

LEVER CHARLES JAMES

JACK HINTON: THE
GUARDSMAN

Charles Lever

Jack Hinton: The Guardsman

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Содержание

CHAPTER I. A FAMILY PARTY	6
CHAPTER II. THE IRISH PACKET	9
CHAPTER III. THE CASTLE	13
CHAPTER IV. THE BREAKFAST	19
CHAPTER V. THE REVIEW IN THE PHOENIX	27
CHAPTER VI. THE SHAM BATTLE	30
CHAPTER VII. THE ROONEYS	35
CHAPTER VIII. THE VISIT	40
CHAPTER IX. THE BALL	44
CHAPTER X. A FINALE TO AN EVENING	50
CHAPTER XI. A NEGOTIATION	57
CHAPTER XII. A WAGER	60
CHAPTER XIII. A NIGHT OF TROUBLE	65
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	72

Charles James Lever

Jack Hinton: The Guardsman

PREFACE

Very few words of preface will suffice to the volume now presented to my readers. My intention was to depict, in the early experiences of a young Englishman in Ireland, some of the almost inevitable mistakes incidental to such a character. I had so often myself listened to so many absurd and exaggerated opinions on Irish character, formed on the very slightest acquaintance with the country, and by persons, too, who, with all the advantages long intimacy might confer, would still have been totally inadequate to the task of a rightful appreciation, that I deemed the subject one where a little “reprisal” might be justifiable.

Scarcely, however, had I entered upon my story, than I strayed from the path I had determined on, and, with very little reference to my original intention, suffered Jack Hinton to “take his chance amongst the natives,” and with far too much occupation on his hands to give time for reflecting over their peculiarities, or recording their singular traits, I threw him into the society of the capital, under the vice-royalty of a celebrated Duke, all whose wayward eccentricities were less marked than the manly generosity and genuine honesty of his character. I introduced him into a set where, whatever purely English readers may opine, I have wonderfully little exaggerated; and I led him down to the West to meet adventures which every newspaper, some twenty-five years ago, would show were by no means extravagant or strange.

As for the characters of the story, there is not one for which I did not take a “real sitter;” at the same time, I have never heard one single correct guess as to the types that afforded them. To Mrs. Paul Rooney, Father Tom Loftus, Bob Mahon, O’Grady, Tipperary Joe, and even Corny himself, I have scarcely added a touch which nature has not given them, while assuredly I have failed to impart many a fine and delicate tint far above the “reach of – ‘my– art,” and which might have presented them in stronger light and shadow than I have dared to attempt. Had I desired to caricature English ignorance as to Ireland in the person of my Guardsman, nothing would have been easier; but I preferred merely exposing him to such errors as might throw into stronger relief the peculiarities of Irishmen, and, while offering something to laugh at, give no offence to either. The volume amused me while I was writing it, – less, perhaps, by what I recorded, than what I abstained from inditing; at all events, it was the work of some of the pleasantest hours of my life, and if it can ever impart to any of my readers a portion of the amusement some of the real characters afforded myself, it will not be all a failure. That it may succeed so far is the hope of the reader’s

Very devoted servant,

CHARLES LEVER.

Casa Capponi, Florence, March, 1857.

CHAPTER I. A FAMILY PARTY

It was on a dark and starless night in February, 181 – , as the last carriage of a dinner-party had driven from the door of a large house in St. James's-square, when a party drew closer around the drawing-room fire, apparently bent upon that easy and familiar chit-chat the presence of company interdicts.

One of these was a large and fine-looking man of about five-and-forty, who, dressed in the full uniform of a general officer, wore besides the ribbon of the Bath; he leaned negligently upon the chimney-piece, and, with his back towards the fire, seemed to follow the current of his own reflections: this was my Father.

Beside him, but almost concealed in the deep recess of a well-cushioned arm-chair, sat, or rather lay, a graceful figure, who with an air of languid repose was shading her fine complexion as well from the glare of the fire as from the trying brilliancy of an Argand lamp upon the mantelpiece. Her rich dress, resplendent with jewels, while it strangely contrasted with the careless ease of her attitude, also showed that she had bestowed a more than common attention that day upon her toilette: this, fair reader, was my Mother.

Opposite to her, and disposed in a position of rather studied gracefulness, lounged a tall, thin, fashionable-looking man, with a dark olive complexion, and a short black moustache. He wore in the button-hole of his blue coat the ribbon of St. Louis. The Count de Grammont, for such he was, was an *émigré* noble, who, attached to the fortunes of the Bourbons, had resided for some years in London, and who, in the double capacity of adviser of my father and admirer of my lady-mother, obtained a considerable share of influence in the family and a seat at its councils.

At a little distance from the rest, and apparently engaged with her embroidery, sat a very beautiful girl, whose dark hair and long lashes deepened the seeming paleness of features a Greek sculptor might have copied. While nothing could be more perfect than the calm loveliness of her face and the delicate pencilling of her slightly-arched eyebrows, an accurate observer could detect that her tremulous lip occasionally curled with a passing expression of half scorn, as from time to time she turned her eyes towards each speaker in turn, while she herself maintained a perfect silence. My cousin, Lady Julia Egerton, had indeed but that one fault: shall I venture to call by so harsh a name that spirit of gentle malice which loved to look for the ludicrous features of everything around her, and inclined her to indulge what the French call the "*esprit moqueur*" even on occasions where her own feelings were interested?

The last figure of the group was a stripling of some nineteen years, who, in the uniform of the Guards, was endeavouring to seem perfectly easy and unconcerned, while it was evident that his sword-knot divided his attention with some secret thoughts that rendered him anxious and excited: this was Myself!

A silence of some moments was at length broken by my mother, who, with a kind of sigh Miss O'Neill was fond of, turned towards the Count, and said,

"Do confess, Count, we were all most stupid to-day. Never did a dinner go off so heavily. But it's always the penalty one pays for a royal Duke. *A propos*, General, what did he say of Jack's appointment?"

"Nothing could be more kind, nothing more generous than his Royal Highness. The very first thing he did in the room was to place this despatch in my hands. This, Jack," said my father, turning to me, "this is your appointment as an extra aide-de-camp."

"Very proper indeed," interposed my mother; "I am very happy to think you'll be about the Court. Windsor, to be sure, is stupid."

"He is not likely to see much of it," said my father, dryly.

"Oh, you think he'll be in town then?"

“Why, not exactly that either.”

“Then what can you mean?” said she, with more of animation than before.

“Simply, that his appointment is on the staff in Ireland.”

“In Ireland!” repeated my mother, with a tragic start. “In Ireland!”

“In Ireland!” said Lady Julia, in a low, soft voice.

“*En Irlande!*” echoed the Count, with a look of well got up horror, as he elevated his eyebrows to the very top of his forehead; while I myself, to whom the communication was as sudden and as unexpected, assumed a kind of soldier-like indifference, as though to say, “What matters it to me? what do I care for the rigours of climate? the snows of the Caucasus, or the suns of Bengal, are quite alike; even Ireland, if his Majesty’s service require it.”

“Ireland!” repeated my mother once more; “I really never heard anything so very shocking. But, my dear Jack, you can’t think of it. Surely, General, you had presence of mind to decline.”

“To accept, and to thank most gratefully his Royal Highness for such a mark of his favour, for this I had quite presence of mind,” said my father, somewhat haughtily.

“And you really will go, Jack?”

“Most decidedly,” said I, as I put on a kind of Godefroy de Bouillon look, and strutted about the room.

“And pray what can induce you to such a step?”

“*Oui, que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?*” said the Count.

“By Jove!” cried my father, hastily, “you are intolerable; you wished your boy to be a Guardsman in opposition to my desire for a regiment on service. You would have him an aide-de-camp: now he is both one and the other. In Heaven’s name, what think ye of getting him made a lady of the bedchamber? for it’s the only appointment I am aware of – ”

“You are too absurd, General,” said my mother, pettishly. “Count, pray touch the bell; that fire is so very hot, and I really was quite unprepared for this piece of news.”

“And you, Julia,” said I, leaning over the back of my cousin’s chair, “what do you say to all this?”

“I’ve just been thinking what a pity it is I should have wasted all my skill and my worsted on this foolish rug, while I could have been embroidering a gay banner for our young knight bound for the wars. ‘*Partant pour la Syrie,*’” hummed she, half pensively, while I could see a struggling effort to suppress a laugh. I turned indignantly away, and walked towards the fire, where the Count was expending his consolations on my mother.

“After all, *Miladi*, it is not so bad as you think in the provinces; I once spent three weeks in Brittany, very pleasantly indeed: *oui, pardieu*, it’s quite true. To be sure, we had Perlet, and Mademoiselle Mars, and got up the *Précieuse Ridicules* as well as in Paris.”

The application of this very apposite fact to Ireland was clearly satisfactory to my mother, who smiled benignly at the speaker, while my father turned upon him a look of the most indescribable import.

“Jack, my boy!” said he, taking me by the arm, “were I your age, and had no immediate prospect of active service, I should prefer Ireland to any country in the world. I have plenty of old friends on the staff there. The Duke himself was my schoolfellow – ”

“I hope he will be properly attentive,” interrupted my mother. “Dear Jack, remind me to-morrow to write to Lady Mary.”

“Don’t mistake the country you are going to,” continued my father; “you will find many things very different from what you are leaving; and, above all, be not over ready to resent, as an injury, what may merely be intended as a joke: your brother officers will always guide you on these points.”

“And above all things,” said my mother, with great earnestness, “do not adopt that odious fashion of wearing their hair. I’ve seen members of both Houses, and particularly that little man they talk so much of, Mr. Grattan, I believe they call him – ”

“Make your mind perfectly easy on that head, my lady,” said my father, dryly, “your son is not particularly likely to resemble Henry Grattan.”

My cousin Julia alone seemed to relish the tone of sarcasm he spoke in, for she actually bestowed on him a look of almost grateful acknowledgment.

“The carriage, my lady,” said the servant. And at the same moment my mother, possibly not sorry to cut short the discussion, rose from her chair.

“Do you intend to look in at the Duchess’s, General?”

“For half an hour,” replied my father; “after that I have my letters to write. Jack, you know, leaves us to-morrow.”

“Tis really very provoking,” said my mother, turning at the same time a look towards the Count.

“*A vos ordres, Madame,*” said he, bowing with an air of most deferential politeness, while he presented his arm for her acceptance.

“Good night, then,” cried I, as the party left the room; “I have so much to do and to think of, I shan’t join you.” I turned to look for Lady Julia, but she was gone, when and how I knew not; so I sat down at the fire to ruminate alone over my present position, and my prospects for the future.

These few and imperfect passages may put the reader in possession of some, at least, of the circumstances which accompanied my outset in life; and if they be not sufficiently explicit, I can only say, that he knows fully as much of me as at the period in question I did of myself.

At Eton, I had been what is called rather a smart boy, but incorrigibly idle; at Sandhurst, I showed more ability, and more disinclination to learn. By the favour of a royal Duke (who had been my godfather), my commission in a marching regiment was exchanged for a lieutenancy in the Guards; and at the time I write of I had been some six months in the service, which I spent in all the whirl and excitement of London society. My father, who, besides being a distinguished officer, was one of the most popular men among the clubs, my mother, a London beauty of some twenty years’ standing, were claims sufficient to ensure me no common share of attention, while I added to the number what, in my own estimation at least were, certain very decided advantages of a purely personal nature.

To obviate, as far as might be, the evil results of such a career, my father secretly asked for the appointment on the staff of the noble Duke then Viceroy of Ireland, in preference to what my mother contemplated – my being attached to the royal household. To remove me alike from the enervating influence of a mother’s vanity, and the extravagant profusion and voluptuous abandonment of London habits, this was his object. He calculated, too, that by new ties, new associations, and new objects of ambition, I should be better prepared, and more desirous of that career of real service to which in his heart he destined me. These were his notions, at least; the result must be gleaned from my story.

CHAPTER II. THE IRISH PACKET

A few nights after the conversation I have briefly alluded to, and pretty much about the same hour, I aroused myself from the depression of nearly thirty hours' sea-sickness, on hearing that at length we were in the bay of Dublin. Hitherto I had never left the precincts of the narrow den denominated my berth; but now I made my way eagerly on deck, anxious to catch a glimpse, however faint, of that bold coast I had more than once heard compared with, or even preferred to, Naples. The night, however, was falling fast, and, worse still, a perfect down-pour of rain was falling with it; the sea ran high, and swept the little craft from stem to stern; the spars bent like whips, and our single topsail strained and stretched as though at every fresh plunge it would part company with us altogether. No trace or outline of the coast could I detect on any side; a deep red light appearing and disappearing at intervals, as we rode upon or sank beneath the trough of the sea, was all that my eye could perceive: this the dripping helmsman briefly informed me was the "Kish," but, as he seemed little disposed for conversation, I was left to my unassisted ingenuity to make out whether it represented any point of the capital we were approaching or not.

The storm of wind and rain increasing at each moment, drove me once more back to the cabin, where, short as had been the period of my absence, the scene had undergone a most important change. Up to this moment my sufferings and my seclusion gave me little leisure or opportunity to observe my fellow travellers. The stray and scattered fragments of conversation that reached me, rather puzzled than enlightened me. Of the topics which I innocently supposed occupied all human attention, not a word was dropped; Carlton House was not once mentioned; the St. Leger and the Oaks not even alluded to; whether the Prince's breakfast was to come off at Knights-bridge or Progmore, no one seemed to know, or even care; nor was a hint dropped as to the fashion of the new bearskins the Guards were to sport at the review on Hounslow. The price of pigs, however, in Ballinasloe, they were perfect in. Of a late row in Kil – something, where one half of the population had massacred the other, they knew everything, even to the names of the defunct. A few of the better dressed chatted over country matters, from which I could glean that game and gentry were growing gradually scarcer; but a red-nosed, fat old gentleman, in rusty black and high boots, talked down the others by an eloquent account of the mawling that he, a certain Father Tom Loftus, had given the Reverend Paul Strong, at a late controversial meeting in the Rotunda.

Through all this "bald, disjointed chat," unceasing demands were made for bottled porter, "mataterials," or spirits and wather, of which, were I to judge from the frequency of the requests, the consumption must have been awful.

There would seem something in the very attitude of lying down that induces reflection, and, thus stretched at full length in my berth, I could not help ruminating upon the land I was approaching, in a spirit which, I confess, accorded much more with my mother's prejudices than my father's convictions. From the few chance phrases dropped around me, it appeared that even the peaceful pursuits of a country market, or the cheerful sports of the field, were followed up in a spirit of recklessness and devilment; so that many a head that left home without a care, went back with a crack in it. But to return once more to the cabin. It must be borne in mind that some thirty odd years ago the passage between Liverpool and Dublin was not, as at present, the rapid flight of a dozen hours, from shore to shore; where, on one evening, you left the thundering din of waggons, and the iron crank of cranes and windlasses, to wake the next morning with the rich brogue of Paddy floating softly around you. Far from it! the thing was then a voyage. You took a solemn leave of your friends, you tore yourself from the embraces of your family, and, with a tear in your eye and a hamper on your arm, you betook yourself to the pier to watch, with an anxious and a beating heart, every step of the three hours' proceeding that heralded your departure. In those days there was some honour in being a traveller,

and the man who had crossed the Channel a couple of times became a kind of Captain Cook among his acquaintances.

