you,’ said his Grace; ‘I intend, some of these fine days, when business permits, to go over and eat an oyster at your villa on the coast.’

“My grandfather remembers no more; indeed, ma’am, I believe that at that instant his Grace’s condescension had so much overwhelmed him that he had a kind of vision before his eyes of a whole wood full of Lord-Lieutenants, with about thirty thousand people opening oysters for them as fast as they could eat, and he himself running about with a pepper-caster, pressing them to eat another ‘black fin.’ It was something of that kind; for when he got on his legs a considerable time must have elapsed, as he found all silent around him, and a smart rheumatic pain in his knee-joints from the cold of the ground.

“The first thing my grandfather did when he got back to town was to remember that he had no villa on the sea-coast, nor any more suitable place to eat an oyster than his house in Abbey Street, for he could n’t ask his Grace to go to ‘Killeen’s.’ Accordingly he set out the next day in search of a villa, and before a week was over he had as beautiful a place about a mile below Howth as ever was looked at; and that he mightn’t be taken short, he took a lease of two oyster-beds, and made every preparation in life for the Duke’s visit. He might have spared himself the trouble. Whether it was that somebody had said something of him behind his back, or that politics were weighing on the Duke’s mind, – the Catholics were mighty troublesome then, – or, indeed, that he forgot it altogether, clean, but so it was, my grandfather never heard more of the visit, and if the oysters waited for his Grace to come and eat them, they might have filled up Howth harbor.

“A year passed over, and my grandfather was taking his solitary walk in the Park, very nearly in the same place as before, – for you see, ma’am, he could n’t bear the sight of the seacoast, and the very smell of shell-fish made him ill, – when somebody called out his name. He looked up, and there was M’Claverty in a gig.

“‘Well, D. and D., how goes the world with you?’

“‘Very badly indeed,’ says my grandfather; his heart was full, and he just told him the whole story.

“‘I’ll settle it all,’ said the captain; ‘leave it to me. There ‘s to be a review to-morrow in the Park; get on the back of the best horse you can find, – the Duke is a capital judge of a nag, – ride him briskly about the field; he ‘ll notice you, never fear; the whole thing will come up before his memory, and you ‘ll have him to breakfast before the week’s over.’

“‘Do you think so? – do you really think so?’

“‘I ‘ll take my oath of it. I say, D. and D., could you do a little thing at a short date just now?’

“‘If it was n’t too heavy,’ said my grandfather, with a faint sigh.

“‘Only a hundred.’

“‘Well,’ said he, ‘you may send it down to the office. Good-bye.’ And with that he turned back towards town again; not to go home, however, for he knew well there was no time to lose, but straight he goes to Dycer’s, – it was old Tom was alive in those days, and a shrewder man than Tom Dycer there never lived. They tell you, ma’am, there ‘s chaps in London that if you send them your height, and your width, and your girth round the waist, they ‘ll make you a suit of clothes that will fit you like your own skin; but, ‘pon my conscience, I believe if you ‘d give your age and the color of your hair to old Tom Dycer, he could provide you a horse the very thing to carry you. Whenever a stranger used to come into the yard, Tom would throw a look at him, out of the corner of his eye, – for he had only one, there was a feather on the other, – Tom would throw a look at him, and he’d shout out, ‘Bring out 42; take out that brown mare with the white fetlocks.’ That’s the way he had of doing business, and the odds were five to one but the gentleman rode out half an hour after on the beast Tom intended for him. This suited my grandfather’s knuckle well; for when he told him that it was a horse to ride before the Lord-Lieutenant he wanted, ‘Bedad,’ says Tom, ‘I’ll give you one you might ride before the Emperor of Chaney. – Here, Dennis, trot out 176.’ To all appearance, ma’am, 176 was no common beast, for every man in the yard, big and little, set off, when they heard the order, down to the stall where he stood, and at last two doors were flung wide open, and out he came with a man leading him. He was seventeen hands two if he was an inch, bright gray, with flea-bitten marks all over him; he held his head up so high at one end, and his tail at the other, that my grandfather said he ‘d have frightened the stoutest fox-hunter to look at him; besides, my dear, he went with his knees in his mouth when he trotted, and gave a skelp of his hind legs at every stride, that it was n’t safe to be within four yards of him.

“‘There’s action!’ says Tom, – ‘there ‘s bone and figure! Quiet as a lamb, without stain or blemish, warranted in every harness, and to carry a lady.’

“‘I wish he ‘d carry a wine-merchant safe for about one hour and a half,’ said my grandfather to himself. ‘What’s his price?’

“‘But Tom would n’t mind him, for he was going on reciting the animal’s perfections, and telling him how he was bred out of Kick the Moon, by Moll Flanders, and that Lord Dunraile himself only parted with him because he did n’t think him showy enough for a charger. ‘Though, to be sure,’ said Tom, ‘he’s greatly improved since that. Will you try him in the school, Mr. Dempsey?’ said he; ‘not but I tell you that you ‘ll find him a little mettlesome or so there; take him on the grass, and he’s gentleness itself, – he’s a kid, that’s what he is.’

“‘And his price?’ said my grandfather.

“‘Dycer whispered something in his ear.

“‘Blood alive!’ said my grandfather.

“‘Devil a farthing less. Do you think you ‘re to get beauty and action, ay, and gentle temper, for nothing?’

“‘My dear, the last words, ‘gentle temper,’ wasn’t well out of his mouth when ‘the kid’ put his two hind-legs into the little pulpit where the auctioneer was sitting, and sent him flying through the window behind him into the stall.

“‘That comes of tickling him,’ said Tom; ‘them blackguards never will let a horse alone.’

“I hope you don’t let any of them go out to the reviews in the Park, for I declare to Heaven, if I was on his back then, Dodd and Dempsey would be D. D. sure enough.”

“With a large snaffle, and the saddle well back,” says Tom, “he’s a lamb.”

“God grant it,” says my grandfather; “send him over to me to-morrow, about eleven.” He gave a check for the money, – we never heard how much it was, – and away he went.

“That must have been a melancholy evening for him, for he sent for old Rogers, the attorney, and after he was measured for breeches and boots, he made his will and disposed of his effects, ‘For there’s no knowing,’ said he, ‘what 176 may do for me.’ Rogers did his best to persuade him off the excursion, —

“Dress up one of Dycer’s fellows like you; let him go by the Lord-Lieutenant prancing and rearing, and then you yourself can appear on the ground, all splashed and spurred, half an hour after.”

“No,” says my grandfather, “I’ll go myself.”

“For so it is, there’s no denying, when a man has got ambition in his heart it puts pluck there. Well, eleven o’clock came, and the whole of Abbey Street was on foot to see my grandfather; there was n’t a window had n’t five or six faces in it, and every blackguard in the town was there to see him go off, just as if it was a show.

“Bad luck to them,” says my grandfather; “I wish they had brought the horse round to the stable-yard, and let me get up in peace.”

“And he was right there, – for the stirrup, when my grandfather stood beside the horse, was exactly even with his chin; but somehow, with the help of the two clerks and the book-keeper and the office stool, he got up on his back with as merry a cheer as ever rung out to welcome him, while a dirty blackguard, with two old pocket-handkerchiefs for a pair of breeches, shouted out, ‘Old Dempsey’s going to get an appetite for the oysters!’

“Considering everything, 176 behaved very well; he did n’t plunge, and he did n’t kick, and my grandfather said, ‘Providence was kind enough not to let him rear!’ but somehow he wouldn’t go straight but sideways, and kept lashing his long tail on my grandfather’s legs and sometimes round his body, in a way that terrified him greatly, till he became used to it.

“Well, if riding be a pleasure,” says my grandfather, “people must be made different from me.”

“For, saving your favor, ma’am, he was as raw as a griskin, and there was n’t a bit of him the size of a half-crown he could sit on without a cry-out; and no other pace would the beast go but this little jig-jig, from side to side, while he was tossing his head and flinging his mane about, just as if to say, ‘Could n’t I pitch you sky-high if I liked? Could n’t I make a Congreve-rocket of you, Dodd and Dempsey?’

“When he got on the ‘Fifteen Acres,’ it was only the position he found himself in that destroyed the grandeur of the scene; for there were fifty thousand people assembled at least, and there was a line of infantry of two miles long, and the artillery was drawn up at one end, and the cavalry stood beyond them, stretching away towards Knockmaroon.

“My grandfather was now getting accustomed to his sufferings, and he felt that, if 176 did no more, with God’s help he could bear it for one day; and so he rode on quietly outside the crowd, attracting, of course, a fair share of observation, for he wasn’t always in the saddle, but sometimes a little behind or before it. Well, at last there came a cloud of dust, rising at the far end of the field, and it got thicker and thicker, and then it broke, and there were white plumes dancing, and gold glittering, and horses all shaking their gorgeous trappings, for it was the staff was galloping up, and then there burst out a great cheer, so loud that nothing seemed possible to be louder, until bang – bang – bang, eighteen large guns went thundering together, and the whole line of infantry let off a clattering volley, till you ‘d think the earth was crashing open.

“Devil’s luck to ye all! couldn’t you be quiet a little longer?” says D. and D., for he was trying to get an easy posture to sit in; but just at this moment 176 pricked up his ears, made three bounds in the air, as if something lifted him up, shook his head like a fish, and away he went: wasn’t it wonderful

that my grandfather kept his seat? He remembers, he says, that at each bound he was a yard over his back; but as he was a heavy man, and kept his legs open, he had the luck to come down in the same place, and a sore place it must have been! for he let a screech out of him each time that would have pierced the heart of a stone. He knew very little more what happened, except that he was galloping away somewhere, until at last he found himself in a crowd of people, half dead with fatigue and fright, and the horse thick with foam.

“‘Where am I?’ says my grandfather.

“‘You ‘re in Lucan, sir,’ says a man.

“‘And where ‘s the review?’ says my grandfather.

“‘Five miles behind you, sir.’

“‘Blessed Heaven!’ says he; ‘and where ‘s the Duke?’

“‘God knows,’ said the man, giving a wink to the crowd, for they thought he was mad.

“‘Won’t you get off and take some refreshment?’ says the man, for he was the owner of a little public.

“‘Get off!’ says my grandfather; ‘it’s easy talking! I found it hard enough to get on. Bring me a pint of porter where I am.’ And so he drained off the liquor, and he wiped his face, and he turned the beast’s head once more towards town.

“When my grandfather reached the Park again, he was, as you may well believe, a tired and a weary man; and, indeed, for that matter, the beast did n’t seem much fresher than himself, for he lashed his sides more rarely, and he condescended to go straight, and he didn’t carry his head higher than his rider’s. At last they wound their way up through the fir copse at the end of the field, and caught sight of the review, and, to be sure, if poor D. and D. left the ground before under a grand salute of artillery and small arms, another of the same kind welcomed him back again. It was an honor he ‘d have been right glad to have dispensed with, for when 176 heard it, he looked about him to see which way he ‘d take, gave a loud neigh, and, with a shake that my grandfather said he ‘d never forget, he plunged forward, and went straight at the thick of the crowd; it must have been a cruel sight to have seen the people running for their lives. The soldiers that kept the line laughed heartily at the mob; but they hadn’t the joke long to themselves, for my grandfather went slap at them into the middle of the field; and he did that day what I hear has been very seldom done by cavalry, – he broke a square of the Seventy-ninth Highlanders, and scattered them over the field.

In truth, the beast must have been the devil himself; for wherever he saw most people, it was there he always went. There were at this time three heavy dragoons and four of the horse-police, with drawn swords, in pursuit of my grandfather; and if he were the enemy of the human race, the cries of the multitude could not have been louder, as one universal shout arose of ‘Cut him down! Cleave him in two!’ And, do you know, he said, afterwards, he ‘d have taken it as a mercy of Providence if they had. Well, my dear, when he had broke through the Highlanders, scattered the mob, dispersed the band, and left a hole in the big drum you could have put your head through, 176 made for the staff, who, I may remark, were all this time enjoying the confusion immensely. When, however, they saw my grandfather heading towards them, there was a general cry of ‘Here he comes! here he comes! Take care, your Grace!’ And there arose among the group around the Duke a scene of plunging, kicking, and rearing, in the midst of which in dashed my grandfather. Down went an aide-de-camp on one side; 176 plunged, and off went the town-major at the other; while a stroke of a sabre, kindly intended for my grandfather’s skull, came down on the horse’s back and made him give plunge the third, which shot his rider out of the saddle, and sent him flying through the air like a shell, till he alighted under the leaders of a carriage where the Duchess and the Ladies of Honor were seated.

“Twenty people jumped from their horses now to finish him; if they were bunting a rat, they could not have been more venomous.

“‘Stop! stop!’ said the Duke; ‘he’s a capital fellow, don’t hurt him. Who are you, my brave little man? You ride like Chifney for the Derby.’

“God knows who I am!’ says my grandfather, creeping out, and wiping his face. ‘I was Dodd and Dempsey when I left home this morning; but I ‘m bewitched, devil a lie in it.’

“Dempsey, my Lord Duke,’ said M’Claverty, coming up at the moment. ‘Don’t you know him?’ And he whispered a few words in his Grace’s ear.

“Oh, yes, to be sure,’ said the Viceroy. ‘They tell me you have a capital pack of hounds, Dempsey. What do you hunt?’

“Horse, foot, and dragoons, my Lord,’ said my grandfather; and, to be sure, there was a jolly roar of laughter after the words, for poor D. and D. was just telling his mind, without meaning anything more.