The most singular feature of the whole, however, and the one to which I am now about to allude, proceeded from the fact that the steward in those days, instead of the extensive resources of the present period, had little to offer you, save some bad brandy and a biscuit, and each traveller had to look to his various wants with an accuracy and foresight that required both tact and habit. The mere demands of hunger and thirst were not only to be considered in the abstract, but a point of far greater difficulty, the probable length of the voyage, was to be taken into consideration; so that you bought your beefsteaks with your eye upon the barometer, and laid in your mutton by the age of the moon. While thus the agency of the season was made to react upon your stomach, in a manner doubtless highly conducive to the interests of science, your part became one of the most critical nicety.

Scarcely were you afloat, and on the high seas, when your appetite was made to depend on the aspect of the weather. Did the wind blow fresh and fair, you eat away with a careless ease and a happy conscience, highly beneficial to your digestion. With a glance through the skylight at the blue heaven, with a sly look at the prosperous dog-vane, you helped yourself to the liver wing, and took an extra glass of your sherry. Let the breeze fall, however, let a calm come on, or, worse still, a trampling noise on deck, and a certain rickety motion of the craft betoken a change of wind, the knife and fork fell listlessly from your hand, the unlifted cutlet was consigned to your plate, the very spoonful of gravy you had devoured in imagination was dropped upon the dish, and you replaced the cork in your bottle, with the sad sigh of a man who felt that, instead of his income, he has been living on the principal of his fortune.

Happily, there is a reverse to the medal, and this it was to which now my attention was directed. The trip as occasionally happened, was a rapid one; and while under the miserable impression that a fourth part of the journey had not been accomplished, we were blessed with the tidings of land. Scarcely was the word uttered, when it flew from mouth to mouth; and I thought I could trace the elated look of proud and happy hearts, as home drew near. What was my surprise, however, to see the enthusiasm take another and very different channel. With one accord a general rush was made upon the hampers of prog. Baskets were burst open on every side. Sandwiches and sausages, porter bottles, cold punch, chickens, and hard eggs, were strewn about with a careless and reckless profusion; none seemed too sick or too sore for this general epidemic of feasting. Old gentlemen sat up in their beds and bawled for beef; children of tender years brandished a drumstick. Individuals who but a short half-hour before seemed to have made a hearty meal, testified by the ravenous exploits of their appetites to their former forbearance and abstemiousness. Even the cautious little man in the brown spencer, who wrapped up the remnant of his breakfast in the *Times*, now opened his whole store, and seemed bent upon a day of rejoicing. Never was such a scene of riotous noise and tumultuous mirth. Those who scowled at each other till now, hob-nobbed across the table; and simpering old maids cracked merry thoughts with gay bachelors, without even a passing fear for the result. "Thank Heaven," said I, aloud, "that I see all this with my sense and my intellects clear about me." Had I suddenly awoke to such a prospect from the disturbed slumber of sickness» the chances were ten to one I had jumped overboard, and swam for my life. In fact, it could convey but one image to the mind, such as we read of, when some infuriated and reckless men, despairing of safety, without a hope left, resolve upon closing life in the mad orgies of drunken abandonment.

Here were the meek, the tranquil, the humble-minded, the solitary, the seasick, all suddenly converted into riotous and roystering feasters. The lips that scarcely moved, now blew the froth from a porter cup with the blast of a Boreas: and even the small urchin in the green face and nankeen jacket, bolted hard eggs with the dexterity of a clown in a pantomime. The end of all things (eatable) had certainly come. Chickens were dismembered like felons, and even jokes and witticisms were bandied upon the victuals. "What, if even yet," thought I, "the wind should change!" The idea was a malicious

one, too horrible to indulge in. At this moment the noise and turmoil on deck apprised me that our voyage was near its termination.

The night, as I have said, was dark and stormy. It rained too – as it knows only how to rain in Ireland. There was that steady persistence, that persevering monotony of down-pour, which, not satisfied with wetting you to the skin, seems bent upon converting your very blood into water. The wind swept in long and moaning gusts along the bleak pier, which, late and inclement as it was, seemed crowded with people. Scarcely was a rope thrown ashore, when we were boarded on every side, by the rigging, on the shrouds, over the bulwarks, from the anchor to the taffrail; the whole population of the island seemed to flock in upon us; while sounds of welcome and recognition resounded on all sides —

“How are you, Mister Maguire?” “Is the mistress with you?” “Is that you, Mr. Tierney?” “How are you, ma’am?” “And yourself, Tim?” “Beautiful, glory be to God!” “A great passage, entirely, ma’am.” “Nothing but rain since I seen you.” “Take the trunks up to Mrs. Tun-stall; and, Tim, darling, oysters and punch for four.”

“Great mercy!” said I, “eating again!”

“Morrisson, your honour,” said a ragged ruffian, nudging me by the elbow.

“Reilly, sir; isn’t it? It’s me, sir – the Club. I’m the man always drives your honour.”

“Arrah, howld your prate,” said a deep voice, “the gentleman hasn’t time to bless himself.”

“It’s me, sir; Owen Daly, that has the black horse.”

“More by token, with a spavin,” whispered another; while a roar of laughter followed the joke.

“A car, sir – take you up in five minutes.”

“A chaise, your honour – do the thing dacently.”

Now, whether my hesitation at this moment was set down by the crowd of my solicitors to some doubt of my solvency or not, I cannot say; but true it is, their tone of obsequious entreaty gradually changed into one of rather caustic criticism.

“Maybe it’s a gossoon you’d like to carry the little trunk.”

“Let him alone; it’s only a carpet-bag; he’ll carry it himself.”

“Don’t you see the gentleman would rather walk; and as the night is fine, ‘tis pleasanter – and – cheaper.”

“Take you for a fipp’ny bit and a glass of sparits,” said a gruff voice in my ear.

By this time I had collected my luggage together, whose imposing appearance seemed once more to testify in my favour, particularly the case of my cocked-hat, which to my ready-witted acquaintances proclaimed me a military man. A general rush was accordingly made upon my luggage; and while one man armed himself with a portmanteau, another laid hands on a trunk, a third a carpet-bag, a fourth a gun-case, and so on until I found myself keeping watch and ward over my epaulet-case and my umbrella, the sole remnant of my effects. At the same moment a burst of laughter and a half shout broke from the crowd, and a huge, powerful fellow jumped on the deck, and, seizing me by the arm, cried out,

“Come along now, Captain, it’s all right. This way – this way, sir.”

“But why am I to go with you?” said I, vainly struggling to escape his grasp.

“Why is it?” said he, with a chuckling laugh; “reason enough – didn’t we toss up for ye, and didn’t I win ye.”

“Win me!”

“Ay; just that same.”

By this time I found myself beside a car, upon which all my luggage was already placed.

“Get up, now,” said he.

“It’s a beautiful car, and a dhry cushion,” added a voice near, to the manifest mirth of the bystanders.

Delighted to escape my tormentors, I sprang up opposite to him, while a cheer, mad and wild enough for a tribe of Iroquois, yelled behind us. Away We rattled over the pavement, without lamp

or lantern to guide our path, while the sea dashed its foam across our faces, and the rain beat in torrents upon our backs.

“Where to, Captain?” inquired my companion, as he plied his whip without ceasing.

“The Castle; you know where that is?”

“Faix I ought,” was the reply. “Ain’t I there at the levees. But howld fast, your honour; the road isn’t good; and there is a hole somewhere hereabouts.”

“A hole! For Heaven’s sake, take care. Do you know where it is?”

“Begorra! you’re in it,” was the answer; and, as he spoke, the horse went down head foremost, the car after him; away flew the driver on one side, while I myself was shot some half-dozen yards on the other, a perfect avalanche of trunks, boxes, and portmanteaus rattling about my doomed head. A crashing shower of kicks, the noise of the flying splinters, and the imprecations of the carman, were the last sounds I heard, as a heavy imperial full of books struck me on the head, and laid me prostrate.

Through my half-consciousness, I could still feel the rain as it fell in sheets; the heavy plash of the sea sounded in my ears; but, somehow, a feeling like sleepiness crept over me, and I became insensible.

CHAPTER III. THE CASTLE

When I next came to my senses, I found myself lying upon a sofa in a large room, of which I appeared the only occupant. A confused and misty recollection of my accident, some scattered fragments of my voyage, and a rather aching sensation in my head, were the only impressions of which I was well conscious. The last evening I spent at home was full in my memory, and I could not help thinking over my poor mother's direful anticipations in my vain endeavours to penetrate what I felt had been a misfortune of some kind or other. The mystery was, however, too deep for my faculties; and so, in despair of unravelling the past, I set myself to work to decipher the present. The room, I have already said, was large; and the ceiling, richly stuccoed and ornamented, spoke of a day whose architecture was of a grand and massive character. The furniture, now old and time-worn, had once been handsome, even magnificent – rich curtains of heavy brocaded silk, with deep gold fringes, gorgeously carved and gilded chairs, in the taste of Louis XV.; marble consoles stood between the windows, and a mirror of gigantic proportions occupied the chimney-breast. Years and neglect had not only done their worst, but it was evident that the hand of devastation had also been at work. The marbles were cracked; few of the chairs were available for use; the massive lustre, intended to shine with a resplendent glare of fifty wax-lights, was now made a resting-place for chakos, bearskins, and foraging caps; an ominous-looking star in the looking-glass bore witness to the bullet of a pistol; and the very Cupids carved upon the frame, who once were wont to smile blandly at each other, were now disfigured with cork moustaches, and one of them even carried a short pipe in his mouth. Swords, sashes, and sabretasches, spurs and shot-belts, with guns, fishing-tackle, and tandem whips, were hung here and there upon the walls, which themselves presented the strangest spectacle of all, there not being a portion of them unoccupied by caricature sketches, executed in every imaginable species of taste, style, and colouring. Here was a field-day in the Park, in which it was easy to see the prominent figures were portraits: there an enormous nose, surmounted by a grenadier cap, was passing in review some trembling and terrified soldiers. In another, a commander of the forces was seen galloping down the lines, holding on by the pommel of the saddle. Over the sofa I occupied, a levee at the Castle was displayed, in which, if the company were not villanously libelled, the Viceroy had little reason to be proud of his guests. There were also dinners at the Lodge; guards relieved by wine puncheons dressed up like field-officers; the whole accompanied by doggrel verses explanatory of the views.

The owner of this singular chamber had, however, not merely devoted his walls to the purposes of an album, but he had also made them perform the part of a memorandum-book. Here were the "meets" of the Kildare and the Dubber for the month of March; there, the turn of duty for the garrison of Dublin, interspersed with such fragments as the following: – "Mem. To dine at Mat Kean's on Tuesday, 4th. – Not to pay Hennesy till he settles about the handicap. – To ask Courtenay – for Fanny Burke's fan; the same Fanny has pretty legs of her own. – To tell Holmes to have nothing to do with Lanty Moore's niece, in regard to a reason! – Five to two on Giles's two-year-old, if Tom likes. N.B. The mare is a roarer. – A heavenly day; what fun they must have! – may the devil fire Tom O'Flaherty, or I would not be here now." These and a hundred other similar passages figured on every side, leaving me in a state of considerable mystification, not as to the character of my host, of which I could guess something, but as to the nature of his abode, which I could not imagine to be a barrack-room.

As I lay thus pondering, the door cautiously opened, and a figure appeared, which, as I had abundant leisure to examine it, and as the individual is one who occasionally turns up in the course of my history, I may as well take the present opportunity of presenting to my reader. The man who entered, scarcely more than four feet and a half high, might be about sixty years of age. His head, enormously disproportioned to the rest of his figure, presented a number of flat surfaces, as though

nature had originally destined it for a crystal. Upon one of these planes the eyes were set; and although as far apart as possible, yet upon such terms of distance were they, that they never, even by an accident, looked in the same direction. The nose was short and snubby; the nostrils wide and expanded, as if the feature had been pitched against the face in a moment of ill-temper, and flattened by the force. As for the mouth, it looked like the malicious gash of a blunt instrument, jagged, ragged, and uneven. It had not even the common-place advantage of being parallel to the horizon, but ran in an oblique direction from right to left, enclosed between a parenthesis of the crankiest wrinkles that ever human cheek were creased by. The head would have been bald but for a scanty wig, technically called a “jasy,” which, shrunk by time, now merely occupied the apex of the scalp, where it moved about with every action of the forehead and eyebrows, and was thus made to minister to the expression of a hundred emotions that other men’s wigs know nothing about. Truly, it was the strangest peruke that ever covered a human cranium. I do not believe that another like it ever existed. It had nothing in common with other wigs. It was like its owner, perfectly *sui generis*. It had not the easy flow and wavy curl of the old beau. It had not the methodical precision and rectilinear propriety of the elderly gentleman. It was not full, like a lawyer’s, nor horse-shoed, like a bishop’s. No. It was a cross-grained, ill-tempered, ill-conditioned old scratch, that looked like nothing under heaven save the husk of a hedgehog.

The dress of this strange figure was a suit of very gorgeous light brown livery, with orange facings, a green plush waistcoat and shorts, frogged, flapped, and embroidered most lavishly with gold lace, silk stockings, with shoes, whose enormous buckles covered nearly the entire foot, and rivalled, in their paste brilliancy, the piercing brightness of the wearer’s eye. Having closed the door carefully behind him, he walked towards the chimney, with a certain air of solemn and imposing dignity that very nearly overcame all my efforts at seriousness; his outstretched and expanded hands, his averted toes and waddling gait, giving him a most distressing resemblance to the spread eagle of Prussia, had that respectable bird been pleased to take a promenade in a showy livery. Having snuffed the candles, and helped himself to a pinch of snuff from a gold box on the mantelpiece, he stuck his arms, nearly to the elbows, in the ample pockets of his coat, and with his head a little elevated, and his under-lip slightly protruded, seemed to meditate upon the mutability of human affairs, and the vanity of all worldly pursuits.

I coughed a couple of times to attract his attention, and, having succeeded in catching his eye, I begged, in my blandest imaginable voice, to know where I was.

“Where are ye, is it?” said he, repeating my question in a tone of the most sharp and querulous intonation, to which not even his brogue could lend one touch of softness, – “where are ye? and where would you like to be? or where would any one be that was disgracing himself, or blackguarding about the streets till he got his head cut and his clothes torn, but in Master Phil’s room: devil other company it’s used to. Well, well! It is more like a watchhouse nor a gentleman’s parlour, this same room. It’s little his father, the Jidge” – here he crossed himself piously – “it is little he thought the company his son would be keeping; but it is no matter. I gave him warning last Tuesday, and with the blessin’ o’ God –”

The remainder of this speech was lost in a low muttering grumble, which I afterwards learnt was his usual manner of closing an oration. A few broken and indistinct phrases being only audible, such as – “Sarve you right” – “Fifty years in the family” – “Slaving like a negur” – “Oh, the Turks! the haythins!”

Having waited what I deemed a reasonable time for his honest indignation to evaporate, I made another effort to ascertain who my host might be.

“Would you favour me,” said I, in a tone still more insinuating, “with the name of –”

“It’s my name, ye want? Oh, sorrow bit I am ashamed of it! Little as you think of me, Cornelius Delany is as good a warrant for family as many a one of the dirty spalpeens about the Coort, that haven’t a civiler word in their mouth than Cross Corny! Bad luck to them for that same.”

This honest admission as to the world's opinion of Mister Delany's character was so far satisfactory as it enabled me to see with whom I had to deal; and, although for a moment or two it was a severe struggle to prevent myself bursting into laughter, I fortunately obtained the mastery, and once more returned to the charge.

"And now, Mister Delany, can you inform me how I came here? I remember something of an accident on my landing; but when, where, and how, I am totally ignorant."