“Well, then,’ said the Duke, ‘if you ‘ve always as good sport as to-day, you ‘ve capital fun of it.’

“Oh, delightful, indeed!’ said my grandfather; ‘never enjoyed myself more in my life.’

“Where ‘s his horse?’ said his Grace.

“He jumped down into the sand-quarry and broke his neck, my Lord Duke.’

“The heavens be praised!’ said my grandfather; ‘if it’s true, I am as glad as if I got fifty pounds.’

“The trumpets now sounded for the cavalry to march past, and the Duke was about to move away, when M’Claverty again whispered something in his ear.

“Very true,’ said he; ‘well thought of. I say, Dempsey, I ‘ll go over some of these mornings and have a run with your hounds.’

“My grandfather rubbed his eyes and looked up, but all he saw was about twenty staff-officers with their hats off; for every man of them saluted my father as they passed, and the crowd made way for him with as much respect as if it was the Duke himself. He soon got a car to bring him home, and notwithstanding all his sufferings that day, and the great escape he had of his life, there wasn’t as proud a man in Dublin as himself.

“He’s coming to hunt with my hounds!’ said he; ‘t is n’t to take an oyster and a glass of wine, and be off again! – no, he’s coming down to spend the whole day with me.’

“The thought was ecstasy; it only had one drawback. Dodd and Dempsey’s house had never kept hounds. Well, ma’am, I needn’t detain you long about what happened; it’s enough if I say that in less than six weeks my grandfather had bought up Lord Tyrawley’s pack, and his hunting-box and horses, and I believe his grooms; and though he never ventured on the back of a beast himself, he did nothing from morning to night but listen and talk about hunting, and try to get the names of the dogs by heart, and practise to cry ‘Tally-ho!’ and ‘Stole away!’ and ‘Ho-ith! ho-ith!’ with which, indeed, he used to start out of his sleep at night, so full he was of the sport. From the 1st of September he never had a red coat off his back. ‘Pon my conscience, I believe he went to bed in his spurs, for he did n’t know what moment the Duke might be on him, and that’s the way the time went on till spring; but not a sign of his Grace, not a word, not a hint that he ever thought more of his promise! Well, one morning my grandfather was walking very sorrowfully down near the Curragh, where his hunting-lodge was, when he saw them roping-in the course for the races, and he heard the men talking of the magnificent cup the Duke was to give for the winner of the three-year-old stakes, and the thought flashed on him, ‘I’ll bring myself to his memory that way.’ And what does he do, but he goes back to the house and tells his trainer to go over to the racing-stables, and buy, not one, nor two, but the three best horses that were entered for the race. Well, ma’am, their engagements were very heavy, and he had to take them all on himself, and it cost him a sight of money. It happened that this time he was on the right scent, for down comes M’Claverty the same day with orders from the Duke to take the odds, right and left, on one of the three, a little mare called Let-Me-Alone-Before-the-People; she was one of his own breeding, and he had a conceit out of her. Well, M’Claverty laid on the money here and there, till he stood what between the Duke’s bets and all the officers of the staff and his own the heaviest winner or loser on that race.

“She’s Martin’s mare, is n’t she?’ said M’Claverty.

“No, sir, she was bought this morning by Mr. Dempsey, of Tear Fox Lodge.’

“‘The devil she is,’ said M’Claverty; and he jumped on his horse, and he cantered over to the Lodge.

“‘Mr. Dempsey at home?’ says he.

“‘Yes, sir.’

“‘Give him this card, and say, I beg the favor of seeing him for a few moments.’

“The man went off, and came back in a few minutes, with the answer, ‘Mr. Dempsey is very sorry, but he ‘s engaged.’

“‘Oh, oh! that’s it!’ says M’Claverty to himself; ‘I see how the wind blows. I say, my man, tell him I ‘ve a message from his Grace the Lord-Lieutenant.’

“‘Well, the answer came for the captain to send the message in, for my grandfather could n’t come out.

“‘Say, it’s impossible,’ said M’Claverty; ‘it’s for his own private ear.’

“‘Dodd and Dempsey was strong in my grandfather that day: he would listen to no terms.

“‘No,’ says he, ‘if the goods are worth anything, they never come without an invoice. I ‘ll have nothing to say to him.’

“‘But the captain wasn’t to be balked; for, in spite of everything, he passed the servant, and came at once into the room where my grandfather was sitting, – ay, and before he could help it, was shaking him by both hands as if he was his brother.

“‘Why the devil didn’t you let me in?’ said he; ‘I came from the Duke with a message for you.’

“‘Bother!’ says my grandfather.

“‘I did, though,’ says he; ‘he’s got a heavy book on your little mare, and he wants you to make your boy ride a waiting race, and not win the first beat, – you understand?’

“‘I do,’ says my grandfather, ‘perfectly; and he’s got a deal of money on her, has he?’

“‘He has,’ said the captain; ‘and every one at the Castle, too, high and low, from the chief secretary down to the second coachman, – we are all backing her.’

“‘I am glad of it, – I am sincerely glad of it,’ said my grandfather, rubbing his hands.

“‘I knew you would be, old boy!’ cried the captain, joyfully.

“‘Ah, but you don’t know why; you ‘d never guess.’

“‘M’Claverty stared at him, but said nothing.

“‘Well, I’ll tell you,’ resumed my grandfather; ‘the reason is this: I ‘ll not let her run, – no, divil a step! I ‘ll bring her up to the ground, and you may look at her, and see that she ‘s all sound and safe, in top condition, and with a skin like a looking-glass, and then I ‘ll walk her back again! And do you know why I ‘ll do this?’ said he, while his eyes flashed fire, and his lip trembled; ‘just because I won’t suffer the house of Dodd and Dempsey to be humbugged as if we were greengrocers! Two years ago, it was to “eat an oyster with me;” last year it was a “day with my hounds;” maybe now his Grace would join the race dinner; but that’s all past and gone, – I ‘ll stand it no longer.’

“‘Confound it, man,’ said the captain, ‘the Duke must have forgotten it. You never reminded him of his engagement. He ‘d have been delighted to have come to you if he only recollected.’

“‘I am sorry my memory was better than his,’ said my grandfather, ‘and I wish you a very good morning.’

“‘Oh, don’t go; wait a moment; let us see if we can’t put this matter straight. You want the Duke to dine with you?’

“‘No, I don’t; I tell you I ‘ve given it up.’

“‘Well, well, perhaps so; will it do if you dine with him?’

“‘My grandfather had his hand on the lock, – he was just going, – he turned round, and fixed his eyes on the captain.

“‘Are you in earnest, or is this only more of the same game?’ said he, sternly.

“‘I’ll make that very easy to you,’ said the captain; ‘I ‘ll bring the invitation to you this night; the mare doesn’t run till to-morrow; if you don’t receive the card, the rest is in your own power.’

“Well, ma’am, my story is now soon told; that night, about nine o’clock, there comes a footman, all splashed and muddy, in a Castle livery, up to the door of the Lodge, and he gave a violent pull at the bell, and when the servant opened the door, he called out in a loud voice, ‘From his Excellency the Lord-Lieutenant,’ and into the saddle he jumped, and away he was like lightning; and, sure enough, it was a large card, all printed, except a word here and there, and it went something this way: —

“I am commanded by his Excellency the Lord-Lieutenant to request the pleasure of Mr. Dempsey’s company at dinner on Friday, the 23d instant, at the Lodge, Phoenix Park, at seven o’clock.

“Granville Vereker, *Chamberlain*.

“Swords and Bags.’

“At last!” said my grandfather, and he wiped the tears from his eyes; for to say the truth, ma’am, it was a long chase without ever getting once a ‘good view.’ I must hurry on; the remainder is easy told. Let-Me-Alone-Before-the-People won the cup, my grandfather was chaired home from the course in the evening, and kept open house at the Lodge for all comers while the races lasted; and at length the eventful day drew near on which he was to realize all his long-coveted ambition. It was on the very morning before, however, that he put on his Court suit for about the twentieth time, and the tailor was standing trembling before him while my grandfather complained of a wrinkle here or a pucker there.

“You see,’ said he, ‘you’ve run yourself so close that you ‘ve no time now to alter these things before the dinner.’

“I ‘ll have time enough, sir,’ says the man, ‘if the news is true.’

“What news?” says my grandfather, with a choking in his throat, for a sudden fear came over him.

“The news they have in town this morning.’

“What is it? – speak it out, man!”

“They say – But sure you ‘ve heard it, sir?”

“Go on!” says my grandfather; and he got him by the shoulders and shook him. ‘Go on, or I’ll strangle you!’

“They say, sir, that the Ministry is out, and – ’

“And, well – ’

“And that the Lord-Lieutenant has resigned, and the yacht is coming round to Dunleary to take him away this evening, for he won’t stay longer than the time to swear in the Lords Justices, – he’s so glad to be out of Ireland.’

“My grandfather sat down on the chair, and began to cry, and well he might, for not only was the news true, but he was ruined besides. Every farthing of the great fortune that Dodd and Dempsey made was lost and gone, – scattered to the winds; and when his affairs were wound up, he that was thought one of the richest men in Dublin was found to be something like nine thousand pounds worse than nothing. Happily for him, his mind was gone too, and though he lived a few years after, near Finglass, he was always an innocent, didn’t remember anybody, nor who he was, but used to go about asking the people if they knew whether his Grace the Lord-Lieutenant had put off his dinner-party for the 23d; and then he ‘d pull out the old card to show them, for he kept it in a little case, and put it under his pillow every night till he died.”

While Mr. Dempsey’s narrative continued, Tom Leonard indulged freely and without restraint in the delights of the Knight’s sherry, forgetting not only all his griefs, but the very circumstances and people around him. Had the party maintained a conversational tone, it is probable that he would have been able to adhere to the wise resolutions he had planned for his guidance on leaving home; unhappily, the length of the tale, the prosy monotony of the speaker’s voice, the deepening twilight which stole on ere the story drew to a close, were influences too strong for prudence so frail; an instinct told him that the decanter was close by, and every glass he drained either drowned a care or stifled a compunction.

The pleasant buzz of voices which succeeded to the anecdote of Dodd and Dempsey aroused Leonard from his dreary stupor. Wine and laughter and merry voices were adjuncts he had not met for many a day before; and, strangely enough, the only emotions they could call up were some vague, visionary sorrowings over his fallen and degraded condition.

“By Jove!” said Dempsey, in a whisper to Darcy, “the lieutenant has more sympathy for my grandfather than I have myself, – I ‘ll be hanged if he is n’t wiping his eyes! So you see, ma’am,” added he, aloud, “it was a taste for grandeur ruined the Dempseys; the same ambition that has destroyed states and kingdoms has brought your humble servant to a trifle of thirty-eight pounds four and nine per annum for all worldly comforts and virtuous enjoyments; but, as the old ballad says, —

‘Though classic ‘t is to show one’s grief,
And cry like Carthaginian Marius,
I ‘ll not do this, nor ask relief,
Like that ould beggar Belisarius.’

No, ma’am, ‘Never give in while there’s a score behind the door,’ – that’s the motto of the Dempseys. If it’s not on their coat-of-arms, it’s written in their hearts.”

“Your grandfather, however, did not seem to possess the family courage,” said the Knight, slyly.

“Well, and what would you have? Wasn’t he brave enough for a wine-merchant?”

“The ladies will give us some tea, Leonard,” said the Knight, as Lady Eleanor and her daughter had, some time before, slipped unobserved from the room.

“Yes, Colonel, always ready.”

“That’s the way with him,” whispered Dempsey; “he’d swear black and blue this minute that you commanded the regiment he served in. He very often calls me the quartermaster.”

The party rose to join the ladies; and while Leonard maintained his former silence, Dempsey once more took on himself the burden of the conversation by various little anecdotes of the Fumbally household, and sketches of life and manners at Port Ballintray.

So perfectly at ease did he find himself, so inspired by the happy impression he felt convinced he was making, that he volunteered a song, “if the young lady would only vouchsafe few chords on the piano” by way of accompaniment, – a proposition Helen acceded to.

Thus passed the evening, – a period in which Lady

Eleanor more than once doubted if the whole were not a dream, and the persons before her the mere creations of disordered fancy; an impression certainly not lessened as Mr. Dempsey’s last words at parting conveyed a pressing invitation to a “little thing he ‘d get up for them at Mother Finn’s.”

CHAPTER III. SOME VISITORS AT GWYNNE ABBEY

It is a fact not only well worthy of mention, but pregnant with its own instruction, that persons who have long enjoyed all the advantages of an elevated social position better support the reverses which condemned them to humble and narrow fortunes, than do the vulgar-minded, when, by any sudden caprice of the goddess, they are raised to a conspicuous and distinguished elevation.

There is in the gentleman, and still more in the gentlewoman, – as the very word itself announces, – an element of placidity and quietude that suggests a spirit of accommodation to whatever may arise to ruffle the temper or disturb the equanimity. Self-respect and consideration for others are a combination not inconsistent or unfrequent, and there are few who have not seen, some time or other, a reduced gentleman dispensing in a lowly station the mild graces and accomplishments of his order, and, while elevating others, sustaining himself.

The upstart, on the other hand, like a mariner in some unknown sea without chart or compass, has nothing to guide him; impelled hither or thither as caprice or passion dictate, he is neither restrained by a due sense of decorum, nor admonished by a conscientious feeling of good breeding. With the power that rank and wealth bestow he becomes not distinguished, but eccentric; unsustained by the companionship of his equals, he tries to assimilate himself to them rather by their follies than their virtues, and thus presents to the world that mockery of rank and station which makes good men sad, and bad men triumphant.