"An accident!" said he, turning up his eyes; "an accident, indeed! that's what they always call it when they wring off the rappers, or bate the watch: ye came here in a hackney-coach, with the police, as many a one came before you."

"But where am I?" said I, impatiently.

"In Dublin Castle; bad luck to it for a riotous, disorderly place."

"Well, well," said I, half angrily, "I want to know whose room is this?"

"Captain O'Grady's. What have you to say agin the room? Maybe you're used to worse. There now, that's what you got for that. I'm laving the place next week, but that's no rayson – "

Here he went off, *diminuendo*, again, with a few flying imprecations upon several things and persons unknown.

Mr. Delany now dived for a few seconds into a small pantry at the end of the room, from which he emerged with a tray between his hands, and two decanters under his arms.

"Draw the little table this way," he cried, "more towards the fire, for, av coorse, you're fresh and fastin'; there now, take the sherry from under my arm – the other's port: that was a ham, till Captain Mills cut it away, as ye see – there's a veal pie, and here's a cold grouse – and, maybe, you've eat worse before now – and will again, plaze God."

I assured him of the truth of his observation in a most conciliating tone.

"Oh, the devil fear ye," was the reply, while he murmured somewhat lower, "the half of yees isn't used to meat twice in the week."

"Capital fare this, Mr. Delany," said I, as, half famished with long fasting, I helped myself a second time.

"You're eating as if you liked it," said he, with a shrug of his shoulders.

"Upon my word," said I, after throwing down a bumper of sherry, "that's a very pleasant glass of wine; and, on the whole, I should say, there are worse places than this in the world."

A look of unutterable contempt – whether at me for my discovery, or at the opinion itself, I can't say – was the sole reply of my friend; who, at the same moment, presuming I had sufficient opportunities for the judgment I pronounced, replaced the decanters upon the tray, and disappeared with the whole in the most grave and solemn manner.

Repressing a very great inclination to laughter, I sat still; and a silence of a few moments ensued, when Mr. Delany walked towards the window, and, drawing aside the curtains, looked out. All was in darkness save on the opposite side of the court-yard, where a blaze of light fell upon the pavement from over the half shutters of an apparently spacious apartment. "Ay, ay, there you go; hip, hip, hurrah! you waste more liquor every night than would float a lighter; that's all you're good for. Bad luck to your Grace – making fun of the people, laughing and singing as if the potatoes wasn't two shillings a stone."

"What's going on there?" said I.

"The ould work, nather more nor less. The Lord-Liftinnant, and the bishops, and the jidges, and all the privy councillors roaring drunk. Listen to them. May I never, if it isn't the Dean's voice I hear – the ould beast; he is singing 'The Night before Larry was stretched.'"

"That's a good fellow, Corny – Mr. Delany I mean – do open the window for a little, and let's hear them."

"It's a blessed night you'd have the window open to listen to a set of drunken devils: but here's Master Phil; I know his step well It's long before his father that's gone would come tearing up the

stairs that way as if the bailiffs was after him; rack and ruin, sorrow else, av I never got a place – the haythins! the Turks!”

Mr. Delany, who, probably from motives of delicacy, wished to spare his master the pain of an interview, made his exit by one door as he came in at the other. I had barely time to see that the person before me was in every respect the very opposite of his follower, when he called out in a rich, mellow voice,

“All right again, I hope, Mr. Hinton; it’s the first moment I could get away; we had a dinner of the Privy Council, and some of them are rather late sitters; you’re not hurt, I trust?”

“A little bruised or so, nothing more; but pray, how did I fall into such kind hands?”

“Oh! the watchmen, it seems, could read, and, as your trunks were addressed to the Castle, they concluded you ought to go there also. You have despatches, haven’t you?”

“Yes,” said I, producing the packet; “when must they be delivered?”

“Oh, at once. Do you think you could make a little change in your dress, and manage to come over? his Grace always likes it better; there’s no stiffness, no formality whatever; most of the dinner-party have gone home; there are only a few of the government people, the Duke’s friends, remaining, and, besides, he’s always kind and good-natured.”

“I’ll see what I can do,” replied I, as I rose from the sofa; “I put myself into your hands altogether.”

“Well, come along,” said he; “you’ll find everything ready in this room. I hope that old villain has left hot water. Corny! Corny, I say! Confound him, he’s gone to bed, I suppose.”

Having no particular desire for Mr. Delany’s attentions, I prevailed on his master not to disturb him, and proceeded to make my toilette as well as I was able.

“Didn’t that stupid scoundrel come near you at all?” cried O’Grady.

“Oh yes, we have had a long interview; but, somehow, I fear I did not succeed in gaining his good graces.”

“The worst-tempered old villain in Europe.”

“Somewhat of a character, I take it.”

“A crab-tree planted in a lime-kiln, cranky and cross-grained; but he is a legacy, almost the only one my father left me. I’ve done my best to part with him every day for the last twelve years, but he sticks to me like a poor relation, giving me warning every night of his life, and every morning kicking up such a row in the house that every one is persuaded I am beating him to a jelly before turning him out to starve in the streets.”

“Oh, the haythins! the Turks!” said I, slyly.

“Confound it!” cried he, “the old devil has been opening upon you already; and Jet, with all that, I don’t know how I should get on without Corny; his gibes, his jeers, his everlasting ill-temper, his crankiness that never sleeps, seem to agree with me: the fact is, one enjoys the world from all its contrasts. The olive is a poor thing in itself, but it certainly improves the smack of your Burgundy. In this way Corny Delany does me good service. Come, by Jove, you have not been long dressing. This way: now follow’ me.” So saying, Captain O’Grady led the way down the stairs to the colonnade, following which to the opposite side of the quadrangle we arrived at a brilliantly lighted hall, where several servants in full-dress liveries were in waiting. Passing hastily through this, we mounted a handsome staircase, and, traversing several ante-chambers, at length arrived at one whose contiguity to the dinner-room I could guess at from the loud sound of many voices. “Wait one moment here,” said my companion, “until I speak to his Grace.” He disappeared as he spoke, but before a minute had elapsed he was again beside me. “Come this way; it’s all right,” said he. The next moment I found myself in the dinner-room.

The scene before me was altogether so different from what I had expected, that for a moment or two I could scarce do aught else than stand still to survey it. At a table which had been laid for about forty persons, scarcely more than a dozen were now present. Collected together at one end of

the board, the whole party were roaring with laughter at some story of a strange, melancholy-looking man, whose whining voice added indescribable ridicule to the drollery of his narrative. Grey-headed general officers, grave-looking divines, lynx-eyed lawyers, had all given way under the irresistible impulse, and the very table shook with laughter.

“Mr. Hinton, your Excellency,” said O’Grady for the third time, while the Duke wiped his eye with his napkin, and, pushing his chair a little back from the table, motioned me to approach.

“Ah, Hinton, glad to see you; how is your father? – a very old friend of mine, indeed; and Lady Charlotte – well, I hope? O’Grady tells me you’ve had an accident – something slight, I trust. So these are the despatches.” Here he broke the seal of the envelope, and ran his eye over the contents. “There, that’s your concern.” So saying, he pitched a letter across the table to a shrewd-looking personage in a horse-shoe wig. “They won’t do it, Dean, and we must wait. Ah! – so they don’t like my new commissioners; but, Hinton, my boy, sit down. O’Grady, have you room there? A glass of wine with you.”

“Nothing the worse of your mishap, sir?” said the melancholy-looking man who sat opposite to me.

I replied by briefly relating my accident.

“Strange enough,” said he, in a compassionate tone, “your head should have suffered; your countrymen generally fall upon their legs in Ireland.” This was said with a sly look at the Viceroy, who, deep in his despatches, paid no attention to the allusion.

“A very singular thing, I must confess,” said the Duke, laying down the paper. “This is the fourth time the bearer of despatches has met with an accident. If they don’t run foul of a rock in the Channel, they are sure to have a delay on the pier.”

“It is so natural, my Lord,” said the gloomy man, “that the carriers should stop at the Pigeon-house.”

“Do be quiet, Curran,” cried the Duke, “and pass round the decanter. They’ll not take the duty off claret, it seems.”

“And Day, my Lord, won’t put the claret on duty; he has kept the wine at his elbow for the last half-hour. Upon my soul, your Grace ought to knight him.”

“Not even his Excellency’s habits,” said a sharp, clever-looking man, “would excuse his converting Day into Knight.”

Amid a shower of smart, caustic, and witty sayings, droll stories, retort and repartee, the wine circulated freely from hand to hand; the presence of the Duke adding fresh impulse to the sallies of fun and merriment around him. Anecdotes of the army, the bench, and the bar, poured in unceasingly, accompanied by running commentaries of the hearers, who never let slip an opportunity for a jest or a rejoinder. To me, the most singular feature of all this was, that no one seemed too old or too dignified, too high in station, or too venerable from office, to join in this headlong current of conviviality. Austere churchmen, erudite chief-justices, profound politicians, privy councillors, military officers of high rank and standing, were here all mixed up together into one strange medley, apparently bent on throwing an air of ridicule over the graver business of life, and laughing alike at themselves and the world. Nothing was too grave for a jest, nothing too solemn for a sarcasm. All the soldier’s experience of men and manners, all the lawyer’s acuteness of perception and readiness of wit, all the politician’s practised tact and habitual subtlety, were brought to bear upon the common topics of the day with such promptitude, and such power, that one knew not whether to be more struck by the mass of information they possessed, or by that strange fatality which could make men, so great and so gifted, satisfied to jest where they might be called on to judge.

Play and politics, wine and women, debts and duels, were discussed, not only with an absence of all restraint, but with a deep knowledge of the world and a profound insight into the heart, which often imparted to the careless and random speech the sharpness of the most cutting sarcasm. Personalities, too, were rife; no one spared his neighbour, for he did not expect mercy for himself; and the luckless

wight who tripped in his narrative, or stumbled in his story, was assailed on every side, until some happy expedient of his own, or some new victim being discovered, the attack would take another direction, and leave him once more at liberty. I feel how sadly inadequate I am to render even the faintest testimony to the talents of those, any one of whom, in after life, would have been considered to have made the fortune of a dinner-party, and who now were met together, not in the careless ease and lounging indifference of relaxation, but in the open arena where wit met wit, and where even the most brilliant talker, the happiest relater, the quickest in sarcasm, and the readiest in reply, felt he had need of all his weapons to defend and protect him. This was a *mêlée* tournament, where each man rode down his neighbour, with no other reason for attack than detecting a rent in his armour. Even the Viceroy himself, who, as judge of the lists, might be supposed to enjoy an immunity, was not safe here, and many an arrow, apparently shot at an adversary, was sent quivering into his corslet.

As I watched, with all the intense excitement of one to whom such a display was perfectly new, I could not help feeling how fortunate it was that the grave avocations and the venerable pursuits of the greater number of the party should prevent this firework of wit from bursting into the blaze of open animosity. I hinted as much to my neighbour, O'Grady, who at once broke into a fit of laughter at my ignorance; and I now learnt to my amazement that the Common Pleas had winged the Exchequer, that the Attorney-General had pinked the Bolls, and, stranger than all, that the Provost of the University himself had planted his man in the Phoenix.

"It is just as well for us," continued he, in a whisper, "that the churchmen can't go out; for the Dean, yonder, can snuff a candle at twenty paces, and is rather a hot-tempered fellow to boot. But come, now, his Grace is about to rise. We have a field-day to-morrow in the Park, and break up somewhat earlier in consequence."

As it was now near two o'clock, I could see nothing to cavil at as to the earliness of the hour, although, I freely confess, tired and exhausted as I felt, I could not contemplate the moment of separation without a sad foreboding that I ne'er should look upon the like again. The party rose at this moment, and the Duke, shaking hands cordially with each person as he passed down, wished us all a good night. I followed with O'Grady and some others of the household, but when I reached the ante-chamber, my new friend volunteered his services to see me to my quarters.

On traversing the lower castle-yard, we mounted an old-fashioned and rickety stair, which conducted to a gloomy, ill-lighted corridor. I was too much fatigued, however, to be critical at the moment, and so, having thanked O'Grady for all his kindness, I threw off my clothes hastily, and, before my head was well upon the pillow, was sound asleep.

CHAPTER IV. THE BREAKFAST

There are few persons so unreflective as not to give way to a little self-examination on waking for the first time in a strange place. The very objects about are so many appeals to your ingenuity or to your memory, that you cannot fail asking yourself how you became acquainted with them: the present is thus made the herald of the past, and it is difficult, when unravelling the tangled web of doubt that assails you, not to think over the path by which you have been travelling.

As for me, scarcely were my eyes opened to the light, I had barely thrown one glance around my cold and comfortless chamber, when thoughts of home came rushing to my mind. The warm earnestness of my father, the timid dreads of my poor mother, rose up before me, as I felt myself, for the first time, alone in the world. The elevating sense of heroism, that more or less blends with every young man's dreams of life, gilds our first journey from our father's roof. There is a feeling of freedom in being the arbiter of one's actions, to go where you will and when you will. Till that moment the world has been a comparative blank; the trammels of school or the ties of tutorship have bound and restrained you. You have been living, as it were, within the rules of court – certain petty privileges permitted, certain small liberties allowed; but now you come forth disenchanted, disenthralled, emancipated, free to come as to go – a man in all the plenitude of his volition; and, better still, a man without the heavy, depressing weight of responsibility that makes manhood less a blessing than a burden. The first burst of life is indeed a glorious thing; youth, health, hope, and confidence have each a force and vigour they lose in after years: life is then a splendid river, and we are swimming with the stream – no adverse waves to weary, no billows to buffet us, we hold on our course rejoicing.

The sun was peering between the curtains of my window, and playing in fitful flashes on the old oak floor, as I lay thus ruminating and dreaming over the future. How many a resolve did I then make for my guidance – how many an intention did I form – how many a groundwork of principle did I lay down, with all the confidence of youth! I fashioned to myself a world after my own notions; in which I conjured up certain imaginary difficulties, all of which were surmounted by my admirable tact and consummate cleverness. I remembered how, at both Eton and Sandhurst, the Irish boy was generally made the subject of some jest or quiz, at one time for his accent, at another for his blunders. As a Guardsman, short as had been my experience of the service, I could plainly see that a certain indefinable tone of superiority was ever asserted towards our friends across the sea. A wide-sweeping prejudice, whose limits were neither founded in reason, justice, or common sense, had thrown a certain air of undervaluing import over every one and every thing from that country. Not only were its faults and its follies heavily visited, but those accidental and trifling blemishes – those slight and scarce perceptible deviations from the arbitrary standard of fashion – were deemed the strong characteristics of the nation, and condemned accordingly; while the slightest use of any exaggeration in speech – the commonest employment of a figure or a metaphor – the casual introduction of an anecdote or a repartee, were all heavily censured, and pronounced “so very Irish!” Let some fortune-hunter carry off an heiress – let a lady trip over her train at the drawing-room – let a minister blunder in his mission – let a powder-magazine explode and blow up one-half of the surrounding population, there was but one expression to qualify all – “How Irish! how very Irish!” The adjective had become one of depreciation; and an Irish lord, an Irish member, an Irish estate, and an Irish diamond, were held pretty much in the same estimation.