To these observations we have been led by the altered fortunes of those two families of whom our story treats. If the Darcys suddenly found themselves brought down to a close acquaintanceship with poverty and its fellows, they bore the change with that noble resignation that springs from true regard for others at the sacrifice of ourselves. The little shifts and straits of narrowed means were ever treated jestingly, the trials that a gloomy spirit had converted into sorrows made matters of merriment and laughter; and as the traveller sees the Arab tent in the desert spread beside the ruined temple of ancient grandeur, and happy faces and kind looks beneath the shade of ever-vanished splendor, so did this little group maintain in their fall the kindly affection and the high-souled courage that made of that humble cottage a home of happiness and enjoyment.

Let us now turn to the west, where another and very different picture presented itself. Although certain weighty questions remained to be tried at law between the Darcys and the Hickmans, Bicknell could not advise the Knight to contest the mortgage under which the Hickmans had now taken possession of the abbey.

The reputation for patriotism and independence so fortunately acquired by that family came at a most opportune moment. In no country of Europe are the associations connected with the proprietorship of land more regarded than in Ireland; this feeling, like most others truly Irish, has the double property of being either a great blessing or a great curse, for while it can suggest a noble attachment to country, it can also, as we see it in our own day, be the fertile source of the most atrocious crime.

Had Hickman O'Reilly succeeded to the estate of the Darcys at any other moment than when popular opinion called the one a "patriot" and the other a "traitor," the consequences would have been serious; all the disposable force, civil and military, would scarcely have been sufficient to secure possession. The thought of the "ould ancient family" deposed and exiled by the men of yesterday, would have excited a depth of feeling enough to stir the country far and near. Every trait that adorned the one, for generations, would be remembered, while the humble origin of the other would be offered as the bitterest reproach, by those who thought in embodying the picture of themselves and their fortune they were actually summing up the largest amount of obloquy and disgrace. Such is mob principle in everything! Aristocracy has no such admirers as the lowly born, just as the liberty of the press is inexpressibly dear to that part of the population who know not how to read.

When last we saw Gwynne Abbey, the scene was one of mourning, the parting hour of those whose affections clung to the old walls, and who were to leave it forever. We must now return there for a brief space under different auspices, and when Mr. Hickman O'Reilly, the high sheriff of the county, was entertaining a large and distinguished company in his new and princely residence.

It was the assize week, and the judges, as well as the leading officers of the Crown, were his guests; many of the gentry were also there, – some from indifference to whom their host might be, others from curiosity to see how the upstart, Bob Hickman, would do the honors; and there were many who felt far more at their ease in the abbey now than when they had the fears of Lady Eleanor Darcy's quietude and coldness of manner before them.

No expense was spared to rival the style and retinue of the abbey under its former owners. O'Reilly well knew the value of first impressions in such matters, and how the report that would soon gain currency would decide the matter for or against him. So profusely, and with such disregard to money, was everything done, that, as a mere question of cost, there was no doubt that never in the Knight's palmiest days had anything been seen more magnificent than the preparations. Luxuries, brought at an immense cost, and by contraband, from abroad; wines, of the rarest excellence, abounded at every entertainment; equipages, more splendid than any ever seen there before, appeared each morning; and troops of servants without number moved hither and thither, displaying the gorgeous liveries of the O'Reillys.

The guests were for the most part the neighboring gentry, the military, and the members of the bar; but there were others also, selected with peculiar care, and whose presence was secured at no inconsiderable pains. These were the leading "diners-out" of Dublin, and recognized "men about town," whose names were seen on club committees, and whose word was law on all questions of society. Among them, the chief was Con Heffernan; and he now saw himself for the first time a guest at Gwynne Abbey. The invitation was made and accepted with a certain coquetting that gave it the character of a reconciliation; there were political differences to be got over, mutual recriminations to be forgotten; but as each felt, for his own reasons, not indisposed to renew friendly relations, the matter presented little difficulty, and when Mr. O'Reilly received his guest, on his arrival, with a shake of both hands, the action was meant and taken as a receipt in full for all past misunderstanding, and both had too much tact ever to go back on "by-gones."

There had been a little correspondence between the parties, the early portions of which were marked "Confidential," and the latter "Strictly confidential and private." This related to a request made by O'Reilly to Heffernan to entreat his influence in behalf of Lionel Darcy. Nothing could exceed the delicacy of the negotiation; for after professing that the friendship which had subsisted between his own son and young Darcy was the active motive for the request, he went on to say that in the course of certain necessary legal investigations it was discovered that young Lionel, in the unguarded carelessness of a young and extravagant man, had put his name to bills of a large amount, and even hinted that he had not stopped there, but had actually gone the length of signing his father's name to documents for the sale of property. To obtain an appointment for him in some regiment serving in India would at once withdraw him from the likelihood of any exposure in these matters. To interest Heffernan in the affair was the object of O'Reilly's correspondence; and Heffernan was only too glad, at so ready an opportunity, to renew their raptured relations.

Lions were not as fashionable in those days as at present; but still the party had its share in the person of Counsellor O'Halloran, the great orator of the bar, and the great speaker at public meetings, the rising patriot, who, not being deemed of importance enough to be bought, was looked on as incorruptible. He had come down special to defend O'Reilly in a record of Darcy *versus* Hickman, – the first case submitted for trial by Bicknell, and one which, small in itself, would yet, if determined in the Knight's favor, form a rule of great importance respecting those that were to follow.

It was in the first burst of Hickman O'Reilly's indignation against Government that he had secured O'Halloran as his counsel, never anticipating that any conjuncture would bring him once

more into relations with the Ministry. His appointment of high sheriff, however, and his subsequent correspondence with Heffernan, ending with the invitation to the abbey, had greatly altered his sentiments, and he more than once regretted the precipitancy with which he had selected his advocate.

Whether “the Counsellor” did or did not perceive that his reception was one of less cordiality and more embarrassment than might be expected, it is not easy to say, for he was one of those persons who live too much out of themselves to betray their own feelings to the world. He was a large and well-looking man, but whose features would have been coarse in their expression were it not for the animated intelligence of his eye, and the quaint humor that played about the angles of his mouth, and added to the peculiar drollery of an accent to which Kerry had lent all its native archness. His gestures were bold, striking, and original; his manner of speaking, even in private, impressive, – from the deliberate slowness of his utterance, and the air of truthfulness sustained by every agency of look, voice, and expression. The least observant could not fail to remark in him a conscious power, a sense of his own great gifts either in argument or invective; for he was no less skilful in unravelling the tangled tissue of a knotted statement than in overwhelming his adversary with a torrent of abusive eloquence. The habits of his profession, but in particular the practice of cross-examination, had given him an immense insight into the darker recesses of the human heart, and made him master of all the subtleties and evasions of inferior capacities. This knowledge he brought with him into society, where his powers of conversation had already established for him a high repute. He abounded in anecdote, which he introduced so easily and naturally that the *à propos* had as much merit as the story itself. Yet with all these qualities, and in a time when the members of his profession were more than ever esteemed and courted, he himself was not received, save on sufferance, into the better society of the capital. The stamp of a “low tone,” and the assertion of democratic opinions, were two insurmountable obstacles to his social acceptance; and he was rarely, if ever, seen in those circles which arrogated to themselves the title of best. Whether it was a conscious sense of what was “in him” powerful enough to break down such barriers as these, and that, like Nelson, he felt the day would come when he would have a “*Gazette of his own*,” but his manner at times displayed a spirit of haughty daring and effrontery that formed a singular contrast with the slippery and insinuating softness of his *nisi prius* tone and gesture.

If we seem to dwell longer on this picture than the place the original occupies in our story would warrant, it is because the character is not fictitious, and there is always an interest to those who have seen the broad current of a mighty river rolling onward in its mighty strength, to stand beside the little streamlet which, first rising from the mountain, gave it origin, – to mark the first obstacles that opposed its course, – and to watch the strong impulses that moulded its destiny to overcome them.

Whatever fears Hickman O'Reilly might have felt as to how his counsel, learned in the law, would be received by the Government agent, Mr. Heffernan, were speedily allayed. The gentlemen had never met before, and yet, ere the first day went over, they were as intimate as old acquaintances, each, apparently, well pleased with the strong good sense and natural humor of the other. And so, indeed, it may be remarked in the world, that when two shrewd, far-reaching individuals are brought together, the attraction of quick intelligence and craft is sufficient to draw them into intimate relations at once. There is something wonderfully fraternal in roguery.

This was the only social difficulty O'Reilly dreaded, and happily it was soon dispelled, and the general enjoyment was unclouded by even the slightest accident. The judges were *bon vivants*, who enjoyed good living and good wine; he of the Common Pleas, too, was an excellent shot, and always exchanged his robes for a shooting-jacket on entering the park, and despatched hares and woodcocks as he walked along, with as much unconcern as he had done Whiteboys half an hour before. The Solicitor-General was passionately fond of hunting, and would rather any day have drawn a cover than an indictment; and so with the rest, – they seemed all of them sporting-gentlemen of wit and pleasure, who did a little business at law by way of “distraction.” Nor did O'Halloran form an exception; he was as ready as the others to snatch an interval of pleasure amid the fatigues of his laborious day.

But, somehow, he contrived that no amount of business should be too much for him; and while his ruddy cheek and bright eye bespoke perfect health and renewed enjoyment, it was remarked that the lamp burned the whole night long unextinguished in his chamber, and that no morning found him ever unprepared to defend the interest of his client.

There was, as we have said, nothing to throw a damper on the general joy. Fortune was bent on dealing kindly with Mr. O'Reilly; for while he was surrounded with distinguished and delighted guests, his father, the doctor, the only one whose presence could have brought a blush to his cheek, was confined to his room by a severe cold, and unable to join the party.

The assize calendar was a long one, and the town the last in the circuit, so that the judges were in no hurry to move on; besides, Gwynne Abbey was a quarter which it was very unlikely would soon be equalled in style of living and resources. For all these several reasons the business of the law went on with an easy and measured pace, the Court opening each day at ten, and closing about three or four, when a magnificent procession of carriages and saddle-horses drew up in the main street to convey the guests back to the abbey.

While the other trials formed the daily subject of table-talk, suggesting those stories of fun, anecdote, and incident with which no other profession can enter into rivalry, the case of Darcy *versus* Hickman was never alluded to, and, being adroitly left last on the list for trial, could not possibly interfere with the freedom so essential to pleasant intercourse.

The day fixed on for this record was a Saturday. It was positively the last day the judges could remain, and having accepted an engagement to a distant part of the country for that very day at dinner, the Court was to sit early, and there being no other cause for trial, it was supposed the cause would be concluded in time to permit their departure. Up to this morning the high sheriff had never omitted, as in duty bound, to accompany the judges to the court-house, displaying in the number and splendor of his equipages a costliness and magnificence that excited the wonder of the assembled gentry. On this day, however, he deemed it would be more delicate on his part to be absent, as the matter in litigation so nearly concerned himself. And half seriously and half in jest he made his apologies to the learned baron who was to try the cause, and begged for permission to remain at the abbey. The request was most natural, and at once acceded to; and although Heffer-nan had expressed the greatest desire to hear the Counsellor, he determined to pass the morning, at least, with O'Reilly, and endeavor afterwards to be in time for the address to the jury.

At last the procession moved off; several country gentlemen, who had come over to breakfast, joining the party, and making the cavalcade, as it entered the town, a very imposing body. It was the market-day, too; and thus the square in front of the court-house was crowded with a frieze-coated and red-cloaked population, earnestly gesticulating and discussing the approaching trial, for to the Irish peasant the excitement of a law process has the most intense and fascinating interest. All the ordinary traffic of the day was either neglected or carelessly performed, in the anxiety to see those who dispensed the dread forms of justice, but more particularly to obtain a sight of the young "Counsellor," who for the first time had appeared on this circuit, but whose name as a patriot and an orator was widely renowned.

"Here he comes! Here he comes! Make way there!" went from mouth to mouth, as O'Halloran, who had entered the inn for a moment, now issued forth in wig and gown, and carrying a heavily laden bag in his hand. The crowd opened for him respectfully and in dead silence, and then a hearty cheer burst forth, that echoed through the wide square, and was taken up by hundreds of voices in the neighboring streets.

It needed not the reverend companionship of Father John M'Enerty, the parish priest of Curraghglass, who walked at his side, to secure him this hearty burst of welcome, although of a truth the circumstance had its merit also, and many favorable comments were passed upon O'Halloran for the familiar way he leaned on the priest's arm, and the kindly intelligence that subsisted between them.

If anything could have added to the pleasure of the assembled crowd at the instant, it was an announcement by Father John, who, turning round on the steps of the courthouse, informed them in a kind of confidential whisper that was heard over the square, that “if they were good boys, and did n’t make any disturbance in the town,” the Counsellor would give them a speech when the trial was over.

The most deafening shout of applause followed this declaration, and whatever interest the questions of law had possessed for them before was now merged in the higher anxiety to hear the great Counsellor himself discuss the “veto,” that long-agitated question each had taught himself to believe of nearest importance to himself.

“When last I visited this town,” said Bicknell to the senior counsel employed in the Knight’s behalf, “I witnessed a very different scene. Then we had triumphal arches, and bonfire illuminations, and addresses. It was young Darcy’s birthday, and a more enthusiastic reception it is impossible to conceive than he met in these very streets from these very people.”

“There is only one species of interest felt for dethroned monarchs,” said the other, caustically, – “how they bear their misfortunes.”

“The man you see yonder waving his hat to young O’Reilly was one of a deputation to congratulate the heir of Gwynne Abbey! I remember him well, – his name is Mitchell.”

“I hope not the same I see upon our jury-list here,” said the Counsellor, as he unfolded a written paper, and perused it attentively.

“The same man; he holds his house under the Darcys, and has received many and deep favors at their hands.”

“So much the worse, if we should find him in the jury-box. But have we any chance of young Darcy yet? Do you give up all hope of his arrival?”

“The last tidings I received from my clerk were, that he was to follow him down to Plymouth by that night’s mail, and still hoped to be in time to catch him ere the transport sailed.”

“What a rash and reckless fellow he must be, that would leave a country where he has such interests at stake!”

“If he felt that a point of honor or duty was involved, I don’t believe he ‘d sacrifice a jot of either to gain this cause, and I ‘m certain that some such plea has been made use of on the present occasion.”

“How they cheer! What’s the source of their enthusiasm at this moment? There it goes, that carriage with the green liveries and the Irish motto round the crest. Look at O’Halloran, too! how he shakes hands with the townsfolk; canvassing for a verdict already! Now, Bicknell, let us move on; but, for my part, I feel our cause is decided outside the court-house. If I ‘m not very much mistaken, we are about to have an era of ‘popular justice’ in Ireland, and our enemies could not wish us worse luck.”

CHAPTER IV. A SCENE AT THE ASSIZES

Although Mr. Hickman O'Reilly affected an easy unconcern regarding the issue of the trial, he received during the morning more than one despatch from the court-house narrating its progress. They were brief but significant; and when Hefferuan, with his own tact, inquired if the news were satisfactory, the reply was made by putting into his hands a slip of paper with a few words written in pencil: "They are beaten, – the verdict is certain."

"I concluded," said Heffernan, as he handed back the paper, "that the case was not deemed by you a very doubtful matter."

"Neither doubtful nor important," said Hickman, calmly; "it was an effort, in all probability suggested by some crafty lawyer, to break several leases on the ground of forgery in the signatures. I am sure nothing short of Mr. Darcy's great difficulties would ever have permitted him to approve of such a proceeding."

"The shipwrecked sailor will cling to a hen-coop," said Heffernan. "By the way, where are these Darcys? What has become of them?"

"Living in Wales, or in Scotland, some say."

"Are they utterly ruined?"

"Utterly, irretrievably. A course of extravagance maintained for years at a rate of about double his income, loans obtained at any sacrifice, sales of property effected without regard to loss, have overwhelmed him; and the worst of it is, the little remnant of fortune left is likely to be squandered in vain attempts to recover at law what he has lost by recklessness."

Heffernan walked on for some moments in silence, and, as if pondering over Hickman's words, repeated several times, half aloud: "No doubt of it, – no doubt of it." Then added, in a louder tone: "The whole history of this family, Mr. O'Reilly, is a striking confirmation of a remark I heard made, a few days since, by a distinguished individual, – to *you* I may say it was Lord Cornwallis. 'Heffernan,' said he, 'this country is in a state of rapid transition; everything progresses but the old gentry of the land; they alone seem rooted to ancient prejudices, and fast confirmed in bygone barbarisms.' I ventured to ask him if he could suggest a remedy for the evil, and I 'll never forget the tone with which he whispered in my ear, 'Yes; supersede them!' And that, sir," said Heffernan, laying his hand confidentially on O'Reilly's arm, – "that is and must be the future policy regarding Ireland."

Mr. Heffernan did not permit himself to risk the success of his stroke by a word more, nor did he even dare to cast a look at his companion and watch how his spell was working. As the marksman feels when he has shot his bolt that no after-thought can amend the aim, so did he wait quietly for the result, without a single effort on his part. "The remark is a new one to me," said O'Reilly, at length; "but so completely does it accord with my own sentiments, I feel as if I either had or might have made it myself. The old school you speak of were little calculated to advance the prosperity of the country; the attachment of the people to them was fast wearing out."

"Nay," interposed Heffernan, "it was that very same attachment, that rude remnant of feudalism, made the greatest barrier against improvement. The law of the land was powerless in comparison with the obligations of this clanship. It is time, full time, that the people should become English in feeling, as they are in law and in language; and to make them so, the first step is, to work the reformation in the gentry. Now, at the hazard of a liberty which you may deem an impertinence, I will tell you frankly, Mr. O'Reilly, that you, you yourself, are admirably calculated to lead the van of this great movement. It is all very natural, and perhaps very just, that in a moment of chagrin with a minister or his party, a man should feel indignant, and, although acting under a misconception, throw himself into a direct opposition; yet a little reflection will show that such a line involves a false position. Popularity with the masses could never recompense a man like you for the loss of that higher esteem you must sacrifice for it; the *devoirs* of your station impose a very different class of

duties from what this false patriotism suggests; besides, if from indignation – a causeless indignation I am ready to prove it – you separate yourself from the Government, you are virtually suffering your own momentary anger to decide the whole question of your son's career. You are shutting the door of advancement against a young man with every adventitious aid of fortune in his favor; handsome, accomplished, wealthy, – what limit need there be to his ambition? And finally, some fellow, like our friend the Counsellor, without family, friends, or fortune, but with lungs of leather and a ready tongue, will beat you hollow in the race, and secure a wider influence over the mass of the people than a hundred gentlemen like you. You will deem it, probably, enough to spend ten or fifteen thousand on a contested election, and to give a vote for your party in Parliament; he, on the other hand, will write letters, draw up petitions, frame societies, meetings, resolutions, and make speeches, every word of which will sink deeply into the hearts of men whose feelings are his own. You, and others in your station, will be little better than tools in his hands; and powerful as you think yourselves to-day, with your broad acres and your cottier freeholders, the time may come when these men will be less at *your* bidding than *his*, and for this simple reason, – the man of nothing will always be ready to bid higher for mob support than he who has a fortune to lose.”

“You have put a very strong case,” said O'Reilly; “perhaps I should think it stronger, if I had not heard most of the arguments before, from yourself, and know by this time how their application to me has not sustained your prophecy.”

“I am ready to discuss that with you, too,” said Heffer-nan. “I know how it all happened: had I been with you the day you dined with Castlereagh, the misunderstanding never could have occurred; but there was a fatality in it all. Come,” said he, familiarly, and he slipped his arm, as he spoke, within O'Reilly's, “I am the worst diplomatist in the world, and I fear I never should have risen to high rank in the distinguished corps of engineers if such had been my destination. I can lay down the parallels and the trenches patiently enough, I can even bring up my artillery and my battering-train, but, hang it! somehow, I never can wait for a breach to storm through. The truth is, if it were not for a very strong feeling on the subject I have just spoken of, you never would have seen me here this day. No man is happier or prouder to enjoy your hospitality than I am, but I acknowledge it was a higher sentiment induced me to accept your invitation. When your note reached me, I showed it to Castlereagh.

“What answer have you sent?” said he.

“Declined, of course,” said I.

“You are wrong, Heffernan,” said his Lordship, as he took from me the note which I held ready sealed in my hand; ‘in my opinion, Heffernan, you are quite wrong.’

“I may be so, my Lord; but I confess to you I always act from the first impulse, and if it suggests regret afterwards, it at least saves trouble at the time.”

“Heffernan,” said the Secretary, as he calmly read over the lines of your letter, ‘there are many reasons why you should go: in the first place, O'Reilly has really a fair grudge against us, and this note shows that he has the manliness to forget it. Every line of it bespeaks the gentleman, and I 'll not feel contented with myself until you convey to him my own sorrow for what is past, and the high sense I entertain of his character and conduct.’

“He said a great deal more; enough, if I tell you he induced me to rescind my first intention, and to become your guest; and I may say that I never followed advice the consequences of which have so thoroughly sustained my expectations.”

“This is very flattering,” said O'Reilly; “it is, indeed, more than I looked for; but, as you have been candid with me, I will be as open with you: I had already made up my mind to retire, for a season at least, from politics. My father, you know, is a very old man, and not without the prejudices that attach to his age; he was always averse to those ambitious views a public career would open, and a degree of coldness had begun to grow up between us in consequence. This estrangement is now happily at an end; and in his consenting to our present mode of life and its expenditure, he is, in reality, paying the recompense of his former opposition. I will not say what changes time may work

in my opinion or my line of acting; but I will pledge myself that, if I do resume the path of public life, you are the very first man I will apprise of the intention.”

A cordial shake-hands ratified this compact; and Heffer-nan, who now saw that the fortress had capitulated, only stipulating for the honors of war, was about to add something very complimentary, when Beecham O'Reilly galloped up, with his horse splashed and covered with foam.

“Don't you want to hear O'Halloran, Mr. Heffernan?” cried he.

“Yes, by all means.”

“Come along, then; don't lose a moment; there's a phaeton ready for you at the door, and if we make haste, we'll be in good time.”

O'Reilly whispered a few words in his son's ear, to which the other replied, aloud, —

“Oh! quite safe, perfectly safe. He was obliged to join his regiment, and sail at a moment's notice.”

“Young Darcy, I presume?” said Heffernan, with a look of malicious intelligence. But no answer was returned, and O'Reilly continued to converse eagerly in Beecham's ear.

“Here comes the carriage, Mr. Heffernan,” said the young man; “so slip in, and let's be off.” And, giving his horse to a servant, he took his seat beside Heffernan, and drove off at a rapid pace towards the town.

After a quick drive of some miles, they entered the town, and had no necessity to ask if O'Halloran had begun his address to the jury. The streets which led to the square before the court-house, and the square itself, was actually crammed with country-people, of all sexes and ages; some standing with hats off, or holding their hands close to their ears, but all, in breathless silence, listening to the words of the Counsellor, which were not less audible to those without than within the building.

Nothing short of Beecham O'Reilly's present position in the county, and the fact that the gratification they were then deriving was of his family's procuring for them, could have enabled him to force a passage through that dense crowd, which wedged up all the approaches. As it was, he could only advance step by step, the horses and even the pole of the carriage actually forcing the way through the throng.

As they went thus slowly, the rich tones of the speaker swelled on the air with a clear, distinct, and yet so soft and even musical intonation that they fell deeply into the hearts of the listeners. He was evidently bent as much on appealing to those outside the court as to the jury, for his speech was less addressed to the legal question at issue than to the social condition of the peasantry; the all but absolutism of a landlord, – the serf-like slavery of a tenantry, dependent on the will or the caprice of the owners of the soil! With the consummate art of a rhetorician, he first drew the picture of an estate happily circumstanced, a benevolent landlord surrounded by a contented tenantry, the blessings of the poor man, “rising like the dews of the earth, and descending again in rain to refresh and fertilize the source it sprang from.” Not vaguely nor unskilfully, but with thorough knowledge, of his subject, he descanted on the condition of the peasant, his toils, his struggles against poverty and sickness borne with long-suffering and patience, from the firm trust that, even in this world, his destinies were committed to no cruel or unfeeling taskmaster. Although generally a studied plainness and even homeliness of language pervaded all he said, yet at times some bold figure, some striking and brilliant metaphor, would escape him, and then, far from soaring – as it might be suspected he had – above the comprehension of the hearers, a subdued murmur of delight would follow the words, and swelling louder and louder, burst forth at last into one great roar of applause. If a critical ear might cavil at the incompleteness or inaptitude of his similes, to the warm imagination and excited fancy of the Irish peasant they had no such blemishes.

It was at the close of a brilliant peroration on this theme, that Heffernan and Beecham O'Reilly reached the courthouse, and with difficulty forcing their way, obtained standing-room near the bar.

The orator had paused, and turning round he caught Beecham's eye: the glance exchanged was but of a second's duration, but, brief as it was, it did not escape Heffernan's notice, and with a

readiness he knew well how to profit by, he assumed a quiet smile, as though to say that he, too, had read its meaning. The young man blushed deeply; whatever his secret thoughts were, he felt ashamed that another should seem to know them, and in a hesitating whisper, said, —

“Perhaps my father has told you — ”

A short nod from Heffernan — a gesture to imply anything or nothing — was all his reply, and Beecham went on, —

“He’s going to do it, now.”

Heffernan made no answer, but, leaning forward on the rail, settled himself to listen attentively to the speaker.

“Gentlemen of the jury,” said O’Halloran, in a low and deliberate tone, “if the only question I was interested in bringing before you this day was the cause you sit there to try, I would conclude here. Assured as I feel what your verdict will and must be, I would not add a word more, nor weaken the honest merit of your convictions by anything like an appeal to your feelings. But I cannot do this. The law of the land, in the plenitude of its liberty, throws wide the door of justice, that all may enter and seek redress for wrong, and with such evident anxiety that he who believes himself aggrieved should find no obstacle to his right, and that even he who frivolously and maliciously advances a charge against another suffers no heavier penalty for his offence than the costs of the suit. No, my Lords, for the valuable moments lost in a vexatious cause, for the public time consumed, for insult and outrage cast upon the immutable principles of right and wrong, you have nothing more severe to inflict than the costs of the action! — a pecuniary fine, seldom a heavy one, and not unfrequently to be levied upon insolvency! What encouragement to the spirit of revengeful litigation! How suggestive of injury is the system! How deplorable would it be if the temple could not be opened without the risk of its altar being desecrated! But, happily, there is a remedy — a great and noble remedy — for an evil like this. The same glorious institutions that have built up for our protection the bulwark of the law, have created another barrier against wrong, — grander, more expansive, and more enduring still; one neither founded on the variable basis of nationality or of language, nor propped by the artifices of learned, or the subtleties of crafty men; not following the changeful fortunes of a political condition, or tempered by the tone of the judgment-seat, but of all lands, of every tongue and nation and people, great, enduring, and immutable, — the law of Public Opinion. To the bar of this judgment-seat, one higher and greater than even your Lordships, I would now summon the plaintiff in this action. There is no need that I should detail the charge against him; the accusation he has brought this day is our indictment, — his allegation is his crime.”