Reared in the very hot-bed, the forcing-house, of such exaggerated prejudice, while imbibing a very sufficient contempt for everything in that country, I obtained proportionably absurd notions of all that was Irish. Our principles may come from our fathers; our prejudices certainly descend from the female branch. Now, my mother, notwithstanding the example of the Prince Regent himself, whose chosen associates were Irish, was most thoroughly exclusive on this point. She would admit that a

native of that country could be invited to an evening party under extreme and urgent circumstances – that some brilliant orator, whose eloquence was at once the dread and the delight of the House – that some gifted poet, whose verses came home to the heart alike of prince and peasant – that the painter, whose canvas might stand unblushingly amid the greatest triumphs of art – could be asked to lionise for those cold and callous votaries of fashion, across the lake of whose stagnant nature no breath of feeling stirred, esteeming it the while, that in her card of invitation he was reaping the proudest proof of his success; but that such could be made acquaintances or companions, could be regarded in the light of equals or intimates, the thing never entered into her imagination, and she would as soon have made a confidant of the King of Kongo as a gentleman from Connaught.

Less for the purposes of dwelling upon my lady-mother's "Hibernian horrors," than of showing the school in which I was trained, I have made this somewhat lengthened *exposé*. It may, however, convey to my reader some faint impression of the feelings which animated me at the outset of my career in Ireland.

I have already mentioned the delight I experienced with the society at the Viceroy's table. So much brilliancy, so much wit, so much of conversational power, until that moment I had no conception of. Now, however, while reflecting on it, I was actually astonished to find how far the whole scene contributed to the support of my ancient prejudices. I well knew that a party of the highest functionaries – bishops and law-officers of the crown – would not have conducted themselves in the same manner in England. I stopped not to inquire whether it was more the wit or the will that was wanting; I did not dwell upon the fact that the meeting was a purely convivial one, to which I was admitted by the kindness and condescension of the Duke; but, so easily will a warped and bigoted impression find food for its indulgence, I only saw in the meeting an additional evidence of my early convictions. How far my theorising on this point might have led me – whether eventually I should have come to the conclusion that the Irish nation were lying in the darkest blindness of barbarism, while, by a special intervention of Providence, I, was about to be erected into a species of double revolving light – it is difficult to say, when a tap at the door suddenly aroused me from my musings.

"Are ye awake, yet?" said a harsh, husky voice, like a bear in bronchitis, which I had no difficulty in pronouncing to be Corny's.

"Yes, come in," cried I; "what hour is it?"

"Somewhere after ten," replied he, sulkily; "you're the first I ever heerd ask the clock, in the eight years I have lived here. Are ye ready for your morning?"

"My what?" said I, with some surprise.

"Didn't I say it, plain enough? Is it the brogue that bothers you?"

As he said this with a most sarcastic grin he poured, from a large jug he held in one hand, a brimming goblet full of some white compound, and handed it over to me. Preferring at once to explore, rather than to question the intractable Corny, I put it to my lips, and found it to be capital milk punch, concocted with great skill, and seasoned with what O'Grady afterwards called "a notion of nutmeg."

"Oh! devil fear you, that he'll like it. Sorrow one of you ever left as much in the jug as 'ud make a foot-bath for a flea."

"They don't treat you over well, then, Corny," said I, purposely opening the sorest wound of his nature.

"Trate me well! faix, them that 'ud come here for good tratement, would go to the devil for divarsion. There's Master Phil himself, that I used to bate, when he was a child, many's the time, when his father, rest his sowl, was up at the coorts – ay, strapped him, till he hadn't a spot that wasn't sore an him – and look at him now; oh, wirra! you'd think I never took a ha'porth of pains with him. Ugh! – the haythins! – the Turks!"

"This is all very bad, Corny; hand me those boots."

“And thim’s boots!” said he, with a contemptuous expression on his face that would have struck horror to the heart of Hoby. “Well, well.” Here he looked up as though the profligacy and degeneracy of the age were transgressing all bounds. “When you’re ready, come over to the master’s, for he’s waiting breakfast for you. A beautiful hour for breakfast, it is! Many’s the day his father sentenced a whole dockful before the same time!”

With the comforting reflection that the world went better in his youth, Corny drained the few remaining drops of the jug, and, muttering the while something that did not sound exactly like a blessing, waddled out of the room with a gait of the most imposing gravity.

I had very little difficulty in finding my friend’s quarters; for, as his door lay open, and as he himself was carolling away, at the very top of his lungs, some popular melody of the day, I speedily found myself beyond the threshold.

“Ah! Hinton, my hearty, how goes it? your headpiece nothing the worse, I hope, for either the car or the claret? By-the-by, capital claret that is! you’ve nothing like it in England.”

I could scarce help a smile at the remark, as he proceeded,

“But come, my boy, sit down; help yourself to a cutlet, and make yourself quite at home in Mount O’Grady.”

“Mount O’Grady!” repeated I. “Ha! in allusion, I suppose, to these confounded two flights one has to climb up to you.”

“Nothing of the kind; the name has a very different origin. Tea or coffee? there’s the tap! Now, my boy, the fact is, we O’Gradys were once upon a time very great folk in our way; lived in an uncouth old barrack, with battlements and a keep, upon the Shannon, where we ravaged the country for miles round, and did as much mischief, and committed as much pillage upon the peaceable inhabitants, as any respectable old family in the province. Time, however, wagged on; luck changed; your countrymen came pouring in upon us with new-fangled notions of reading, writing, and road-making; police and petty sessions, and a thousand other vexatious contrivances followed, to worry and puzzle the heads of simple country gentlemen; so that, at last, instead of taking to the hill-side for our mutton, we were reduced to keep a market-cart, and employ a thieving rogue in Dublin to supply us with poor claret, instead of making a trip over to Galway, where a smuggling craft brought us our liquor, with a bouquet fresh from Bordeaux. But the worst wasn’t come; for you see, a litigious spirit grew up in the country, and a kind of vindictive habit of pursuing you for your debts. Now, we always contrived, somehow or other, to have rather a confused way of managing our exchequer. No tenant on the property ever precisely knew what he owed; and, as we possessed no record of what he paid, our income was rather obtained after the maimer of levying a tribute, than receiving a legal debt. Meanwhile, we pushed our credit like a new colony: whenever a loan was to be, obtained, it was little we cared for ten, twelve, or even fifteen per cent.; and as we kept a jolly house, a good cook, good claret, and had the best pack of beagles in the country, he’d have been a hardy creditor who’d have ventured to push us to extremities. Even sheep, however, they say, get courage when they flock together, and so this contemptible herd of tailors, tithe-proctors, butchers, barristers, and bootmakers, took heart of grace, and laid siege to us in all form. My grandfather, Phil, – for I was called after him, – who always spent his money like a gentleman, had no notion of figuring in the Four Courts; but he sent Tom Darcy, his cousin, up to town, to call out as many of the plaintiffs as would fight, and to threaten the remainder that, if they did not withdraw their suits, they’d have more need of the surgeon than the attorney-general; for they shouldn’t have a whole bone in their body by Michaelmas-day. Another cutlet, Hinton? But I am tiring you with all these family matters.”

“Not at all; go on, I beg of you. I want to hear how your grandfather got out of his difficulties.”

“Faith, I wish you could! it would be equally pleasant news to myself; but, unfortunately, his beautiful plan only made bad worse, for they began fresh actions. Some, for provocation to fight a duel; others, for threats of assault and battery; and the short of it was, as my grandfather wouldn’t enter a defence, they obtained their verdicts, and got judgment, with all the costs.”

“The devil they did! That must have pushed him hard.”

“So it did; indeed it got the better of his temper, and he that was one of the heartiest, pleasantest fellows in the province, became, in a manner, morose and silent; and, instead of surrendering possession, peaceably and quietly, he went down to the gate, and took a sitting shot at the sub-sheriff, who was there in a tax-cart.”

“Bless my soul! Did he kill him?”

“No; he only ruffled his feathers, and broke his thigh; but it was bad enough, for he had to go over to France till it blew over. Well, it was either vexation or the climate, or, maybe, the weak wines, or, perhaps, all three, undermined his constitution, but he died at eighty-four – the only one of the family ever cut off early, except such as were shot, or the like.”

“Well, but your father – ”

“I am coming to him. My grandfather sent for him from school when he was dying, and he made him swear he would be a lawyer. ‘Morris will be a thorn in their flesh, yet,’ said he; ‘and look to it, my boy,’ he cried, ‘I leave you a Chancery suit that has nearly broke eight families and the hearts of two chancellors; – see that you keep it goings – sell every stick on the estate – put all the beggars in the barony on the property – beg, borrow, and steal them – plough up all the grazing-land; and I’ll tell you a better trick than all – ’ Here a fit of coughing interrupted the pious old gentleman, and, when it was over, so was he!”

“Dead!” said I.

“As a door-nail! Well, my father was dutiful; he kept the suit moving till he got called to the Bar! Once there, he gave it all his spare moments; and when there was nothing doing in the Common Pleas or King’s Bench, he was sure to come down with a new bill, or a declaration, before the Master, or a writ of error, or a point of law for a jury, till at last, when no case was ready to come on, the sitting judge would call out, ‘Let us hear O’Grady/ in appeal, or in error, or whatever it was. But, to make my story short, my father became a first-rate lawyer, by the practice of his own suit – rose to a silk-gown – was made solicitor and attorney-general – afterwards, chief-justice – ”

“And the suit?”

“Oh! the suit survived him, and became my property; but, somehow, I didn’t succeed in the management quite as well as my father; and I found that my estate cost me somewhere about fifteen hundred a year – not to mention more oaths than fifty years of purgatory could pay off. This was a high premium to pay for figuring every term on the list of trials, so I raised a thousand pounds on my commission, gave it to Nick M’Namara, to take the property off my hands, and as my father’s last injunction was, ‘Never rest till you sleep in Mount O’Grady,’ – why, I just baptised my present abode by that name, and here I live with the easy conscience of a dutiful and affectionate child that took the shortest and speediest way of fulfilling his father’s testament.”

“By Jove! a most singular narrative. I shouldn’t like to have parted with the old place, however.”

“Faith, I don’t know! I never was much there. It was a rackety, tumble-down old concern, with rattling windows, rooks, and rats, pretty much like this; and, what between my duns and Corny Delany, I very often think I am back there again. There wasn’t as good a room as this in the whole house, not to speak of the pictures. Isn’t that likeness of Darcy capital? You saw him last night. He sat next Curran. Come, I’ve no curaçoa to offer you, but try this usquebaugh.”

“By-the-by, that Corny is a strange character. I rather think, if I were you, I should have let him go with the property.”

“Let him go! Egad, that’s not so easy as you think. Nothing but death will ever part us.”

“I really cannot comprehend how you endure him; he’d drive me mad.”

“Well, he very often pushes me a little hard or so; and, if it wasn’t that, by deep study and minute attention, I have at length got some insight into the weak parts of his nature, I frankly confess I couldn’t endure it much longer.”

“And, pray, what may these amiable traits be?”

“You will scarcely guess”

“Love of money, perhaps?”

“No.”

“Attachment to your family, then?”

“Not that either.”

“I give it up.”

“Well, the truth is, Corny is a most pious Catholic. The Church has unbounded influence and control over all his actions. Secondly, he is a devout believer in ghosts, particularly my grandfather’s, which, I must confess, I have personated two or three times myself, when his temper had nearly tortured me into a brain fever; so that between purgatory and apparitions, fears here and hereafter, I keep him pretty busy. There’s a friend of mine, a priest, one Father Tom Loftus – ”

“I’ve heard that name before, somewhere.”

“Scarcely, I think; I’m not aware that he was ever in England; but he’s a glorious fellow; I’ll make you known to him, one of these days; and when you have seen a little more of Ireland, I am certain you’ll like him. But I’m forgetting; it must be late; we have a field-day, you know, in the Park.”

“What am I to do for a mount? I’ve brought no horses with me.”

“Oh, I’ve arranged all that. See, there are the nags already. That dark chesnut I destine for you; and, come along, we have no time to lose; there go the carriages, and here comes our worthy colleague and fellow aide-de-camp. Do you know him?”

“Who is it, pray?”

“Lord Dudley de Vere, the most confounded puppy, and the emptiest ass – But here he is.”

“De Vere, my friend Mr. Hinton – one of ours.”

His Lordship raised his delicate-looking eyebrows as high as he was able, letting fall his glass at the same moment from the corner of his eye; and while he adjusted his stock at the glass, lisped out,

“Ah – yes – very happy. In the Guards, I think. Know Douglas, don’t you?”

“Yes, very slightly.”

“When did you come – to-day?”

“No; last night.”

“Must have got a buffeting; blew very fresh. You don’t happen to know the odds on the Oaks?”

“Hecate, they say, is falling. I rather heard a good account of the mare.”

“Indeed,” said he, while his cold, inanimate features brightened up with a momentary flush of excitement. “Take you five to two, or give you the odds, you don’t name the winner on the double event.”

A look from O’Grady decided me at once on declining the proffered wager; and his Lordship once more returned to the mirror and his self-admiration.

“I say, O’Grady, do come here for a minute. What the deuce can that be?”

Here an immoderate fit of laughter from his Lordship brought us both to the window. The figure to which his attention was directed was certainly not a little remarkable. Mounted upon an animal of the smallest possible dimensions, sat, or rather stood, the figure of a tall, gaunt, raw-boned looking man, in a livery of the gaudiest blue and yellow, his hat garnished with silver lace, while long tags of the same material were festooned gracefully from his shoulder to his breast; his feet nearly touched the ground, and gave him rather the appearance of one progressing with a pony between his legs, than of a figure on horseback; he carried under one arm a leather pocket, like a despatch bag; and, as he sauntered slowly about, with his eyes directed hither and thither, seemed like some one in search of an unknown locality.

The roar of laughter which issued from our window drew his attention to that quarter, and he immediately touched his hat, while a look of pleased recognition played across his countenance. “Holloa, Tim!” cried O’Grady, “what’s in the wind now?”

Tim's answer was inaudible, but inserting his hand into the leathern con-veniency already mentioned, he drew forth a card of most portentous dimensions. By this time Corny's voice could be heard joining the conversation.

"Arrah, give it here, and don't be making a baste of yourself. Isn't the very battle-axe Guards laughing at you? I'm sure I wonder how a Christian would make a merry-andrew of himself by wearing such clothes; you're more like a play-actor nor a respectable servant."

With these words he snatched rather than accepted the proffered card; and Tim, with another flourish of his hat, and a singularly droll grin, meant to convey his appreciation of Cross Corny, plunged the spurs till his legs met under the belly of the little animal, and cantered out of the courtyard amid the laughter of the bystanders, in which even the sentinels on duty could not refrain from participating.

"What the devil can it be?" cried Lord Dudley; "he evidently knows you, O'Grady."

"And you, too, my Lord; his master has helped you to a cool hundred or two more than once before now."

"Eh – what – you don't say so! Not our worthy friend Paul – eh? Why, confound it, I never should have known Timothy in that dress."

"No," said O'Grady, slyly; "I acknowledge it is not exactly his costume when he serves a latitat."

"Ha, ha!" cried the other, trying to laugh at the joke, which he felt too deeply; "I thought I knew the pony, though. Old three-and-fourpence; his infernal canter always sounds in my ears like the jargon of a bill of costs."

"Here comes Corny," said O'Grady. "What have you got there?"

"There, 'tis for you," replied he, throwing, with an air of the most profound disdain, a large card upon the table; while, as he left the room, he muttered some very sagacious reflections about the horrors of low company – his father the Jidge – the best in the land – riotous, disorderly life; the whole concluding with an imprecation upon heathens and Turks, with which he managed to accomplish his exit.

"Capital, by Jove!" said Lord Dudley, as he surveyed the card with his glass.