The reader, by this time, may partake of Mr. Heffernan’s prescience, and divine what the secret intelligence between the Counsellor and Beecham portended, and that a long-meditated attack on the Knight of Gwynne, in all the relations of his public and private life, was the chief duty of Mr. O’Halloran in the action. Taking a lesson from the great and illustrious chief of a neighboring state, O’Reilly felt that Usurpation can never be successful till Legitimacy becomes odious. The “prestige” of the “old family” clung too powerfully to every class in the county to make his succession respected. His low origin was too recent, his moneyed dealings too notorious, to gain him acceptance, except on the ruins of the Darcys. The new edifice of his own fame must be erected out of the scattered and broken materials of his rival’s house. If any one was well calculated to assist in such an emergency, it was O’Halloran.

It was by — to use his own expression — “weeding the country of such men” that the field would be opened for that new class of politicians who were to issue their edicts in newspapers, and hold their parliaments in public meetings. Against exclusive or exaggerated loyalty the struggle would be violent, but not difficult; while against moderation, sound sense and character, the Counsellor well knew the victory was not so easy of attainment. He himself, therefore, had a direct personal object in this attack on the Knight of Gwynne, and gladly accepted the special retainer that secured his services.

By a series of artful devices, he so arranged his case that the Knight of Gwynne did not appear as an injured individual seeking redress against the collusive guilt of his agent and his tenantry, but as a ruined gambler, endeavoring to break the leases he had himself granted and guaranteed, and, by an act of perfidy, involve hundreds of innocent families in hopeless beggary. To the succor of these unprotected people Mr. Hickman O'Reilly was represented as coming forward, this noble act of devotion being the first pledge he had offered of what might be expected from him as the future leader of a great county.

He sketched with a masterly but diabolical ingenuity the whole career of the Knight, representing him at every stage of life as the pampered voluptuary seeking means for fresh enjoyment without a thought of the consequences; he exhibited him dispensing, not the graceful duties of hospitality, but the reckless waste of a tasteless household, to counterbalance by profusion the insolent hauteur of his wife, "that same Lady Eleanor who would not deign to associate with the wives and daughters of his neighbors!" "I know not," cried the orator, "whether you were more crushed by *his* gold or by *her* insolence: it was time that you should weary of both. You took the wealth on trust, and the rank on guess, – what now remains of either?"

He drew a frightful picture of a suffering and poverty-enslaved tenantry, sinking fast into barbarism from hopelessness, – unhappily, no Irishman need depend upon his imagination for the sketch. He contrasted the hours of toil and sickness with the wanton spendthrift in his pleasures, – the gambler setting the fate of families on the die, reserving for his last hope the consolation that he might still betray those whom he had ruined, and that when he had dissipated the last shilling of his fortune, he still had the resource of putting his honor up to auction! "And who is there will deny that he did this?" cried O'Halloran. "Is there any man in the kingdom has not heard of his conduct in Parliament – that foul act of treachery which the justice of Heaven stigmatized by his ruin! How on the very night of the debate he was actually on his way to inflict the last wound upon his country, when the news came of his own overwhelming destruction! And, like as you have seen sometime in our unhappy land the hired informer transferred from the witness-table to the dock, this man stands now forth to answer for his own offences!

"It was full time that the rotten edifice of this feudal gentry should fall; honor to you on whom the duty devolves to roll away the first stone!"

A slight movement in the crowd behind the bar disturbed the silence in which the Court listened to the speaker, and a murmur of disapprobation was heard, when a hand, stretched forth, threw a little slip of paper on the table before O'Halloran. It was addressed to him; and believing it came from the attorney in the cause, he paused to read it. Suddenly his features became of an ashy paleness, his lip trembled convulsively, and in a voice scarcely audible from emotion, he addressed the bench, —

"My Lords, I ask the protection of this Court. I implore your Lordships to see that an advocate, in the discharge of his duty, is not the mark of an assassin. I have just received this note – " He attempted to read it, but after a pause of a second or two, unable to utter a word, he handed the paper to the bench.

The judge perused the paper, and immediately whispered an order that the writer, or at least the bearer, of the note should be taken into custody.

"You may rest assured, sir," said the senior judge, addressing O'Halloran, "that we will punish the offender, if he be discovered, with the utmost penalty the law permits. Mr. Sheriff, let the court be searched."

The sub-sheriff was already, with the aid of a strong police force, engaged in the effort to discover the individual who had thus dared to interfere with the administration of justice; but all in vain. The court and the galleries were searched without eliciting anything that could lead to detection; and although several were taken up on suspicion, they were immediately afterwards liberated on being recognized as persons well known and in repute. Meanwhile the business of the trial stood still, and

O'Halloran, with his arms folded, and his brows bent in a sullen frown, sat without speaking, or noticing any one around him.

The curiosity to know the exact words the paper contained was meanwhile extreme, and a thousand absurd versions gained currency; for, in the absence of all fact, invention was had recourse to. "Young Darcy is here, – he was seen this morning on the mail, – it was he himself gave the letter." Such were among the rumors around; while Con Heffernan, coolly tapping his snuff-box, asked one of the lawyers near him, but in a voice plainly audible on either side, "I hope our friend Bagenal Daly is well; have you seen him lately?"

From that moment an indistinct murmur ran through the crowd that it was Daly had come back to "the West" to challenge the bar, and the whole bench, if necessary. Many added that there could no longer be any doubt of the fact, as Mr. Heffernan had seen and spoken to him.

Order was at last restored; but so completely had this new incident absorbed all the interest of the trial, that already the galleries began to thin, and of the great crowd that filled the body of the court, many had taken their departure. The Counsellor arose, agitated and evidently disconcerted, to finish his task: he spoke, indeed, indignantly of the late attempt to coerce the free expression of the advocate "by a brutal threat;" but the theme seemed one he felt no pleasure in dwelling upon, and he once more addressed himself to the facts of the case.

The judge charged briefly; and the jury, without retiring from the box, brought in a verdict for Hickman O'Reilly.

When the judges retired to unrobe, a messenger of the court summoned O'Halloran to their chamber. His absence was very brief; but when he returned his face was paler, and his manner more disturbed than ever, notwithstanding an evident effort to seem at ease and unconcerned. By this time Hickman O'Reilly had arrived in the town, and Heffernan was complimenting the Counsellor on the admirable display of his speech.

"I regret sincerely that the delicate nature of the position in which I stood prevented my hearing you," said O'Reilly, shaking his hand.

"You have indeed had a great loss," said Heffernan; "a more brilliant display I never listened to."

"Well, sir," interposed the little priest of Curraghglass, who, not altogether to the Counsellor's satisfaction, had now slipped an arm inside of his, "I hope the evil admits of remedy; Mr. O'Halloran intends to address a few words to the people before he leaves the town."

Whether it was the blank look that suddenly O'Reilly's features assumed, or the sly malice that twinkled in Heffernan's gray eyes, or that his own feelings suggested the course, but the Counsellor hastily whispered a few words in the priest's ear, the only audible portion of which was the conclusion: "Be that as it may, I'll not do it."

"I'm ready now, Mr. O'Reilly," said he, turning abruptly round.

"My father has gone over to say good-bye to the judges," said Beecham; "but I'll drive you back to the abbey, – the carriage is now at the door."

With a few more words in a whisper to the priest, O'Halloran moved on with young O'Reilly towards the door.

"Only think, sir," said Father John, dropping behind with Heffernan, from whose apparent intimacy with O'Halloran he augured a similarity of politics, "it is the first time the Counsellor was ever in our town, the people have been waiting since two o'clock to hear him on the 'veto,' – sorra one of them knows what the same 'veto' is, – but it will be a cruel disappointment to see him leave the place without so much as saying a word."

"Do you think a short address from *me* would do instead?" said Heffernan, slyly; "I know pretty well what's doing up in Dublin."

"Nothing could be better, sir," said Father John, in ecstasy; "if the Counsellor would just introduce you in a few words, and say that, from great fatigue, or a sore throat, or anything that way, he deputed his friend Mr. –"

“Heffernan’s my name.”

“His friend Mr. Heffernan to state his views about the ‘veto,’ – mind, it must be the ‘veto,’-you can touch on the reform in Parliament, the oppression of the penal laws, but the ‘veto’ will bring a cheer that will beat them all.”

“You had better hint the thing to the Counsellor,” said Heffernan; “I am ready whenever you want me.”

As the priest stepped forward to make the communication to O’Halloran, that gentleman, leaning on Beecham O’Reilly’s arm, had just reached the steps of the courthouse, where now a considerable police-force was stationed, – a measure possibly suggested by O’Reilly himself.

The crowd, on catching sight of the Counsellor, cheered vociferously; and, although they were not without fears that he intended to depart without speaking, many averred that he would address them from the carriage. Before Father John could make known his request, a young man, dressed in a riding-costume, burst through the line of police, and, springing up the steps, seized O’Halloran by the collar.

“I gave you a choice, sir,” said he, “and you made it;” and at the same instant, with a heavy horsewhip, struck him several times across the shoulders, and even the face. So sudden was the movement, and so violent the assault, that, although a man of great personal strength, O’Halloran had received several blows almost before he could defend himself, and when he had rallied, his adversary, though much lighter and less muscular, showed in skill, at least, he was his superior. The struggle, however, was not to end here; for the mob, now seeing their favorite champion attacked, with a savage howl of vengeance dashed forward, and the police, well aware that the youth would be torn limb from limb, formed a line in front of him with fixed bayonets. For a few moments the result was doubtful; nor was it until more than one retired into the crowd bleeding and wounded, that the mob desisted, or limited their rage to yells of vengeance.

Meanwhile the Counsellor was pulled back within the court-house by his companions, and the young man secured by two policemen, – a circumstance which went far to allay the angry tempest of the people without.

As, pale and powerless from passion, his livid cheek marked with a deep blue welt, O’Halloran sat in one of the waiting-rooms of the court, O’Reilly and his son endeavored, as well as they could, to calm down his rage; expressing, from time to time, their abhorrence of the indignity offered, and the certain penalty that awaited the offender. O’Halloran never spoke; he tried twice to utter something, but the words died away without sound, and he could only point to his cheek with a trembling finger, while his eyes glared like the red orbs of a tiger.

As they stood thus, Heffernan slipped noiselessly behind O’Reilly, and said in his ear, —

“Get him off to the abbey; your son will take care of him. I have something for yourself to hear.”

O’Reilly nodded significantly, and then, turning, said a few words in a low, persuasive tone to O’Halloran, concluding thus: “Yes, by all means, leave the whole affair in my hands. I ‘ll have no difficulty in making a bench. The town is full of my brother magistrates.”

“On every account I would recommend this course, sir,” said Heffernan, with one of those peculiarly meaning looks by which he so well knew how to assume a further insight into any circumstance than his neighbors possessed.

“I will address the people,” cried O’Halloran, breaking his long silence with a deep and passionate utterance of the words; “they shall see in me the strong evidence of the insolent oppression of that faction that rules this country; I ‘ll make the land ring with the tyranny that would stifle the voice of justice, and make the profession of the bar a forlorn hope to every man of independent feeling.”

“The people have dispersed already,” said Beecham, as he came back from the door of the court; “the square is quite empty.”

“Yes, I did that,” whispered Heffernan in O’Reilly’s ear; “I made the servant put on the Counsellor’s greatcoat, and drive rapidly off towards the abbey. The carriage is now, however, at the back entrance to the court-house; so, by all means, persuade him to return.”

“When do you propose bringing the fellow up for examination, Mr. O’Reilly?” said O’Halloran, as he arose from his seat.

“To-morrow morning. I have given orders to summon a full bench of magistrates, and the affair shall be sifted to the bottom.”

“You may depend upon that, sir,” said the Counsellor, sternly. “Now I ‘ll go back with you, Mr. Beecham O’Reilly.” So saying, he moved towards a private door of the building, where the phaeton was in waiting, and, before any attention was drawn to the spot, he was seated in the carriage, and the horses stepping out at a fast pace towards home.

“It’s not Bagenal Daly?” said O’Reilly, the very moment he saw the carriage drive off.

“No, no!” said Heffernan, smiling.

“Nor the young Darcy, – the captain?”

“Nor him either. It’s a young fellow we have been seeking for in vain the last month. His name is Forester.”

“Not Lord Castlereagh’s Forester?”

“The very man. You may have met him here as Darcy’s guest?”

O’Reilly nodded.

“What makes the affair worse is that the relationship with Castlereagh will be taken up as a party matter by O’Halloran’s friends in the press; they will see a Castle plot, where, in reality, there is nothing to blame save the rash folly of a hot-headed boy.”

“What is to be done?” said O’Reilly, putting his hand to his forehead, in his embarrassment to think of some escape from the difficulty.

“I see but one safe issue, – always enough to any question, if men have resolution to adopt it.”

“Let me hear what you counsel,” said O’Reilly, as he cast a searching glance at his astute companion.