"'Mr. and Mrs. Paul Rooney presents' – the devil they does – 'presents their compliments, and requests the honour of Captain O'Grady's company at dinner on Friday, the 8th, at half-past seven o'clock.'"

"How good! glorious, by Jove! eh, O'Grady? You are a sure ticket there — *l'ami de la maison!*"

O'Grady's cheek became red at these words; and a flashing expression in his eyes told how deeply he felt them. He turned sharply round, his lip quivering with passion; then, checking himself suddenly, he burst into an affected laugh,

"You'll go too, wont you?"

"I? No, faith, they caught me once; but then the fact was, a protest and an invitation were both served on me together. I couldn't accept one, so I did the other."

"Well, I must confess," said O'Grady, in a firm, resolute tone, "there may be many more fashionable people than our friends; but I, for one, scruple not to say I have received many kindnesses from them, and am deeply, sincerely grateful."

"As far as doing a bit of paper now and then, when one is hard up," said Lord Dudley, "why, perhaps, I'm somewhat of your mind; but if one must take the discount out in dinners, it's an infernal bore."

"And yet," said O'Grady, maliciously, "I've seen your Lordship tax your powers to play the agreeable at these same dinners; and I think your memory betrays you in supposing you have only been there once. I myself have met you at least four times."

"Only shows how devilish hard up I must have been," was the cool reply; "but now, as the governor begins to behave better, I think I'll cut Paul."

“I’m certain you will,” said O’Grady, with an emphasis that could not be mistaken. “But come, Hinton, we had better be moving; there’s some stir at the portico yonder, I suppose they’re coming.”

At this moment the tramp of cavalry announced the arrival of the guard of honour; the drums beat, the troops stood to arms, and we had barely time to mount our horses, when the viceregal party took their places in the carriages, and we all set out for the Phoenix.

“Confess, Hinton, it is worth while being a soldier to be in Ireland.” This was O’Grady’s observation as we rode down Parliament-street, beside the carriage of the Viceroy. It was the first occasion of a field-day since the arrival of his Excellency, and all Dublin was on the tiptoe of expectation at the prospect. Handkerchiefs were waved from the windows; streamers and banners floated from the house-tops; patriotic devices and allegoric representations of Erin sitting at a plentiful board, opposite an elderly gentleman with a ducal coronet, met us at every turn of the way. The streets were literally crammed with people. The band played Patrick’s-day; the mob shouted, his Grace bowed; and down to Phil O’Grady himself, who winked at the pretty girls as he passed, there did not seem an unoccupied man in the whole procession. On we went, following the line of the quays, threading our way through a bare-legged, ragged population, bawling themselves hoarse with energetic desires for prosperity to Ireland. “Yes,” thought I, as I looked upon the worn, dilapidated houses, the faded and bygone equipages, the tarnished finery of better days – “yes, my father was right, these people are very different from their neighbours; their very prosperity has an air quite peculiar to itself.” Everything attested a state of poverty, a lack of trade, a want of comfort and of cleanliness; but still there was but one expression prevalent in the mass – that of unbounded good humour and gaiety. With a philosophy quite his own, poor Paddy seemed to feel a reflected pleasure from the supposed happiness of those around him, the fine clothes, the gorgeous equipages, the prancing chargers, the flowing plumes – all, in fact, that forms the appliances of wealth – constituting in his mind a kind of paradise on earth. He thought their possessors at least ought to be happy, and, like a good-hearted fellow, he was glad of it for their sakes.

There had been in the early part of the day an abortive effort at a procession. The Lord Mayor and the Sheriffs, in their state liveries, had gone forth with a proud following of their fellow-citizens; but a manœuvre, which hitherto has been supposed exclusively the province of the navy, was here employed with unbounded success; and the hackney coachmen, by “cutting the line” in several places, had completely disorganised the procession, which now presented the singular spectacle of an aldermanic functionary with emblazoned panels and bedizened horses, followed by a string of rackety jaunting-cars, or a nobby with its fourteen insides. Horsemen there were, too, in abundance. Were I to judge from the spectacle before me, I should say that the Irish were the most equestrian people of the globe; and at what a pace they went! Caring little or nothing for the foot-passengers, they only drew rein when their blown steeds were unable to go further, and then dashed onwards like a charge, amid a shower of oaths, curses, and imprecations, half drowned in the laughter that burst on every side. Deputations there were also from various branches of trade, entreating their Graces to wear and to patronise the manufacture of the country, and to conform in many respects to its habits and customs: by all of which, in my then ignorance, I could only understand the vehement desire of the population that the viceregal court should go about in a state of nature, and limit their diet to poteen and potatoes.

“Fine sight this, Hinton! Isn’t it cheering?” said O’Grady, as his eye beamed with pleasure and delight.

“Why, yes,” said I, hesitatingly; “but don’t you think if they wore shoes – ”

“Shoes!” repeated he, contemptuously, “they’d never suffer such restrictions on their liberties. Look at them! they are the fellows to make soldiers of! The only fear of half-rations with them would be the risk of indigestion.”

On we went, a strange and motley mass, the only grave faces being a few of those who sat in gilded coaches, with embroidered hammercloths, while every half-naked figure that flitted past had a countenance of reckless jollity and fun. But the same discrepancy that pervaded the people and

the procession was visible even in their dwellings, and the meanest hovels stood side by side with the public and private edifices of elegance and beauty.

“This, certainly,” thought I, “is a strange land.” A reflection I had reason to recur to more than once in my after experience of Ireland.

CHAPTER V. THE REVIEW IN THE PHOENIX

Winding along the quays, we crossed an old and dilapidated bridge; and after traversing some narrow and ruinous-looking streets, we entered the Park, and at length reached the Fifteen Acres.

The carriages were drawn up in a line; his Grace's led horses were ordered up, and staff-officers galloped right and left to announce the orders for the troops to stand to arms.

As the Duke descended from his carriage he caught my eye, and turning suddenly towards the Duchess, said, "Let me present Mr. Hinton to your Grace."

While I was making my bows and acknowledgments, his Grace put his hand upon my arm.

"You know Lady Killimore, Hinton? Never mind, it's of no consequence. You see her carriage yonder – they have made some blunder in the road, and the dragoons, it seems, won't let them pass. Just canter down and rescue them."

"Do, pray, Mr. Hinton," added the Duchess. "Poor Lady Killimore is so very nervous she'll be terrified to death if they make any fuss. Her carriage can come up quite close; there is plenty of room."

"Now, do it well," whispered O'Grady: "there is a pretty girl in the case; it's your first mission; acquit yourself with credit."

An infernal brass band playing "Rule Britannia" within ten paces of me, the buzz of voices, the crowd, the novelty of the situation, the excitement of the moment, all conspired to addle and confuse me; so that when I put spurs to my horse and struck out into a gallop, I had no very precise idea of what I was to do, and not the slightest upon earth of where I was to do it.

A pretty girl in a carriage beset by dragoons was to be looked for – Lady Kil – somebody's equipage – "Oh! I have it; there they are," said I, as a yellow barouche, with four steaming posters, caught my eye in a far part of the field. From the number of dragoons that surrounded the carriage, no less than their violent gestures, I could perceive that an altercation had taken place; pressing my horse to the top of his speed, I flew across the plain, and arrived flushed, heated, and breathless beside the carriage.

A large and strikingly handsome woman in a bonnet and plumes of the most gaudy and showy character, was standing upon the front seat, and carrying on an active, and, as it seemed, acrimonious controversy with the sergeant of the horse police.

"You must go back – can't help it, ma'am – nothing but the members of the household can pass this way."

"Oh dear! where's Captain O'Grady? – sure it's not possible I could be treated this way. Paul, take that man's name, and mind you have him dismissed in the morning. Where are you, Paul? Ah! he's gone. It is the way with him always; and there you sit, Bob Dwyer, and you are no more good than a stick of sealing-wax!" Here a suppressed titter of laughter from the back of the carriage induced me to turn my eyes in that direction, and I beheld one of the most beautiful girls I ever looked at, holding her handkerchief to her mouth to conceal her laughter. Her dark eyes flashed, and her features sparkled, while a blush, at being so discovered, if possible, added to her beauty.

"All right," said I to myself, as taking off my hat I bowed to the very mane of my horse.

"If your Ladyship will kindly permit me," said I, "his Grace has sent me to show you the way."

The dragoons fell back as I spoke; the horse police looked awfully frightened; while the lady whose late eloquence manifested little of fear or trepidation, threw herself back in the carriage, and, covering her face with a handkerchief, sobbed violently.

"Ah, the Duchess said she was nervous. Poor Lady Kil – "

"Speak to me, Louisa dear. Who is it? Is it Mr. Wellesley Pole? Is it – "

I did not wait for a further supposition, but in a most insinuating voice, added,

"Mr. Hinton, my lady, extra aide-de-camp on his Excellency's staff. The Duchess feared you would be nervous, and hopes you'll get as close to her as possible."

“Where’s Paul?” said the lady, once more recovering her animation. “If this is a hoax, young gentleman – ”

“Madam,” said I, bowing stiffly, “I am really at a loss to understand your meaning.”

“Oh, forgive me, Mr. Hilton.”

“Hinton, my Lady.”

“Yes, Hinton,” said she. “I am a beast to mistrust you, and you so young and so artless; the sweetest blue eyes I ever looked at.”

This was said in a whisper to her young friend, whose mirth now threatened to burst forth.

“And was it really his Royal Highness that sent you?”

“His Grace, my lady, I assure you, despatched me to your aid. He saw your carriage through his glass, and, guessing what had occurred, directed me to ride over and accompany your Ladyship to the viceregal stand.”

Poor Lady Kil – ‘s nervousness again seized her, and, with a faint cry for the ever-absent Paul, she went off into rather smart hysterics. During this paroxysm I could not help feeling somewhat annoyed at the young lady’s conduct, who, instead of evincing the slightest sympathy for her mother, held her head down, and seemed to shake with laughter. By this time, however, the postilions were again under way, and, after ten minutes’ sharp trotting, we entered the grand stand, with whips cracking, ribbons fluttering, and I myself caracoling beside the carriage with an air of triumphant success.

A large dusky travelling carriage had meanwhile occupied the place the Duchess designed for her friend. The only thing to do, therefore, was, to place them as conveniently as I could, and hasten back to inform her Grace of the success of my mission. As I approached her carriage I was saluted by a burst of laughter from the staff, in which the Duke himself joined most extravagantly; while O’Grady, with his hands on his sides, threatened to fall from the saddle.

“What the deuce is the matter?” thought I; “I didn’t bungle it?”

“Tell her Grace,” said the Duke, with his hand upon his mouth, unable to finish the sentence with laughter.

I saw something was wrong, and that I was in some infernal scrape, still, resolved to go through with it, I drew near, and said,

“I am happy to inform your Grace that Lady Kil – ”

“Is here,” said the Duchess, bowing haughtily, as she turned towards a spiteful-looking dowager beside her.

Here was a mess! So, bowing and backing, I dropped through the crowd to where my companions still stood convulsed with merriment.

“What, in the devil’s name, is it?” said I to O’Grady “Whom have I been escorting this half-hour?”

“You’ve immortalised yourself,” said O’Grady, with a roar of laughter. “Your bill at twelve months for five hundred pounds is as good this moment as bank paper.”

“What is it?” said I, losing all patience. “Who is she?”

“Mrs. Paul Rooney, my boy, the gem of attorneys’ wives, the glory of Stephen’s-green, with a villa at Bray, a box at the theatre, champagne suppers every night in the week, dinners promiscuously, and lunch *à discrétion*: there’s glory for you. You may laugh at a latitat, sneer at the King’s Bench, and snap your fingers at any process-server from here to Kilmainham!”

“May the devil fly away with her!” said I, wiping my forehead with passion and excitement.

“The Heavens forbid!” said O’Grady, piously. “Our exchequer may be guilty of many an extravagance, but it could not permit such a flight as that. It is evident, Hinton, that you did not see the pretty girl beside her in the carriage.”

“Yes, yes, I saw her,” said I, biting my lip with impatience, “and she seemed evidently enjoying the infernal blunder I was committing. And Mrs. Paul – oh, confound her! I can never endure the sight of her again!”

“My dear young friend,” replied O’Grady, with an affected seriousness, “I see that already the prejudices of your very silly countrymen have worked their effect upon you. Had not Lord Dudley de Vere given you such a picture of the Rooney family, you would probably be much more lenient in your judgment: besides, after all, the error was yours, not hers. You told her that the Duke had sent you; you told her the Duchess wished her carriage beside her own.”

“You take a singular mode,” said I, pettishly, “to bring a man back to a good temper, by showing him that he has no one to blame for his misfortunes but himself. Confound them! look how they are all laughing about us. Indeed, from the little I’ve seen, it is the only thing they appear to do in this country.”

At a signal from the Duke, O’Grady put spurs to his horse and cantered down the line, leaving me to such reflections as I could form, beneath the gaze of some forty persons, who could not turn to look without laughing at me.

“This is pleasant,” thought I; “this is really a happy *début*: that I, whose unimpeachable accuracy of manner and address should have won for me, at the Prince’s levee, the approbation of the first gentleman of Europe, should here, among these semi-civilised savages, become an object of ridicule and laughter. My father told me they were very different; and my mother – ” I had not patience to think of the frightful effects my absurd situation might produce upon her nerves. “Lady Julia, too – ah! there’s the rub – my beautiful cousin, who, in the slightest solecism of London manners, could find matter for sarcasm and raillery. What would she think of me now? And this it is they persuaded me to prefer to active service! What wound to a man’s flesh could equal one to his feelings? I would rather be condoled with than scoffed at any day; and see! by Jove, they’re laughing still. I would wager a fifty that I furnish the dinner conversation for every table in the capital this day.”

The vine twig shows not more ingenuity, as it traverses some rocky crag in search of the cool stream, at once its luxury and its life, than does our injured self-love, in seeking for consolation from the inevitable casualties of fate, and the irresistible strokes of fortune! Thus I found comfort in the thought that the ridicule attached to me rather proceeded from the low standard of manners and habits about me than from anything positively absurd in my position; and, in my warped and biassed imagination, I actually preferred the insolent insipidity of Lord Dudley de Vere to the hearty raciness and laughter-loving spirit of Phil O’Grady.

My reflections were now cut short by the order for the staff to mount, and, following the current of my present feelings, I drew near to Lord Dudley, in whose emptiness and inanity I felt a degree of security from sarcasm, that I could by no means be so confident of in O’Grady’s company.

Amid the thunder of cannon, the deafening roll of drums, the tramp of cavalry, and the measured footfall of the infantry columns, these thoughts rapidly gave way to others, and I soon forgot myself in the scene around me. The sight, indeed, was an inspiring one; for, although but the mockery of glorious war, to my unpractised eye the deception was delightful: the bracing air, the bright sky, the scenery itself, lent their aid, and, in the brilliant panorama before me, I soon regained my light-heartedness, and felt happy as before.