“Get him off as fast as you can.”

“O’Halloran! You mistake him, Mr. Heffernan; he’ll prosecute the business to the end.”

“I’m speaking of Forester,” said Heffernan, dryly; “it is *his* absence is the important matter at this moment.”

“I confess I am myself unable to appreciate your view of the case,” said O’Reilly, with a cunning smile; “the policy is a new one to me which teaches that a magistrate should favor the escape of a prisoner who has just insulted one of his own friends.”

“I may be able to explain my meaning to your satisfaction,” said Heffernan, as, taking O’Reilly’s arm, he spoke for some time in a low but earnest manner. “Yes,” said he, aloud, “your son Beecham was the object of this young man’s vengeance; chance alone turned his anger on the Counsellor. His sole purpose in ‘the West’ was to provoke your son to a duel, and I know well what the result of your proceedings to-morrow would effect. Forester would not accept of his liberty on bail, nor would he enter into a security on his part to keep the peace. You will be forced, actually forced, to commit a young man of family and high position to a gaol; and what will the world say? That in seeking satisfaction for a very gross outrage on the character of his friend, a young Englishman of high family was sent to prison! In Ireland, the tale will tell badly; *we* always have more sympathy than censure for such offenders. In England, how many will know of his friends and connections, who never heard of your respectable bench of magistrates, – will it be very wonderful if they side with their countryman against the stranger?”

“How am I to face O’Halloran if I follow this counsel?” said O’Reilly, with a thoughtful but embarrassed air. “Then, as to Lord Castlereagh,” continued Heffernan, not heeding the question, “he will take your interference as a personal and particular favor. There never was a more favorable

opportunity for you to disconnect yourself with the whole affair. The hired advocate may calumniate as he will, but he can show no collusion or connivance on your part. I may tell you, in confidence, that a more indecent and gross attack was never uttered than this same speech. I heard it, and from the beginning to the end it was a tissue of vulgarity and falsehood. Oh! I know what you would say: I complimented the speaker on his success, and all that; so I did, perfectly true, and he understood me, too, – there is no greater impertinence, perhaps, than in telling a man that you mistook his bad cider for champagne! But enough of him. You may have all the benefit, if there be such, of the treason, and yet never rub shoulders with the traitor. You see I am eager on this point, and I confess I am very much so. Your son Beecham could not have a worse enemy in the world of Club and Fashion than this same Forester; he knows and is known to everybody.”

“But I cannot perceive how the thing is to be done,” broke in O’Reilly, pettishly; “you seem to forget that O’Halloran is not the man to be put off with any lame, disjointed story.”

“Easily enough,” said Heffernan, coolly; “there is no difficulty whatever. You can blunder in the warrant of his committal; you can designate him by a wrong Christian name; call him Robert, not Richard; he may be admitted to bail, and the sum a low one. The rest follows naturally; or, better than all, let some other magistrate-you surely know more than one to aid in such a pinch – take the case upon himself, and make all the necessary errors; that’s the best plan.”

“Conolly, perhaps,” said O’Reilly, musingly; “he is a great friend of Darcy’s, and would risk something to assist this young fellow.”

“Well thought of,” cried Heffernan, slapping him on the shoulder; “just give me a line of introduction to Mr. Conolly on one of your visiting-cards, and leave the rest to me.”

“If I yield to you in this business, Mr. Heffernan,” said O’Reilly, as he sat down to write, “I assure you it is far more from my implicit confidence in your skill to conduct it safely to the end, than from any power of persuasion in your arguments. O’Halloran is a formidable enemy.”

“You never were more mistaken in your life,” said Heffernan, laughing, “such men are only noxious by the terror they inspire; they are the rattlesnakes of the world of mankind, always giving notice of their approach, and never dangerous to the prudent. He alone is to be dreaded who, tiger-like, utters no cry till his victim is in his fangs.”

There was a savage malignity in the way these words were uttered that made O’Reilly almost shudder. Heffernan saw the emotion he had unguardedly evoked, and, laughing, said, —

“Well, am I to hold over the remainder of my visit to the abbey as a debt unpaid? for I really have no fancy to let you off so cheaply.”

“But you are coming back with me, are you not?”

“Impossible! I must take charge of this foolish boy, and bring him up to Dublin; I only trust I have a vested right to come back and see you at a future day.”

O’Reilly responded to the proposition with courteous warmth; and with mutual pledges, perhaps of not dissimilar sincerity, they parted, – the one to his own home, the other to negotiate in a different quarter and in a very different spirit of diplomacy.

CHAPTER V. MR. HEFFERNAN'S COUNSELS

Mr. Heffernan possessed many worldly gifts and excellences, but upon none did he so much pride himself, in the secret recesses of his heart, – he was too cunning to indulge in more public vauntings, – as in the power he wielded over the passions of men much younger than himself. Thoroughly versed in their habits of life, tastes, and predilections, he knew how much always to concede to the warm and generous temperament of their age, and to maintain his influence over them less by the ascendancy of ability than by a more intimate acquaintance with all the follies and extravagances of fashionable existence.

Whether he had or had not been a principal actor in the scenes he related with so much humor, it was difficult to say; for he would gloss over his own personal adventures so artfully that it was not easy to discover whether the motive were cunning or delicacy. He seemed, at least, to have done everything that wildness and eccentricity had ever devised, to have known intimately every man renowned for such exploits, and to have gone through a career of extravagance and dissipation quite sufficient to make him an unimpeachable authority in every similar case. The reserve which young men feel with regard to those older than themselves was never experienced in Con Heffernan's company; they would venture to tell him anything, well aware that, however absurd the story or embarrassing the scrape, Heffernan was certain to cap it by another twice as extravagant in every respect.

Although Forester was by no means free from the faults of his age and class, the better principles of his nature had received no severe or lasting injury, and his estimation for Heffernan proceeded from a very different view of his character from that which we have just alluded to. He knew him to be the tried and trusted agent of his cousin, Lord Castlereagh, one for whose abilities he entertained the greatest respect; he saw him consulted and advised with on every question of difficulty, his opinions asked, his suggestions followed; and if, occasionally, the policy was somewhat tortuous, he was taught to believe that the course of politics, like that "of true love, never did run smooth." In this way, then, did he learn to look up to Heffernan, who was too shrewd a judge of motives to risk a greater ascendancy by any hazardous appeal to the weaker points of his character.

Fortune could not have presented a more welcome visitor to Forester's eyes than Heffernan, as he entered the room of the inn where the youth had been conducted by the sergeant of police, and where he sat bewildered by the difficulties in which his own rashness had involved him. The first moments of meeting were occupied by a perfect shower of questions, as to how Heffernan came to be in that quarter of the world, when he had arrived, and with whom he was staying. All questions which Heffernan answered by the laughing subterfuge of saying, "Your good genius, I suppose, sent me to get you out of your scrape; and fortunately I am able to do so. But what in the name of everything ridiculous could have induced you to insult this man, O'Halloran? You ought to have known that men like him cannot fight; they would be made riddles of if they once consented to back by personal daring the insolence of their tongues. They set out by establishing for themselves a kind of outlawry from honor, they acknowledge no debts within the jurisdiction of that court, otherwise they would soon be bankrupt."

"They should be treated like all others without the pale of law, then," said Forester, indignantly.

"Or, like Sackville," added Heffernan, laughing, "when they put their swords 'on the peace establishment,' they should put their tongues on the 'civil list.' Well, well, there are new discoveries made every day; some men succeed better in life by the practice of cowardice than others ever did, or ever will do, by the exercise of valor."

"What can I do here? Is there anything serious in the difficulty?" said Forester, hurriedly; for he was in no humor to enjoy the abstract speculations in which Heffernan indulged.

"It might have been a very troublesome business," replied Heffernan, quietly: "the judge might have issued a bench warrant against you, if he did not want your cousin to make him chief baron;

and Justice Conolly might have been much more technically accurate, if he was not desirous of seeing his son in an infantry regiment. It's all arranged now, however; there is only one point for your compliance, – you must get out of Ireland as fast as may be. O'Halloran will apply for a rule in the King's Bench, but the proceedings will not extend to England."

"I am indifferent where I go to," said Forester, turning away; "and provided this foolish affair does not get abroad, I am well content."

"Oh! as to that, you must expect your share of notoriety. O'Halloran will take care to display his martyrdom for the people! It will bring him briefs now; Heaven knows what greater rewards the future may have in store from it!"

"You heard the provocation," said Forester, with an unsuccessful attempt to speak calmly, – "the gross and most unpardonable provocation?"

"I was present," replied Heffernan, quietly.

"Well, what say you? Was there ever uttered an attack more false and foul? Was there ever conceived a more fiendish and malignant slander?"

"I never heard anything worse."

"Not anything worse! No, nor ever one half so bad."

"Well, if you like it, I will agree with you; not one half so bad. It was untrue in all its details, unmanly in spirit. But, let me add, that such philippics have no lasting effect, – they are like unskilful mines, that in their explosion only damage the contrivers. O'Reilly, who was the real deviser of this same attack, whose heart suggested, whose head invented, and whose coffers paid for it, will reap all the obloquy he hoped to heap upon another. Take myself, for instance, an old time-worn man of the world, who has lived long enough never to be sudden in my friendships or my resentments, who thinks that liking and disliking are slow processes, – well, even I was shocked, outraged at this affair; and although having no more intimacy with Darcy than the ordinary intercourse of social life, confess I could not avoid acting promptly and decisively on the subject. It was a question, perhaps, more of feeling than actual judgment, – a case in which the first impulse may generally be deemed the right one." Here Heffernan paused, and drew himself up with an air that seemed to say, "If I am confessing to a weakness in my character, it is at least one that leans to virtue's side."

Forester awaited with impatience for the explanation, and, not perceiving it to come, said, "Well, what did you do in the affair?"

"My part was a very simple one," said Heffernan; "I was Mr. O'Reilly's guest, one of a large party, asked to meet the judges and the Attorney-General. I came in, with many others, to hear O'Halloran; but if I did, I took the liberty of not returning again. I told Mr. O'Reilly frankly that, in point of fact, the thing was false, and, as policy, it was a mistake. Party contests are all very well, they are necessary, because without them there is no banner to fight under; and the man of mock liberality to either side would take precedence of those more honest but less cautious than himself; but these things are great evils when they enlist libellous attacks on character in their train. If the courtesies of life are left at the door of our popular assemblies, they ought at least to be resumed when passing out again into the world."

"And so you actually refused to go back to his house?" said Forester, who felt far more interested in this simple fact than in all the abstract speculation that accompanied it.

"I did so: I even begged of him to send my servant and my carriage after me; and, had it not been for your business, before this time I had been some miles on my way towards Dublin."

Forester never spoke, but he grasped Heffernan's hand, and shook it with earnest cordiality.

"Yes, yes," said Heffernan, as he returned the pressure; "men can be strong partisans, anxious and eager for their own side, but there is something higher and nobler than party." He arose as he spoke, and walked towards the window, and then, suddenly turning round, and with an apparent desire to change the theme, asked, "But how came you here? What good or evil fortune prompted you to be present at this scene?"

“I fear you must allow me to keep that a secret,” said Forester, in some confusion.

“Scarcely fair, that, my young friend,” said Heffernan, laughing, “after hearing my confession in full.”

Forester seemed to feel the force of the observation, but, uncertain how to act, he maintained a silence for several minutes.

“If the affair were altogether my own, I should not hesitate,” said he at length, “but it is not so. However, we are in confidence here, and so I will tell you. I came to this part of the country at the earnest desire of Lionel Darcy. I don’t know whether you are aware of his sudden departure for India. He had asked for leave of absence to give evidence on this trial; the application was made a few days after a memorial he sent in for a change of regiment. The demand for leave was unheeded, but he received a peremptory order to repair to Portsmouth, and take charge of a detachment under sailing-orders for India; they consisted of men belonging to the Eleventh Light Dragoons, of which he was gazetted to a troop. I was with him at Chatham when the letter reached him, and he explained the entire difficulty to me, showing that he had no alternative, save neglecting the interest of his family, on the one hand, or refusing that offer of active service he had so urgently solicited on the other. We talked the thing over one entire night through, and at last, right or wrong, persuaded ourselves that any evidence he could give would be of comparatively little value; and that the refusal to join would be deemed a stain upon him as an officer, and probably be the cause of greater grief to the Knight himself than his absence at the trial. Poor fellow! he felt for more deeply for quitting England without saying good-bye to his family than for all the rest.”

“And so he actually sailed in the transport?” said Heffernan.

“Yes, and without time for more than a few lines to his father, and a parting request to me to come over to Ireland and be present at the trial. Whether he anticipated any attack of this kind or not, I cannot say, but he expressed the desire so strongly I half suspect as much.”

“Very cleverly done, faith!” muttered Heffernan, who seemed far more occupied with his own reflections than attending to Forester’s words; “a deep and subtle stroke, Master O’Reilly, ably planned and as ably executed.”

“I am rejoiced that Lionel escaped this scene, at all events,” said Forester.

“I must say, it was neatly done,” continued Heffernan, still following out his own train of thought; “*Non contigit cuique*,’ as the Roman says; it is not every man can take in Con Heffernan, – I did not expect Hickman O’Reilly would try it.” He leaned his head on his hand for some minutes, then said aloud, “The best thing for you will be to join your regiment.”

“I have left the army,” said Forester, with a flush, half of shame, half of anger.