CHAPTER VI. THE SHAM BATTLE

I have mentioned in my last chapter how very rapidly I forgot my troubles in the excitement of the scene around me. Indeed, they must have been much more important, much deeper woes, to have occupied any place in a head so addled and confused as mine was. The manoeuvres of the day included a sham battle; and scarcely had his Excellency passed down the line, when preparations for the engagement began. The heavy artillery was seen to limber up, and move slowly across the field, accompanied by a strong detachment of cavalry; columns of infantry were marched hither and thither with the most pressing and eager haste; orderly dragoons and staff-officers galloped to and fro like madmen; red-faced plethoric little colonels bawled out the word of command till one feared they might burst a bloodvessel; and already two companies of light infantry might be seen stealing cautiously along the skirts of the wood, with the apparently insidious design of attacking a brigade of guns. As for me, I was at one moment employed carrying despatches to Sir Charles Asgill, at another conveying intelligence to Lord Harrington; these, be it known, being the rival commanders, whose powers of strategy were now to be tested before the assembled and discriminating citizens of Dublin. Not to speak of the eminent personal hazard of a service which required me constantly to ride between the lines of contending armies, the fatigue alone had nigh killed me. Scarcely did I appear, breathless, at head-quarters on my return from one mission, when I was despatched on another. Tired and panting, I more than once bungled my directions, and communicated to Sir Charles the secret intentions of his Lordship, while with a laudable impartiality I disarranged the former's plans by a total misconception of the orders. Fatigue, noise, chagrin, and incessant worry had so completely turned my head, that I became perfectly incapable of the commonest exercises of reason. Some of the artillery I ordered into a hollow, where I was told to station a party of riflemen. Three squadrons of cavalry I desired to charge up a hill, which the 71st Highlanders were to have scrambled up if they were able. Light dragoons I posted in situations so beset with brushwood and firs, that all movement became impossible; and, in a word, when the signal-gun announced the commencement of the action, my mistakes had introduced such a new feature into tactics, that neither party knew what his adversary was at, nor, indeed, had any accurate notion of which were his own troops. The Duke, who had watched with the most eager satisfaction the whole of my proceedings, sat laughing upon his horse till the very tears coursed down his cheeks; and, as all the staff were more or less participators in the secret, I found myself once more the centre of a grinning audience, perfectly convulsed at my exploits. Meanwhile, the guns thundered, the cavalry charged, the infantry poured in a rattling roar of small arms; while the luckless commanders, unable to discover any semblance of a plan, and still worse, not knowing where one half of their forces were concealed, dared not adventure upon a movement, and preferred trusting to the smoke of the battle as a cover for their blunders. The fusilade, therefore, was hotly sustained; all the heavy pieces were brought to the front; and while the spectators were anxiously looking for the manoeuvres of a fight, the ammunition was waxing low, and the day wearing apace. Dissatisfaction at length began to show itself on every side; and the Duke assuming, as well as he was able, somewhat of a disappointed look, the unhappy generals made a final effort to retrieve their mishaps, and aides-de-camp were despatched through all the highways and byways, to bring up whoever they could find as quickly as possible. Now then began such a scene as few even of the oldest campaigners ever witnessed the equal of. From every dell and hollow, from every brake and thicket, burst forth some party or other, who up to this moment believed themselves lying in ambush. Horse, foot, and dragoons, artillery, sappers, light infantry, and grenadiers, rushed forward wherever chance or their bewildered officers led them. Here might be seen one half of a regiment blazing away at a stray company of their own people, running like devils for shelter; here some squadrons of horse, who, indignant at their fruitless charges and unmeaning movements, now doggedly dismounted, were standing right before a brigade of twelve-pounders, thundering mercilessly amongst them. Never was

witnessed such a scene of riot, confusion, and disorder. Colonels lost their regiments, regiments their colonels. The Fusiliers captured the band of the Royal Irish, and made them play through the heat of the engagement. Those who at first expressed *enmui* and fatigue at the sameness and monotony of the scene, were now gratified to the utmost by its life, bustle, and animation. Elderly citizens in drab shorts and buff waistcoats explained to their listening wives and urchins the plans and intentions of the rival heroes, pronouncing the whole thing the while the very best field-day that ever was seen in the Phoenix.

In the midst of all this confusion, a new element of discord suddenly displayed itself. That loyal corps, the Cork militia, who were ordered up to attack close to where the Duke and his staff were standing, deemed that no better moment could be chosen to exhibit their attachment to church and state than when marching on to glory, struck up, with all the discord of their band, the redoubted air of “Protestant Boys.” A cheer burst from the ranks as the loyal strains filled the air; but scarcely had the loud burst subsided, when the Louth militia advanced with a quick step, their fifes playing “Vinegar-hill.”

For a moment or two the rivalry created a perfect roar of laughter; but this very soon gave way, as the two regiments, instead of drawing up at a reasonable distance for the interchange of an amicable blank cartridge, rushed down upon each other with the fury of madmen. So sudden, so impetuous was the encounter, all effort to prevent it was impracticable. Muskets were clubbed or bayonets fixed, and in a moment really serious battle was engaged; the musicians on each side encouraging their party, as they racked their brains for party-tunes of the most bitter and taunting character; while cries of “Down with King William I.” “To hell with the Pope?” rose alternately from either side.

How far this spirit might have extended, it is difficult to say, when the Duke gave orders for some squadrons of cavalry to charge down upon them, and separate the contending forces. This order was fortunately in time; for scarcely was it issued, when a west country yeomanry corps came galloping up to the assistance of the brave Louth.

“Here we are, boys!” cried Mike Westropp, their colonel – “here we are! lave the way! lave the way for us! and we’ll ride down the murdering Orange villains, every man of them!”

The Louth fell back, and the yeomen came forward at a charge; Westropp standing high in his stirrups, and flourishing his sabre above his head. It was just then that a heavy brigade of artillery, unconscious of the hot work going forward, was ordered to open their fire upon the Louth militia. One of the guns, by some accident, contained an undue proportion of wadding, and to this casual circumstance may, in a great degree, be attributed the happy issue of what threatened to be a serious disturbance; for, as Westropp advanced, cheering and encouraging his men, he received this wadding slap in his face. Down he tumbled at once, rolling over and over with the shock; while, believing that he had got his death-wound, he bellowed out,

“Oh! blessed Virgin! there’s threasion in the camp! hit in the face by a four-pounder, by Jove! Oh! Duke darling! Oh! your Grace! Oh! holy Joseph, look at this! Oh! bad luck to the arthillery, for spoiling a fair fight! Peter” – this was the major of the regiment – “Peter Darcy, gallop into town and lodge informations against the brigade of guns. I’ll be dead before you come back.”

A perfect burst of laughter broke from the opposing ranks, and while his friends crowded round the discomfited leader, the rival bands united in a roar of merriment that for a moment caused a suspension of hostilities. For a moment, I say; for scarcely had the gallant Westropp been conveyed to the rear, when once more the bands struck up their irritating strains, and preparations for a still more deadly encounter were made on every side. The matter now assumed so serious an aspect, that the Duke was obliged himself to interfere, and order both parties off the ground; the Cork deploying towards the lodge, while the brave Louth marched off with banners flying and drums beating in the direction of Knockmaroon.

These movements were conducted with a serio-comic solemnity of the most ludicrous kind; and although the respect for viceregal authority was great, and the military devotion of each party strong,

yet neither one nor the other was sufficient to prevent the more violent on both sides from occasionally turning, as they went, to give expression to some taunting allusion or some galling sarcasm, well calculated, did the opportunity permit, to renew the conflict.

A hearty burst of laughter from the Duke indicated pretty clearly how he regarded the matter; and, however the grave and significant looks of others might seem to imply that there was more in the circumstance than mere food for mirth, he shook his sides merrily; and, as his bright eye glistened with satisfaction, and his cheek glowed, he could not help whispering his regret that his station compelled him to check the very best joke he ever witnessed in his life.

“This is hot work, Sir Charles,” said he, wiping his forehead as he spoke; “and, as it is now past three o’clock, and we have a privy council at four, I fear I must leave you.”

“The troops will move past in marching order,” replied Sir Charles, pompously: “will your Grace receive the salute at this point?”

“Wherever you like, Sir Charles; wherever you like. Would to Heaven that some good Samaritan could afford me a little brandy-and-water from his canteen. I say, Hinton, they seem at luncheon yonder in that carriage: do you think your diplomacy could negotiate a glass of sherry for me?”

“If you’ll permit me, my Lord, I’ll try,” said I, as, disengaging myself from the crowd, I set off in the direction he pointed.

As I drew near the carriage – from which the horses had been taken – drawn up beside a clump of beech-trees for the sake of shelter – I was not long in perceiving that it was the same equipage I had so gallantly rescued in the morning from the sabres of the horse police. Had I entertained any fears for the effects of the nervous shock upon the tender sensibilities of Mrs. Paul Rooney, the scene before me must completely have dispelled my uneasiness. Never did a merrier peal of laughter ring from female lungs than hers as I rode forward. Seated in the back of the carriage, the front cushion of which served as a kind of table, sat the lady in question. One hand, resting upon her knee, held a formidable carving-fork, on the summit of which vibrated the short leg of a chicken; in the other she grasped a silver vessel, which, were I to predicate from the froth, I fear I should pronounce to be porter. A luncheon on the most liberal scale, displayed, in all the confusion and disorder inseparable from such a situation, a veal-pie, cold lamb, tongue, chickens, and sandwiches; drinking vessels of every shape and material; a smelling bottle full of mustard, and a newspaper paragraph full of salt. Abundant as were the viands, the guests were not wanting: crowds of infantry officers, flushed with victory or undismayed by defeat, hob-nobbed from the rumble to the box; the steps, the springs, the very splinter-bar had its occupant; and, truly, a merrier party, or a more convivial, it were difficult to conceive.

So environed was Mrs. Rooney by her friends, that I was enabled to observe them some time, myself unseen.

“Captain Mitchell, another wing? Well, the least taste in life of the breast? Bob Dwyer, will ye never have done drawing that cork?”

Now this I must aver was an unjust reproach, inasmuch as to my own certain knowledge he had accomplished three feats of that nature in about as many minutes; and, had the aforesaid Bob been reared from his infancy in drawing corks, instead of declarations, his practice could not have been more expert. Pop, pop, they went; ghig, glug, glug, flowed the bubbling liquor, as sherry, shrub, cold punch, and bottled porter succeeded each other in rapid order. Simpering ensigns, with elevated eyebrows, insinuated nonsense, soft, vapid, and unmeaning as their own brains, as they helped themselves to ham or dived into the pasty; while a young dragoon, who seemed to devote his attention to Mrs. Rodney’s companion, amused himself by constant endeavours to stroke down a growing moustache, whose downy whiteness resembled nothing that I know of save the ill-omened fur one sees on an antiquated apple-pie.

As I looked on every side to catch a glance at him whom I should suppose to Mr. Rooney, I was myself detected by the watchful eye of Bob Dwyer, who, at that moment having his mouth full of three hard eggs, was nearly asphyxiated in his endeavours to telegraph my approach to Mrs. Paul.

“The edge-du-cong, by the mortal!” said he, sputtering out the words, as his bloodshot eyes nearly bolted out of his head.

Had I been a Bengal tiger, my advent might have caused less alarm. The officers not knowing if the Duke himself were coming, wiped their lips, resumed their caps and chakos, and sprang to the ground in dismay and confusion: as Mrs. Rooney herself, with an adroitness an Indian juggler might have envied, plunged the fork, drumstick and all, into the recesses of her muff; while with a back hand she decanted the XX upon a bald major of infantry, who was brushing the crumbs from his facings. One individual alone seemed to relish and enjoy the discomfiture of the others: this was the young lady whom I before remarked, and whose whole air and appearance seemed strangely at variance with everything around her. She gave free current to her mirth; while Mrs. Paul, now suddenly restored to a sense of her nervous constitution, fell back in her carriage, and appeared bent upon a scene.

“You caught us enjoying ourselves, Mr. Stilton?”

“Hinton, if you’ll allow me, madam.”

“Ay, to be sure – Mr. Hinton. Taking a little snack, which I am sure you’d be the better for after the fatigues of the day.”

“Eh, au au! a devilish good luncheon,” chimed in a pale sub, the first who ventured to pluck up his courage.

“Would a sandwich tempt you, with a glass of champagne?” said Mrs. Paul, with the blandest of smiles.

“I can recommend the lamb, sir,” said a voice behind.

“Begad, I’ll vouch for the porter,” said the Major. “I only hope it is a good cosmetic.”

“It is a beautiful thing for the hair,” said Mrs. Rooney, half venturing upon a joke.

“No more on that head, ma’am,” said the little Major, bowing pompously.

By this time, thanks to the assiduous attentions of Bob Dwyer, I was presented with a plate, which, had I been an anaconda instead of an aide-de-camp, might have satisfied my appetite. A place was made for me in the carriage; and the faithful Bob, converting the skirt of his principal blue into a glass-cloth, polished a wine-glass for my private use.

“Let me introduce my young friend, Mr. Hinton,” said Mrs. Paul, with a graceful wave of her jewelled hand towards her companion. “Miss Louisa Bellew, only daughter of Sir Simon Bellew, of –” what the place was I could not well hear, but it sounded confoundedly like Killhiman-smotherum – “a beautiful place in the county Mayo. Bob, is it punch you are giving?”

“Most excellent, I assure you, Mrs. Rooney.”

“And how is the Duke, sir? I hope his Grace enjoys good health. He is a darling of a man.”

By-the-by, it is perfectly absurd the sympathy your third or fourth-rate people feel in the health and habits of those above them in station, pleased as they are to learn the most common-place and worthless trifles concerning them, and happy when, by any chance, some accidental similitude would seem to exist even between their misfortunes.

“And the dear Duchess,” resumed Mrs. Rooney, “she’s troubled with the nerves like myself. Ah! Mr. Hinton, what an affliction it is to have a sensitive nature; that’s what I often say to my sweet young friend here. It’s better for her to be the gay, giddy, thoughtless, happy thing she is, than –” Here the lady sighed, wiped her eyes, flourished her cambric, and tried to look like Agnes in the “Bleeding Nun.” “But here they come. You don’t know Mr. Rooney? Allow me to introduce him to you.”

As she spoke, O’Grady cantered up to the carriage, accompanied by a short, pursy, round-faced little man, who, with his hat set knowingly on one side, and his top-boots scarce reaching to the middle of the leg, bestrode a sharp, strong-boned hackney, with cropped ears and short tail. He

carried in his hand a hunting-whip, and seemed, by his seat in the saddle and the easy finger upon the bridle, no indifferent horseman.

“Mr. Rooney,” said the lady, drawing herself up with a certain austerity of manner, “I wish you to make the acquaintance of Mr. Hinton, the aide-de-camp to his Grace.”

Mr. Rooney lifted his hat straight above his head, and replaced it a little more obliquely than before over his right eye.

“Delighted, upon my honour – faith, quite charmed – hope you got something to eat – there never was such a murdering hot day – Bob Dwyer, open a bottle of port – the Captain is famished.”

“I say, Hinton,” called out O’Grady, “you forgot the Duke, it seems; he told me you’d gone in search of some sherry, or something of the kind; but I can readily conceive how easily a man may forget himself in such a position as yours.”

Here Mrs. Paul dropped her head in deep confusion, Miss Bellew looked saucy, and I, for the first time remembering what brought me there, was perfectly overwhelmed with shame at my carelessness.

“Never mind, boy, don’t fret about it, his Grace is the most forgiving man in the world; and when he knows where you were – ”

“Ah, Captain!” sighed Mrs. Rooney.

“Master Phil, it’s yourself can do it,” murmured Paul, who perfectly appreciated O’Grady’s powers of “blarney,” when exercised on the susceptible temperament of his fair spouse.

“I’ll take a sandwich,” continued the Captain. “Do you know, Mrs. Rooney, I’ve been riding about this half-hour to catch my young friend, and introduce him to you; and here I find him comfortably installed, without my aid or assistance. The fact is, these English fellows have a nattering, insinuating way of their own there’s no coming up to. Isn’t that so, Miss Bellew?”