“I think you were right,” replied Heffernan, calmly, while he avoided noticing the confusion in the young man’s manner. “Soldiering is no career for any man of abilities like yours; the lounging life of a barrack-yard, the mock duties of parade, the tiresome dissipations of the mess, suit small capacities and minds of mere routine. But you have better stuff in you, and, with your connections and family interest, there are higher prizes to strive for in the wheel of fortune.”

“You mistake me,” said Forester, hastily; “it was with no disparaging opinion of the service I left it. My reasons had nothing in common with such an estimate of the army.”

“There’s diplomacy, for instance,” said Heffernan, not minding the youth’s remark; “your brother has influence with the Foreign Office.”

“I have no fancy for the career.”

“Well, there are Government situations in abundance. A man must do something in our work-a-day world, if only to be companionable to those who do. Idleness begets ennui and falling in love; and although the first only wearies for the time, the latter lays its impress on all a man’s after-life, fills him with false notions of happiness, instils wrong motives for exertion, and limits the exercise of capacity to the small and valueless accomplishments that find favor beside the work-table and the piano.”

Forester received somewhat haughtily the unasked counsels of Mr. Heffernan respecting his future mode of life, nor was it improbable that he might himself have conveyed his opinion thereupon in words, had not the appearance of the waiter to prepare the table for dinner interposed a barrier.

“At what hour shall I order the horses, sir?” asked the man of Heffernan.

“Shall we say eight o’clock, or is that too early?”

“Not a minute too early for me,” said Forester; “I am longing to leave this place, where I hope never again to set foot.”

“At eight, then, let them be at the door; and whenever your cook is ready, we dine.”

CHAPTER VI. AN UNLOOKED-FOR PROMOTION

The same post that brought the Knight the tidings of his lost suit conveyed the intelligence of his son's departure for India; and although the latter event was one over which, if in his power, he would have exercised no control, yet was it by far the more saddening of the two announcements.

Unable to apply any more consolatory counsels, his invariable reply to Lady Eleanor was, "It was a point of duty; the boy could not have done otherwise; I have too often expressed my opinion to him about the *devoirs* of a soldier to permit of his hesitating here. And as for our suit, Mr. Bicknell says the jury did not deliberate ten minutes on their verdict; whatever right we might have on our side, it was pretty clear we had no law. Poor Lionel is spared the pain of knowing this, at least." He sighed heavily, and was silent. Lady Eleanor and Helen spoke not either; and except their long-drawn breathings nothing was heard in the room.

Lady Eleanor was the first to speak. "Might not Lionel's evidence have given a very different coloring to our cause if he had been there?"

"It is hard to say. I am not aware whether we failed upon a point of fact or law. Mr. Bicknell writes like a man who felt his words were costly matters, and that he should not put his client to unnecessary expense. He limits himself to the simple announcement of the result, and that the charge of the bench was very pointedly unfavorable. He says something about a motion for a new trial, and regrets Daly's having prevented his engaging Mr. O'Halloran, and refers us to the newspapers for detail."

"I never heard a question of this O'Halloran," said Lady Eleanor, "nor of Mr. Daly's opposition to him before."

"Nor did I, either; though, in all likelihood, if I had, I should have been of Bagenal's mind myself. Employing such men has always appeared to me on a par with the barbarism of engaging the services of savage nations in a war against civilized ones; and the practice is defended by the very same arguments, – if they are not with you, they are against you."

"You are right, my dear father," said Helen, while her countenance glowed with unusual animation; "leave such allies to the enemy if he will, no good cause shall be stained by the scalping-knife and the tomahawk."

"Quite right, my dearest child," said he, fondly; "no defeat is so bad as such a victory."

"And where was Mr. Daly? He does not seem to have been at the trial?"

"No; it would appear as if he were detained by some pressing necessity in Dublin. This letter is in his handwriting; let us see what he says."

Before the Knight could execute his intention, old Tate appeared at the door, and announced the name of Mr. Dempsey.

"You must present our compliments," said Darcy, hastily, "and say that a very particular engagement will prevent our having the pleasure of receiving his visit this evening."

"This is really intolerable," said Lady Eleanor, who, never much disposed to look favorably on that gentleman, felt his present appearance anything but agreeable.

"You hear what your master says," said Helen to the old man, who, never having in his whole life received a similar order, felt proportionately astonished and confused.

"Tell Mr. Dempsey we are very sorry; but –"

"For all that, he won't be denied," said Paul, himself finishing the sentence, while, passing unceremoniously in front of Tate, he walked boldly into the middle of the room. His face was flushed, his forehead covered with perspiration, and his clothes, stained with dust, showed that he had come off a very long and fast walk. He wiped his forehead with a flaring cotton handkerchief, and then, with a long-drawn puff, threw himself back into an arm-chair.

There was something so actually comic in the cool assurance of the little man, that Darcy lost all sense of annoyance at the interruption, while he surveyed him and enjoyed the dignified coolness of Lady Eleanor's reception.

"That's the devil's own bit of a road," said Paul, as he fanned himself with a music-book, "between this and Coleraine. Whenever it 's not going up a hill, it's down one. Do you ever walk that way, ma'am?"

"Very seldom indeed, sir."

"Faith, and I 'd wager, when you do, that it gives you a pain just here below the calf of the leg, and a stitch in the small of the back."

Lady Eleanor took no notice of this remark, but addressed some observation to Helen, at which the young girl smiled, and said, in a whisper, —

"Oh, he will not stay long."

"I am afraid, Mr. Dempsey," said the Knight, "that. I must be uncourteous enough to say that we are unprepared for a visitor this evening. Some letters of importance have just arrived; and as they will demand all our attention, you will, I am sure, excuse the frankness of my telling you that we desire to be alone."

"So you shall in a few minutes more," said Paul, coolly. "Let me have a glass of sherry and water, or, if wine is not convenient, ditto of brandy, and I 'm off. I did n't come to stop. It was a letter that you forgot at the post-office, marked 'with speed,' on the outside, that brought me here; for I was spending a few days at Coleraine with old Hewson."

The kindness of this thoughtful act at once eradicated every memory of the vulgarity that accompanied it; and as the Knight took the letter from his hands, he hastened to apologize for what he said by adding his thanks for the service.

"I offered a fellow a shilling to bring it, but being harvest-time he wouldn't come," said Dempsey. "Phew! what a state the roads are in! dust up to your ankles!"

"Come now, pray help yourself to some wine and water," said the Knight; "and while you do so, I 'll ask permission to open my letter."

"There 's a short cut down by Port-na-happle mill, they tell me, ma'am," said Dempsey, who now found a much more complaisant listener than at first; "but, to tell you the truth, I don't think it would suit you or me; there are stone walls to climb over and ditches to cross. Miss Helen, there, might get over them, she has a kind of a thoroughbred stride of her own, but fencing destroys me outright."

"It was a very great politeness to think of bringing us the letter, and I trust your fatigues will not be injurious to you," said Lady Eleanor, smiling faintly.

"Worse than the damage to a pair of very old shoes, ma'am, I don't anticipate; I begin to suspect they've taken their last walk this evening."

While Mr. Dempsey contemplated the coverings of his feet with a very sad expression, the Knight continued to read the letter he held in his hand with an air of extreme intentness.

"Eleanor, my dear," said he, as he retired into the deep recess of a window, "come here for a moment."

"I guessed there would be something of consequence in that," said Dempsey, with a sly glance from Helen to the two figures beside the window. "The envelope was a thin one, and I read 'War Office' in the corner of the inside cover."

Not heeding the delicacy of this announcement, but only thinking of the fact, which she at once connected with Lionel's fortunes, Helen turned an anxious and searching glance towards the window; but the Knight and Lady Eleanor had entered a small room adjoining, and were already concealed from view.

"Was he ever in the militia, miss?" asked Dempsey, with a gesture of his thumb to indicate of whom he spoke.

"I believe not," said Helen, smiling at the pertinacity of his curiosity.

“Well, well,” resumed Dempsey, with a sigh, “I would not wish him a hotter march than I had this day, and little notion I had of the same tramp only ten minutes before. I was reading the ‘Saunders’ of Tuesday last, with an account of that business done at Mayo between O’Halloran and the young officer-you know what I mean?”

“No, I have not heard it; pray tell me,” said she, with an eagerness very different from her former manner.

“It was a horsewhipping, miss, that a young fellow in the Guards gave O’Halloran, just as he was coming out of court; something the Counsellor said about somebody in the trial, – names never stay in my head, but I remember it was a great trial at the Westport assizes, and that O’Halloran came down special, and faith, so did the young captain too; and if the lawyer laid it on very heavily within the court, the red-coat made up for it outside. But I believe I have the paper in my pocket, and, if you like, I’ll read it out for you.”

“Pray do,” said Helen, whose anxiety was now intense.

“Well, here goes,” said Mr. Dempsey; “but with your permission I ‘ll just wet my lips again. That ‘s elegant sherry!”

Having sipped and tasted often enough to try the young lady’s patience to its last limit, he unfolded the paper, and read aloud, —

““When Counsellor O’Halloran had concluded his eloquent speech in the trial of Darcy v. Hickman, – for a full report of which see our early columns, – a young gentleman, pushing his way through the circle of congratulating friends, accosted him with the most insulting and opprobrious epithets, and failing to elicit from the learned gentleman a reciprocity,’-that means, miss, that O’Halloran did n’t show fight, – ‘struck him repeatedly across the shoulders, and even the face, with a horsewhip. He was immediately committed under a bench warrant, but was liberated almost at once. Perhaps our readers may understand these proceedings more clearly when we inform them that Captain Forester, the aggressor in this case, is a near relative of our Irish Secretary, Lord Castlereagh.’ That ‘s very neatly put, miss, isn’t it?” said Mr. Dempsey, with a sly twinkle of the eye; “it’s as much as to say that the Castle chaps may do what they please. But it won’t end there, depend upon it; the Counsellor will see it out.”

Helen paid little attention to the observation, for, having taken up the paper as Mr. Dempsey laid it down, she was deeply engaged in the report of the trial and O’Halloran’s speech.

“Wasn’t that a touching-up the old Knight of Gwynne got?” said Dempsey, as, with his glass to his eye, he peered over her shoulder at the newspaper. “Faith, O’Halloran flayed him alive! He ‘s the boy can do it!”

Helen scarce seemed to breathe, as, with a heart almost bursting with indignant anger, she read the lines before her.

“Strike him!” cried she, at length, unable longer to control the passion that worked within her; “had he trampled him beneath his feet, it had not been too much?”

The little man started, and stared with amazement at the young girl, as, with flashing eyes and flushed cheek, she arose from her seat, and, tearing the paper into fragments, stamped upon them with her foot.

“Blood alive, miss, don’t destroy the paper! I only got a loan of it from Mrs. Kennedy, of the Post-office; she slipped it out of the cover, though it was addressed to Lord O’Neil. Oh dear! oh dear! it’s a nice article now!”

These words were uttered in the very depth of despair, as, kneeling down on the carpet, Mr. Dempsey attempted to collect and arrange the scattered fragments.

“It’s no use in life! Here’s the Widow Wallace’s pills in the middle of the Counsellor’s speech! and the last day’s drawing of the lottery mixed up with that elegant account of old Darcy’s – ”

A hand which, if of the gentlest mould, now made a gesture to enforce silence, arrested Mr. Dempsey’s words, and at the same moment the Knight entered with Lady Eleanor. Darcy started as

he gazed on the excited looks and the air of defiance of his daughter, and for a second a deep flush suffused his features, as with an angry frown he asked of Dempsey, "What does this mean, sir?"

"D-n me if I know what it means!" exclaimed Paul, in utter despair at the confusion of his own faculties. "My brain is in a whirl."

"It was a little political dispute between Mr. Dempsey and myself, sir," said Helen, with a faint smile. "He was reading for me an article from the newspaper, whose views were so very opposite to mine, and his advocacy of them so very animated, that – in short, we both became warm."

"Yes, that's it," cried Dempsey, glad to accept any explanation of a case in which he had no precise idea wherein lay the difficulty, – "that's it; I'll take my oath it was."

"He is a fierce Unionist," said Helen, speaking rapidly to cover her increasing confusion, "and has all the conventional cant by heart, 'old-fashioned opinions,' 'musty prejudices,' and so on."

"I did not suspect you were so eager a politician, my dear Helen," said the Knight, as, half chidingly, he threw his eyes towards the scattered fragments of the torn newspaper.

The young girl blushed till her neck became crimson: shame, at the imputation of having so far given way to passion; sorrow, at the reproof, whose injustice she did not dare to expose; and regret, at the necessity of dissimulation, all overwhelming her at the same moment.

"I am not angry, my sweet girl," said the Knight, as he drew his arm around her, and spoke in a low, fond accent. "I may be sorry – sincerely sorry – at the social condition that has suffered political feeling to approach our homes and our firesides, and thus agitate hearts as gentle as yours by these rude themes. For your sentiments on these subjects I can scarcely be a severe critic, for I believe they are all my own."

"Let us forget it all," said Helen, eagerly; for she saw that Mr. Dempsey, having collected once more the torn scraps, was busy in arranging them into something like order. In fact, his senses were gradually recovering from the mystification into which they had been thrown, and he was anxious to vindicate himself before the party. "All the magnanimity, however, must not be mine," continued she; "and until that odious paper is consumed, I'll sign no treaty of peace." So saying, and before Dempsey could interfere to prevent it, she snatched up the fragments, and threw them into the fire. "Now, Mr. Dempsey, we are friends again," said she, laughing.