“Very likely,” said the young lady, who now spoke for the first time; “but it is so very well concealed that I for one could never detect it.”

This speech, uttered with a certain pert and saucy air, nettled me for the moment; but as no reply occurred to me, I could only look at the speaker a tacit acknowledgment of her sarcasm; while I remembered, for the first time, that, although seated opposite my very attractive neighbour, I had hitherto not addressed to her a single phrase of even common-place attention.

“I suppose you put up in the Castle, sir?” said Mr. Rooney.

“Yes, two doors lower down than Mount O’Grady,” replied the Captain for me. “But come, Hinton, the carriages are moving, we must get back as quick as we can. Good-by, Paul Adieu, Mrs. Rooney, Miss Bellew, good morning.”

It was just at the moment when I had summoned up my courage to address Miss Bellew, that O’Grady called me away: there was nothing for it, however, but to make my adieus; while, extricating myself from the *débris* of the luncheon, I once more mounted my horse, and joined the viceregal party as they drove from the ground.

“I’m delighted you know the Rooneys,” said O’Grady, as we drove along; “they are by far the best fun going. Paul good, but his wife superb!”

“And the young lady?” said I.

“Oh, a different kind of thing altogether. By-the-by, Hinton, you took my hint, I hope, about your English manner?”

“Eh – why – how – what did you mean?”

“Simply, my boy, that your Coppermine-river kind of courtesy may be a devilish fine thing in Hyde Park or St. James’s, but will never do with us poor people here. Put more warmth into it, man. Dash the lemonade with a little maraschino; you’ll feel twice as comfortable yourself, and the girls like you all the better. You take the suggestion in good part, I’m sure.”

“Oh, of course,” said I, somewhat stung that I should get a lesson in manner where I had meant to be a model for imitation; “if they like that kind of thing, I must only conform.”

CHAPTER VII. THE ROONEYS

I cannot proceed further in this my veracious history without dwelling a little longer upon the characters of the two interesting individuals I have already presented to my readers as Mr. and Mrs. Rooney.

Paul Rooney, attorney-at-law, 42, Stephen's-green, north, was about as well known in his native city of Dublin as Nelson's Pillar. His reputation, unlimited by the adventitious circumstances of class, spread over the whole surface of society; and, from the chancellor down to the carman, his claims were confessed.

It is possible that, in many other cities of the world, Mr. Rooney might have been regarded as a common-place, every-day personage, well to do in the world, and of a free-and-easy character, which, if it left little for reproach, left still less for remark: but in Ireland, whether it was the climate or the people, the potteen or the potatoes, I cannot say, but certainly he "came out," as the painters call it, in a breadth of colour quite surprising.

The changeful character of the skies has, they tell us, a remarkable influence in fashioning the ever-varying features of Irish temperament; and, certainly, the inconstant climate of Dublin had much merit if it produced in Mr. Rooney the versatile nature he rejoiced in.

About ten o'clock, on every morning during term, might be seen a shrewd, cunning-looking, sly little fellow, who, with pursed-up lips and slightly elevated nose, wended his way towards the Four Courts, followed by a ragged urchin with a well-filled bag of purple stuff. His black coat, drab shorts, and gaiters, had a plain and business-like cut; and the short, square tie of his white cravat had a quaint resemblance to a flourish on a deed; the self-satisfied look, the assured step, the easy roll of the head – all bespoke one with whom the world was thriving; and it did not need the additional evidence of a certain habit he had of jingling his silver in his breeches-pocket as he went, to assure you that Rooney was a warm fellow, and had no want of cash.

Were you to trace his steps for the three or four hours that ensued, you would see him bustling through the crowded hall of the Four Courts – now, whispering some important point to a leading barrister, while he held another by the gown lest he should escape him; now, he might be remarked seated in a niche between the pillars, explaining some knotty difficulty to a western client, whose flushed cheek and flashing eye too plainly indicated his impatience of legal strategy, and how much more pleased he would feel to redress his wrongs in his own fashion; now brow-beating, now cajoling, now encouraging, now condoling, he edged his way through the bewigged and dusty throng, not stopping to reply to the hundred salutations he met with, save by a knowing wink, which was the only civility he did not put down at three-and-fourpence. If his knowledge of law was little, his knowledge of human nature – at least of such of it as Ireland exhibits – was great; and no case of any importance could come before a jury, where Paul's advice and opinion were not deemed of considerable importance. No man better knew all the wiles and twists, all the dark nooks and recesses of Irish character. No man more quickly could ferret out a hoarded secret; no one so soon detect an attempted imposition. His was the secret *police* of law: he read a witness as he would a deed, and detected a flaw in him to the full as easily.

As he sat near the leading counsel in a cause, he seemed a kind of middle term between the lawyer and the jury. Marking by some slight but significant gesture every point of the former, to the latter he impressed upon their minds every favourable feature of his client's cause; and twelve deaf men might have followed the pleadings in a cause through the agency of Paul's gesticulations. The consequence of these varied gifts was, business flowed in upon him from every side, and few members of the bar were in the receipt of one-half his income.

Scarcely, however, did the courts rise, when Paul, shaking from his shoulders the learned dust of the Exchequer, would dive into a small apartment which, in an obscure house in Mass-lane, he

dignified by the name of his study. Short and few as were his moments of seclusion, they sufficed to effect in his entire man a complete and total change. The shrewd little attorney, that went in with a *nisi prius* grin, came out a round, pleasant-looking fellow, with a green coat of jockey cut, a buff waistcoat, white cords, and tops; his hat set jauntily on one side, his spotted neckcloth knotted in bang-up mode, – in fact, his figure the *beau idéal* of a west-country squire taking a canter among his covers before the opening of the hunting.

His grey eyes, expanded to twice their former size, looked the very soul of merriment; his nether lip, slightly dropped, quivered with the last joke it uttered. Even his voice partook of the change, and was now a rich, full, mellow Clare accent, which, with the recitative of his country, seemed to Italianise his English. While such was Paul, his *accessoires* – as the French would call them – were in admirable keeping: a dark chesnut cob, a perfect model of strength and symmetry, would be led up and down by a groom, also mounted upon a strong hackney, whose flat rib and short pastern showed his old Irish breeding; the well-fitting saddle, the well-balanced stirrup, the plain but powerful snaffle, all looked like the appendages of one whose jockeyism was no assumed feature; and, indeed, you had only to see Mr. Rooney in his seat, to confess that he was to the full as much at home there as in the Court of Chancery.

From this to the hour of a late dinner, the Phoenix Park became his resort. There, surrounded by a gay and laughing crowd, Paul cantered along, amusing his hearers with the last *mot* from the King's Bench, or some stray bit of humour or fun from a case on circuit. His conversation, however, principally ran on other topics: the Curragh Meeting, the Loughrea Steeple-chase, the Meath Cup, or Lord Boyne's Handicap; with these he was thoroughly familiar. He knew the odds of every race, could apportion the weights, describe the ground, and, better than all, make rather a good guess at the winner. In addition to these gifts, he was the best judge of a horse in Ireland; always well mounted, and never without at least two hackneys in his stable, able to trot their fifteen Irish miles within the hour. Such qualities as these might be supposed popular ones in a country proverbially given to sporting; but Mr. Rooney had other and very superior powers of attraction, – he was the Amphitryon of Dublin. It was no figurative expression to say that he kept open house. *Déjeuners*, dinners, routs, and balls followed each other in endless succession. His cook was French, his claret was Sneyd's; he imported his own sherry and Madeira, both of which he nursed with a care and affection truly parental. His venison and black-cock came from Scotland; every Holyhead packet had its consignment of Welsh mutton; and, in a word, whatever wealth could purchase, and a taste, nurtured as his had been by the counsel of many who frequented his table, could procure, such he possessed in abundance, his greatest ambition being to outshine in splendour, and surpass in magnificence, all the other dinner-givers of the day, filling his house with the great and titled of the land, who ministered to his vanity with singular good-nature, while they sipped his claret, and sat over his Burgundy. His was indeed a pleasant house. The *bons vivants* liked it for its excellent fare, the perfection of its wines, the certainty of finding the first rarity of the season before its existence was heard of at other tables; the loungeur liked it for its ease and informality; the humorist, for the amusing features of its host and hostess; and not a few were attracted by the gracefulness and surpassing loveliness of one who, by some strange fatality of fortune, seemed to have been dropped down into the midst of this singular *ménage*.

Of Mr. Rooney, I have only further to say that, hospitable as a prince, he was never so happy as at the head of his table; for, although his natural sharpness could not but convince him of the footing which he occupied among his high and distinguished guests, yet he knew well there are few such levellers of rank as riches, and he had read in his youth that even the lofty Jove himself was accessible by the odour of a hecatomb.

Mrs. Rooney – or, as she wrote herself upon her card, Mrs. Paul Rooney (there seemed something distinctive in the prenom.) – was a being of a very different order. Perfectly unconscious of the ridicule that attaches to vulgar profusion, she believed herself the great source of attraction of her crowded staircase and besieged drawing-room. True it was, she was a large and very handsome

woman. Her deep, dark, brown eyes, and brilliant complexion, would have been beautiful, had not her mouth somewhat marred their effect, by that coarse expression which high living and a voluptuous life is sure to impress upon those not born to be great. There is no doubt of it, the mouth is your thoroughbred feature. You will meet eyes as softly beaming, as brightly speaking, among the lofty cliffs of the wild Tyrol, or in the deep valleys of the far west; I have seen, too, a brow as fairly pencilled, a nose no Grecian statue could surpass, a skin whose tint was fair and transparent as the downy rose-leaf, amid the humble peasants of a poor and barren land; but never have I seen the mouth whose clean-cut lip and chiselled arch betokened birth. No; that feature would seem the prerogative of the highly born; fashioned to the expression of high and holy thoughts; moulded to the utterance of ennobling sentiment, or proud desire. Its every lineament tells of birth and blood.

Now, Mrs. Rooney's mouth was a large and handsome one, her teeth white and regular withal, and, when at rest, there was nothing to find fault with; but let her speak – was it her accent? – was it the awful provincialism of her native city? – was it that strange habit of contortion any *patois* is sure to impress upon the speaker? – I cannot tell, but certainly it lent to features of very considerable attraction a vulgarising character of expression.

It was truly provoking to see so handsome a person mar every effect of her beauty by some extravagant display. Dramatising every trivial incident in life, she rolled her eyes, looked horror-struck or happy, sweet or sarcastic, lofty or languishing, all in one minute. There was an eternal play of feature of one kind or other; there was no rest, no repose. Her arms – and they were round, and fair, and well-fashioned – were also enlisted in the service; and to a distant observer Mrs. Rooney's animated conversation appeared like a priest performing mass.

And that beautiful head, whose fair and classic proportions were balanced so equally upon her white and swelling throat, how tantalising to know it full of low and petty ambitions, of vulgar tastes, of contemptible rivalries, of insignificant triumph. To see her, amid the voluptuous splendour and profusion of her gorgeous house, resplendent with jewellery, glistening in all the blaze of emeralds and rubies; to watch how the poisonous venom of innate vulgarity had so tainted that fair and beautiful form, rendering her an object of ridicule who should have been a thing to worship. It was too bad; and, as she sat at dinner, her plump but taper fingers grasping a champagne glass, she seemed like a Madonna enacting the part of Moll Flagon.

Now, Mrs. Paul's manner had as many discrepancies as her features. She was by nature a good, kind, merry, coarse personage, who loved a joke not the less if it were broad as well as long. Wealth, however, and its attendant evils, suggested the propriety of a very different line; and catching up as she did at every opportunity that presented itself such of the airs and graces as she believed to be the distinctive traits of high life, she figured about in these cast-off attractions, like a waiting-maid in the abandoned finery of her mistress.

As she progressed in fortune, she “tried back” for a family, and discovered that she was an O'Toole by birth, and consequently of Irish blood-royal; a certain O'Toole being king of a nameless tract, in an unknown year, somewhere about the time of Cromwell, who, Mrs. Rooney had heard, came over with the Romans.

“Ah, yes, my dear,” as she would say when, softened by sherry and sorrow, she would lay her hand upon your arm – “ah, yes, if every one had their own, it isn't married to an attorney I'd be, but living in regal splendour in the halls of my ancestors. Well, well!” Here she would throw up her eyes with a mixed expression of grief and confidence in Heaven, that if she hadn't got her own, in this world, Oliver Cromwell, at least, was paying off, in the other, his foul wrongs to the royal house of O'Toole.

I have only one person more to speak of ere I conclude my rather prolix account of the family. Miss Louisa Bellew was the daughter of an Irish baronet, who put the keystone upon his ruin by his honest opposition to the passing of the Union. His large estates, loaded with debt and encumbered by mortgage, had been for half a century a kind of battle-field for legal warfare at every assizes. Through

the medium of his difficulties he became acquainted with Mr. Rooney, whose craft and subtlety had rescued him from more than one difficulty, and whose good-natured assistance had done still more important service by loans upon his property.

At Mr. Rooney's suggestion, Miss Bellew was invited to pass her winter with them in Dublin. This proposition which, in the palmier days of the baronet's fortune, would in all probability never have been made, and would certainly never have been accepted, was now entertained with some consideration, and finally acceded to, on prudential motives. Rooney had lent him large sums; he had never been a pressing, on the contrary, he was a lenient creditor; possessing great power over the property, he had used it sparingly, even delicately, and showed himself upon more than one occasion not only a shrewd adviser, but a warm friend. "'Tis true," thought Sir Simon, "they are vulgar people, of coarse tastes and low habits, and those with whom they associate laugh at, though they live upon them; yet, after all, to refuse this invitation may be taken in ill part; a few months will do the whole thing. Louisa, although young, has tact and cleverness enough to see the difficulties of her position; besides, poor child, the gaiety and life of a city will be a relief to her, after the dreary and monotonous existence she has passed with me."

This latter reason he plausibly represented to himself as a strong one for complying with what his altered fortunes and ruined prospects seemed to render no longer a matter of choice.

To the Rooneys, indeed, Miss Bellew's visit was a matter of some consequence; it was like the recognition of some petty state by one of the great powers of Europe. It was an acknowledgment of a social existence, an evidence to the world not only that there was such a thing as the kingdom of Rooney, but also that it was worth while to enter into negotiation with it, and even accredit an ambassador to its court.

Little did that fair and lovely girl think, as with tearful eyes she turned again and again to embrace her father, as the hour arrived, when for the first time in her life she was to leave her home, little did she dream of the circumstances under which her visit was to be paid. Less a guest than a hostage, she was about to quit the home of her infancy, where, notwithstanding the inroads of poverty, a certain air of its once greatness still lingered; the broad and swelling lands, that stretched away with wood and coppice, far as the eye could reach – the woodland walks – the ancient house itself, with its discordant pile, accumulated at different times by different masters – all told of power and supremacy in the land of her fathers. The lonely solitude of those walls, peopled alone by the grim-visaged portraits of long-buried ancestors, were now to be exchanged for the noise and bustle, the glitter and the glare of second-rate city life; profusion and extravagance, where she had seen but thrift and forbearance; the gossip, the scandal, the tittle-tattle of society, with its envies, its jealousies, its petty rivalries, and its rancours, were to supply those quiet evenings beside the winter hearth, when reading aloud some old and valued volume she learned to prize the treasures of our earlier writers under the guiding taste of one whose scholarship was of no mean order, and whose cultivated mind was imbued with all the tenderness and simplicity of a refined and gentle nature.