"The Lord grant it!" ejaculated Paul, who really felt no ambition for so energetic an enemy. "I'll never tell a bit of news in your company again, so long as my name is Paul Dempsey. Every officer of the Guards may horsewhip the Irish bar – I was forgetting – not a syllable more."

The Knight, fortunately, did not hear the last few words, for he was busily engaged in reading the letter he still held in his hands; at length he said, —

"Mr. Dempsey has conferred one great favor on us by bringing us this letter; and as its contents are of a nature not to admit of any delay – "

"He will increase the obligation by taking his leave," added Paul, rising, and, for once in his life, really well pleased at an opportunity of retiring.

"I did not say that," said Darcy, smiling.

"No, no, Mr. Dempsey," added Lady Eleanor, with more than her wonted cordiality; "you will, I hope, remain for tea."

"No, ma'am, I thank you; I have a little engagement, – I made a promise. If I get safe out of the house without some infernal blunder or other, it's only the mercy of Providence." And with this burst of honest feeling, Paul snatched up his hat, and without waiting for the ceremony of leave-taking, rushed out of the room, and was soon seen crossing the wide common at a brisk pace.

"Our little friend has lost his reason," said the Knight, laughing. "What have you been doing to him, Helen?"

A gesture to express innocence of all interference was the only reply, and the party became suddenly silent.

“Has Helen seen that letter?” said Lady Eleanor, faintly, and Darcy handed the epistle to his daughter. “Read it aloud, my dear,” continued Lady Eleanor; “for, up to this, my impressions are so confused, I know not which is reality, which mere apprehension.”

Helen’s eyes glanced to the top of the letter, and saw the words “War Office;” she then proceeded to read: —

“Sir, — In reply to the application made to the Commander-in-Chief of the forces in your behalf, expressing your desire for an active employment, I have the honor to inform you that his Royal Highness, having graciously taken into consideration the eminent services rendered by you in former years, and the distinguished character of that corps which, raised by your exertions, still bears your name, has desired me to convey his approval of your claim, and his desire, should a favorable opportunity present itself, of complying with your wish. I have the honor to remain, your most humble and obedient servant,

“Harry Greville,

“*Private Secretary.*”

On an enclosed slip of paper was the single line in pencil: —

“H. G. begs to intimate to Colonel Darcy the propriety of attending the next levee of H. R. H., which will take place on the 14th.”

“Now, you, who read riddles, my dearest Helen, explain this one to us. I made no application of the kind alluded to, nor am I aware of any one having ever done so for me. The thought never once occurred to me, that his Majesty or his Royal Highness would accept the services of an old and shattered hulk, while many a glorious three-decker lies ready to be launched from the stocks. I could not have presumed to ask such a favor, nor do I well know how to acknowledge it.”

“But is there anything so very strange,” said Helen, proudly, “that those highly placed by station should be as highly gifted by nature, and that his Royal Highness, having heard of your unmerited calumnies, should have seen that this was the fitting moment to remember the services you have rendered the Crown? I have heard that there are several posts of high trust and honor conferred on those who, like yourself, have won distinction in the service.”

“Helen is right,” said Lady Eleanor, drawing a long breath, and as if released of a weighty load of doubt and uncertainty; “this is the real explanation; the phrases of official life may give it another coloring to our eyes, but such, I feel assured, is the true solution.”

“I should like to think it so,” said Darcy, feelingly; “it would be a great source of pride to me at this moment, when my fortunes are lower than ever they were, — lower than ever I anticipated they might be, — to know that my benefactor was the Monarch. In any case I must lose no time in acknowledging this mark of favor. It is now the 4th of the month; to be in London by the 14th, I should leave this to-morrow.”

“It is better to do so,” said Lady Eleanor, with an utterance from which a great effort had banished all agitation; “Helen and I are safe and well here, and as happy as we can be when away from you and Lionel.”

“Poor Lionel!” said the Knight, tenderly; “what good news for him it would be were they to give me some staff appointment, — I might have him near us. Come, Eleanor,” added he, with more gayety of manner, “I feel a kind of presentiment of good tidings. But we are forgetting Bagenal Daly all this time; perhaps this letter of his may throw some light on the matter.”

Darcy now broke the seal of Daly’s note, which, even for him, was one of the briefest. This was so far fortunate, since his writing was in his very worst style, blotted and half erased in many places, scarcely legible anywhere. It was only by assembling a “committee of the whole house” that the Darcys were enabled to decipher even a portion of this unhappy document. As well as it could be rendered, it ran somewhat thus: —

“The verdict is against us; old Bretson never forgave you carrying away the medal from him in Trinity some fifty years back; he charged dead against you; I always said he would. *Summum jus,*

summa injuria— The Chief Justice – the greatest wrong! and the jury the fellows who lived under you, in your own town, and their fathers and grandfathers! at least, as many of the rascals as had such. – Never mind, Bicknell has moved for a new trial; they have gained the ‘Habere’ this time, and so has O’Halloran – you heard of the thrashing – ”

Here two tremendous patches of ink left some words that followed quite unreadable.

“What can this mean?” said Darcy, repeating the passage over three or four times, while Helen made no effort to enlighten him in the difficulty. Battled in all his attempts, he read on: “‘I saw him in his way through Dublin last night,’ Who can he possibly mean?” said Darcy, laying down the letter, and pondering for several minutes.

“O’Halloran, perhaps,” said Lady Eleanor, in vain seeking a better elucidation.

“Oh, not him, of course!” cried Darcy; “he goes on to say, that ‘he is a devilish high-spirited young fellow, and for an Englishman a warm-blooded animal.’ Really this is too provoking; at such a time as this he might have taken pains to be a little clearer,” exclaimed Darcy.

The letter concluded with some mysterious hints about intelligence that a few days might disclose, but from what quarter or on what subject nothing was said, and it was actually with a sense of relief Darcy read the words, “Yours ever, Bagenal Daly,” at the foot of the letter, and thus spared himself the torment of further doubts and guesses.

Helen was restrained from at once conveying the solution of the mystery by recollecting the energy she had displayed in her scene with Mr. Dempsey, and of which the shame still lingered on her flushed cheek.

“He adds something here about writing by the next post,” said Lady Eleanor.

“But before that arrives I shall be away,” said the Knight; and the train of thought thus evoked soon erased all memory of other matters. And now the little group gathered together to discuss the coming journey, and talk over all the plans by which anxiety was to be beguiled and hope cherished till they met again.

“Miss Daly will not be a very importunate visitor,” said Lady Eleanor, dryly, “judging at least from the past; she has made one call here since we came, and then only to leave her card.”

“And if Helen does not cultivate a more conciliating manner, I scarce think that Mr. Dempsey will venture on coming either,” said the Knight, laughing.

“I can readily forgive all the neglect,” said Helen, haughtily, “in compensation for the tranquillity.”

“And yet, my dear Helen,” said Darcy, “there is a danger in that same compact. We should watch carefully to see whether, in the isolation of a life apart from others, we are not really indulging the most refined selfishness, and dignifying with the name of philosophy a solitude we love for the indulgence of our own egotism. If we are to have our hearts stirred and our sympathies strongly moved, let the themes be great ones, but above all things let us avoid magnifying the petty incidents of daily occurrence into much consequence: this is what the life of monasteries and convents teaches, and a worse lesson there need not be.”

Darcy spoke with more than usual seriousness, for he had observed some time past how Helen had imbibed much of Lady Eleanor’s distance towards her humble neighbors, and was disposed to retain a stronger memory of their failings in manner than of their better and heartier traits of character.

The young girl felt the remark less as a reproof than a warning, and said, —

“I will not forget it.”

CHAPTER VII. A PARTING INTERVIEW

When Heffernan, with his charge, Forester, reached Dublin, he drove straight to Castlereagh's house, affectedly to place the young man under the protection of his distinguished relative, but in reality burning with eager impatience to recount his last stroke of address, and to display the cunning artifice by which he had embroiled O'Reilly with the great popular leader. Mr. Heffernan had a more than ordinary desire to exhibit his skill on this occasion; he was still smarting under the conscious sense of having been duped by O'Reilly, and could not rest tranquilly until revenged. Under the mask of a most benevolent purpose, O'Reilly had induced Heffernan to procure Lionel Darcy an appointment to a regiment in India. Heffernan undertook the task, not, indeed, moved by any kindness of feeling towards the youth, but as a means of reopening once more negotiations with O'Reilly; and now to discover that he had interested himself simply to withdraw a troublesome witness in a suit – that he had been, in his own phrase, “jockeyed” – was an insult to his cleverness he could not endure.

As Heffernan and Forester drove up to the door, they perceived that a travelling-carriage, ready packed and loaded, stood in waiting, while the bustle and movement of servants indicated a hurried departure.

“What's the matter, Hutton?” asked Heffernan of the valet who appeared at the moment; “is his Lordship at home?”

“Yes, sir, in the drawing-room; but my Lord is just leaving for England. He is now a Cabinet Minister.”

Heffernan smiled, and affected to hear the tidings with delight, while he hastily desired the servant to announce him.

The drawing-room was crowded by a strange and anomalous-looking assemblage, whose loud talking and laughing entirely prevented the announcement of Con Heffernan's name from reaching Lord Castlereagh's ears. Groups of personal friends come to say good-bye, deputations eager to have the last word in the ear of the departing Secretary, tradesmen begging recommendations to his successor, with here and there a disappointed suitor, earnestly imploring future consideration, were mixed up with hurrying servants, collecting the various minor articles which lay scattered through the apartment.

The time which it cost Heffernan to wedge his way through the dense crowd was not wholly profitless, since it enabled him to assume that look of cordial satisfaction at the noble Secretary's promotion which he was so very far from really feeling. Like most men who cultivate mere cunning, he underrated all who do not place the greatest reliance upon it, and in this way conceived a very depreciating estimate of Lord Castlereagh's ability. Knowing how deeply he had himself been trusted, and how much employed in state transactions, he speculated on a long career of political influence, and that, while his Lordship remained as Secretary, his own skill and dexterity would never be dispensed with. This pleasant illusion was now suddenly dispelled, and he saw all his speculations scattered to the wind at once; in fact, to borrow his own sagacious illustration, “he had to submit to a new deal with his hand full of trumps.”

He was still endeavoring to disentangle himself from the throng, when Lord Castlereagh's quick eye discovered him.

“And here comes Heffernan,” cried he, laughingly; “the only man wanting to fill up the measure of congratulations. Pray, my Lord, move one step and rescue our poor friend from suffocation.”

“By Jove! my Lord, one would imagine you were the rising and not the setting sun, from all this adulating assemblage,” said Heffernan, as he shook the proffered hand of the Secretary, and held it most ostentatiously in his cordial pressure. “This was a complete surprise for me,” added he. “I only arrived this evening with Forester.”

“With Dick? Indeed! I’m very glad the truant has turned up again. Where is he?”

“He passed me on the stairs, I fancy to his room, for he muttered something about going over in the packet along with you.”

“And where have you been, Heffernan, and what doing?” asked Lord Castlereagh, with that easy smile that so well became his features.

“That I can scarcely tell you here,” said Heffernan, dropping his voice to a whisper, “though I fancy the news would interest you.” He made a motion towards the recess of a window, and Lord Castlereagh accepted the suggestion, but with an indolence and half-apathy which did not escape Heffernan’s shrewd perception. Partly piqued by this, and partly stimulated by his own personal interest in the matter, Heffernan related, with unwonted eagerness, the details of his visit to the West, narrating with all his own skill the most striking characteristics of the O’Reilly household, and endeavoring to interest his hearer by those little touches of native archness in description of which he was no mean master.

But often as they had before sufficed to amuse his Lordship, they seemed a failure now; for he listened, if not with impatience, yet with actual indifference, and seemed more than once as if about to stop the narrative by the abrupt question, “How can this possibly interest *me*?”

Heffernan read the expression, and felt it as plainly as though it were spoken.

“I am tedious, my Lord,” said he, whilst a slight flush colored the middle of his cheek; “perhaps I only weary you.”

“He must be a fastidious hearer who could weary of Mr. Heffernan’s company,” said his Lordship, with a smile so ambiguous that Heffernan resumed with even greater embarrassment, —

“I was about to observe, my Lord, that this same member for Mayo has become much more tractable. He evidently sees the necessity of confirming his new position, and, I am confident, with very little notice, might be converted into a stanch Government supporter.”

“Your old favorite theory, Heffernan,” said the Secretary, laughing; “to warm these Popish grubs into Protestant butterflies by the sunshine of kingly favor, forgetting the while that ‘the winter of their discontent’ is never far distant. But please to remember, besides, that gold mines will not last forever, — the fountain of honor will at last run dry; and if —”

“I ask pardon, my Lord,” interrupted Heffernan. “I only alluded to those favors which cost the Minister little, and the Crown still less, — that social acceptance from the Court here upon which some of your Irish friends set great store. If you could find an opportunity of suggesting something of this kind, or if your Lordship’s successor —”

“Heaven pity him!” exclaimed Lord Castlereagh. “He will have enough on his hands, without petty embarrassments of this sort. Without you have promised, Heffernan,” added he, hastily. “If you have already made any pledge, of course we must sustain your credit.”

“I, my Lord! I trust you know my discretion better than to suspect me. I merely threw out the suggestion from supposing that your Lordship’s interest in our poor concerns here might outlive your translation to a more distinguished position.”

There was a tone of covert impertinence in the accent, as well as the words, which, while Lord Castlereagh was quick enough to perceive, he was too shrewd to mark by any notice.

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