When fortune smiled, when youth and wealth, an ancient name and a high position, all concurred to elevate him, Sir Simon Bellew was courteous almost to humility; but when the cloud of misfortune lowered over his house, when difficulties thickened around him, and every effort to rescue seemed only to plunge him deeper, then the deep-rooted pride of the man shone forth: and he who in happier days was forgiving even to a fault, became now scrupulous about every petty observance, exacting testimonies of respect from all around him, and assuming an almost tyranny of manner totally foreign to his tastes, his feelings, and his nature; like some mighty oak of the forest, riven and scathed by lightning, its branches leafless and its roots laid bare, still standing erect, it stretches its sapless limbs proudly towards heaven, so stood he, reft of nearly all, yet still presenting to the adverse wind of fortune his bold, unshaken front.

Alas and alas! poverty has no heavier evil in its train than its power of perverting the fairest gifts of our nature from their true channel, – making the bright sides of our character dark, gloomy,

and repulsive. Thus the high-souled pride that in our better days sustains and keeps us far above the reach of sordid thoughts and unworthy actions, becomes, in the darker hour of our destiny, a misanthropic selfishness, in which we wrap ourselves as in a mantle. The caresses of friendship, the warm affections of domestic love, cannot penetrate through this; even sympathy becomes suspect, and then commences that terrible struggle against the world, whose only termination is a broken heart.

Notwithstanding, then, all Mr. Rooney's address in conveying the invitation in question, it was not without a severe struggle that Sir Simon resolved on its acceptance; and when at last he did accede, it was with so many stipulations, so many express conditions, that, had they been complied with *de facto*, as they were acknowledged by promise, Miss Bellew would, in all probability, have spent her winter in the retirement of her own chamber in Stephen's-green, without seeing more of the capital and its inhabitants than a view from her window presented. Paul, it is true, agreed to everything; for, although, to use his own language, the codicil revoked the entire body of the testament, he determined in his own mind to break the will. "Once in Dublin," thought he, "the fascinations of society, the pleasures of the world, with such a guide as Mrs. Rooney" – and here let me mention, that for his wife's tact and social cleverness Paul had the most heartfelt admiration – "with advantages like these, she will soon forget the humdrum life of Kilmorran Castle, and become reconciled to a splendour and magnificence unsurpassed by even the viceregal court."

Here, then, let me conclude this account of the Rooneys, while I resume the thread of my own narrative. Although I feel for and am ashamed of the prolixity in which I have indulged, yet, as I speak of real people, well known at the period of which I write, and as they may to a certain extent convey an impression of the tone of one class in the society of that day, I could not bring myself to omit their mention, nor even dismiss them more briefly.

CHAPTER VIII. THE VISIT

I have already recorded the first twenty-four hours of my life in Ireland; and, if there was enough in them to satisfy me that the country was unlike in many respects that which I had left, there was also some show of reason to convince me that, if I did not conform to the habits and tastes of those around me, I should incur a far greater chance of being laughed at by them than be myself amused by their eccentricities. The most remarkable feature that struck me was the easy, even cordial manner with which acquaintance was made. Every one met you as if he had in some measure been prepared for the introduction; a tone of intimacy sprang up at once; your tastes were hinted, your wishes guessed at, with an unaffected kindness that made you forget the suddenness of the intimacy: so that, when at last you parted with your dear friend of some half an hour's acquaintance, you could not help wondering at the confidences you had made, the avowals you had spoken, and the lengths to which you had gone in close alliance with one you had never seen before, and might possibly never meet again. Strange enough as this was with men, it was still more singular when it extended to the gentler sex. Accustomed as I had been all my life to the rigid observances of etiquette in female society, nothing surprised me so much as the rapid steps by which Irish ladies passed from acquaintance to intimacy, from intimacy to friendship. The unsuspecting kindness of woman's nature has certainly no more genial soil than in the heart of Erin's daughters. There is besides, too, a winning softness in their manner towards the stranger of another land that imparts to their hospitable reception a tone of courteous warmth I have never seen in any other country.

The freedom of manner I have here alluded to, however delightful it may render the hours of one separated from home, family, and friends, is yet not devoid of its inconveniences. How many an undisciplined and uninformed youth has misconstrued its meaning and mistaken its import. How often have I seen the raw subaltern elated with imaginary success – flushed with a fancied victory – where, in reality, he had met with nothing save the kind looks and the kind words in which the every-day courtesies of life are couched, and by which, what, in less favoured lands, are the cold and chilling observances of ceremony, are here the easy and familiar intercourse of those who wish to know each other.

The coxcomb who fancies that he can number as many triumphs as he has passed hours in Dublin, is like one who, estimating the rich production of a southern clime by their exotic value in his own colder regions, dignifies by the name of luxury what are in reality but the every-day productions of the soil: so he believes peculiarly addressed to himself the cordial warmth and friendly greeting which make the social atmosphere around him.

If I myself fell deeply into this error, and if my punishment was a heavy one, let my history prove a beacon to all who follow in my steps; for Dublin is still a garrison city, and I have been told that lips as tempting and eyes as bright are to be met there as heretofore. Now to my story.

Life in Dublin, at the time I write of, was about as gay a thing as a man can well fancy. Less debarred than in other countries from partaking of the lighter enjoyments of life, the members of the learned professions mixed much in society; bringing with them stores of anecdote and information unattainable from other sources, they made what elsewhere would have proved the routine of intercourse a season of intellectual enjoyment. Thus, the politician, the churchman, the barrister, and the military man, shaken as they were together in close intimacy, lost individually many of the prejudices of their caste, and learned to converse with a wider and more extended knowledge of the world. While this was so, another element, peculiarly characteristic of the country, had its share in modelling social life – that innate tendency to drollery, that bent to laugh with every one and at everything, so eminently Irish, was now in the ascendant. From the Viceroy downwards, the island was on the broad grin. Every day furnished its share, its quota of merriment. Epigrams, good stories, repartees, and practical jokes rained in showers over the land. A privy council was a *conversazione*

of laughing bishops and droll chief-justices. Every trial at the bar, every dinner at the court, every drawing-room, afforded a theme for some ready-witted absurdity; and all the graver business of life was carried on amid this current of unceasing fun and untiring drollery, just as we see the serious catastrophe of a modern opera assisted by the crash of an orchestral accompaniment.

With materials like these society was made up; and into this I plunged with all the pleasurable delight of one who, if he could not appreciate the sharpness, was at least dazzled by the brilliancy of the wit that flashed around him. My duties as aide-de-camp were few, and never interfered with my liberty: while in my double capacity of military man and *attaché* to the court, I was invited everywhere, and treated with marked courtesy and kindness. Thus passed my life pleasantly along, when a few mornings after the events I have mentioned, I was sitting at my breakfast, conning over my invitations for the week, and meditating a letter, home, in which I should describe my mode of life with as much reserve as might render the record of my doings a safe disclosure for the delicate nerves of my lady-mother. In order to accomplish this latter task with success, I scribbled with some notes a sheet of paper that lay before me. "Among other particularly nice people, my dear mother," wrote I, "there are the Rooneys. Mr. Rooney – a member of the Irish bar, of high standing and great reputation – is a most agreeable and accomplished person. How much I should like to present him to you." I had got thus far, when a husky, asthmatic cough, and a muttered curse on the height of my domicile, apprised me that some one was at my door. At the same moment a heavy single knock, that nearly stove in the panel, left no doubt upon my mind.

"Are ye at home, or is it sleeping ye are? May I never, if it's much else the half of ye's fit for. Ugh, blessed hour! three flights of stairs, with a twist in them instead of a landing. Ye see he's not in the place. I tould you that before I came up. But if s always the same thing. Corny, run here; Corny, fly there; get me this, take that. Bad luck to them! One would think they badgered me for bare diversion, the haythins, the Turks!"

A fit of coughing, that almost convinced me that Corny had given his last curse, followed this burst of eloquence, just as I appeared at the door.

"What's the matter, Corny?"

"The matter? – ugh, ain't I coughing my soul out with a wheezing and whistling in my chest like a creel of chickens. Here's Mr. Rooney wanting to see ye; and faith," as he added in an under tone, "if s not long you wor in making his acquaintance. That's his room," added he, with a jerk of his thumb. "Now lave the way if you plase, and let me got a howld of the banisters."

With these words Corny began his descent, while I, apologising to Mr. Rooney for not having sooner perceived kirk, bowed him into the room with all proper ceremony.

"A thousand apologies, Mr. Hinton, for the unseasonable hour of my visit, but business –"

"Pray not a word," said I; "always delighted to see you. Mrs. Rooney is well, I hope?"

"Charming, upon my honour. But, as I was saying, I could not well come later; there is a case in the King's Bench – Rex *versus* Ryves – a heavy record, and I want to catch the counsel to assure him that all's safe. God knows, it has cost me an anxious night. Everything depended on one witness, an obstinate beast that wouldn't listen to reason. We got hold of him last night; got three doctors to certify he was out of his mind; and, at this moment, with his head shaved, and a grey suit on him, he is the noisiest inmate in Glassnevin madhouse."

"Was not this a very bold, a very dangerous expedient?"

"So it was. He fought like a devil, and his outrageous conduct has its reward, for they put him on low diet and handcuffs the moment he went in. But excuse me, if I make a hurried visit. Mrs. Rooney requests that – that – but where the devil did I put it?"

Here Mr. Rooney felt his coat-pockets, dived into those of his waistcoat, patted himself all over, then looked into his hat, then round the room, on the floor, and even outside the door upon the lobby.

"Sure it is not possible I've lost it."

"Nothing of consequence, I hope?" said I.

“What a head I have,” replied he, with a knowing grin, while at the same moment throwing up the sash of my window, he thrust out the head in question, and gave a loud shrill whistle.

Scarcely was the casement closed when a ragged urchin appeared at the door, carrying on his back the ominous stuff-bag containing the record of Mr. Rooney’s rogueries.

“Give me the bag, Tim,” quoth he; at the same moment he plunged his hand deep among the tape-tied parcels, and extricated a piece of square pasteboard, which, having straightened and flattened upon his knee, he presented to me with a graceful bow, adding, jocosely, “an ambassador without his credentials would never do.”

It was an invitation to dinner at Mr. Rooney’s for the memorable Friday for which my friend O’Grady had already received his card.

“Nothing will give me more pleasure – ”

“No, will it though? how very good of you! a small cosy party – Harry Burgh, Bowes Daley, Barrington, the judges, and a few more. There now, no ceremony, I beg of you. Come along, Joe. Good morning, Mr. Hinton: not a step further.”

So saying, Mr. Rooney backed and shuffled himself out of my room, and, followed by his faithful attendant, hurried down stairs, muttering a series of self-gratulations, as he went, on the successful result of his mission. Scarcely had he gone, when I heard the rapid stride of another visitor, who, mounting four steps at a time, came along chanting, at the top of his voice,

“My two back teeth I will bequeath
To the Reverend Michael Palmer;
His wife has a tongue that’ll match them well,
She’s a devil of a scold, God d – n her!”

“How goes it, Jack my hearty?” cried he, as he sprang into the room, flinging his sabre into the corner, and hurling his foraging cap upon the sofa.

“You have been away, O’Grady? What became of you for the last two days?”

“Down at the Curragh, taking a look at the nags for the Spring Meeting. Dined with the bar at Naas; had a great night with them; made old Moore gloriously tipsy, and sent him into court the next morning with the overture to Mother Goose in his bag instead of his brief. Since daybreak I have been trying a new horse in the Park, screwing him over all the fences, and rushing him at the double rails in the pathway, to see if he can’t cross the country.”

“Why the hunting season is nearly over.”

“Quite true; but it is the Loughrea Steeple-chase I am thinking of. I have promised to name a horse, and I only remembered last night that I had but twenty-four hours to do it. The time was short, but by good fortune I heard of this grey on my way up to town.”

“And you think he’ll do?”

“He has a good chance, if one can only keep on his back; but what between bolting, plunging, and rushing through his fences, he is not a beast for a timid elderly gentleman. After all, one must have something: the whole world will be there; the Rooneys are going; and that pretty little girl with them. By-the-by, Jack, what do you think of Miss Bellew?”

“I can scarcely tell you; I only saw her for a moment, and then that Hibernian hippopotamus, Mrs. Paul, so completely overshadowed her, there was no getting a look at her.”

“Devilish pretty girl, that she is; and one day or other, they say, will have an immense fortune. Old Rooney always shakes his head when the idea is thrown out, which only convinces me the more of her chance.”

“Well, then, Master Phil, why don’t you do something in that quarter?”

“Well, so I should; but somehow, most unaccountably, you’ll say, I don’t think I made any impression. To be sure, I never went vigorously to work: I couldn’t get over my scruples of making

up to a girl who may have a large fortune, while I myself am so confoundedly out at the elbows; the thing would look badly, to say the least of it; and so, when I did think I was making a little running, I only ‘held in’ the faster, and at length gave up the race. *You* are the man, Hinton. *Your* chances, I should say – ”

“Ah, I don’t know.”

Just at this moment the door opened, and Lord Dudley de Vere entered, dressed in coloured clothes, cut in the most foppish style of the day, and with his hands stuck negligently behind in his coat-pockets. He threw himself affectedly into a chair, and eyed us both without speaking.

“I say, messieurs, Rooney or not Rooney? that’s the question. Do we accept this invitation for Friday?”

“I do, for one,” said I, somewhat haughtily.

“Can’t be, my boy,” said O’Grady; “the thing is most unlucky: they have a dinner at court that same day; our names are all on the list; and thus we lose the Rooneys, which, from all I hear, is a very serious loss indeed. Daley, Barrington, Harry Martin, and half a dozen others, the first fellows of the day, are all to be there.”

“What a deal they will talk,” yawned out Lord Dudley. “I feel rather happy to have escaped it. There’s no saying a word to the woman beside you, as long as those confounded fellows keep up a roaring fire of what they think wit. What an idea! to be sure; there is not a man among them that can tell you the odds upon the Derby, nor what year there was a dead heat for the St. Léger. That little girl the Rooneys have got is very pretty, I must confess; but I see what they are at: won’t do, though. Ha! O’Grady, you know what I mean?”

“Faith, I am very stupid this morning; can’t say that I do.”

“Not see it! It is a hollow thing; but perhaps you are in the scheme too. There, you needn’t look angry; I only meant it in joke – ha! ha! ha! I say, Hinton, do you take care of yourself: Englishers have no chance here; and when they find it won’t do with *me*, they’ll take you in training.”

“Anything for a *pis-aller*” said O’Grady, sarcastically; “but let us not forget there is a levee to-day, and it is already past twelve o’clock.”

“Ha! to be sure, a horrid bore.”

So saying, Lord Dudley lounged one more round the room, looked at himself in the glass, nodded familiarly to his own image, and took his leave. O’Grady soon followed; while I set about my change of dress with all the speed the time required.

[Transcriber’s note: The remainder of this file digitized from a different print copy which uses single quotation marks for all quotes.]

CHAPTER IX. THE BALL

As the day of Mr. Rooney's grand entertainment drew near, our disappointment increased tenfold at our inability to be present. The only topic discussed in Dublin was the number of the guests, the splendour and magnificence of the dinner, which was to be followed by a ball, at which above eight hundred guests were expected. The band of the Fermanagh militia, at that time the most celebrated in Ireland, was brought up expressly for the occasion. All that the city could number of rank, wealth, and beauty had received invitations, and scarcely a single apology had been returned.

'Is there no possible way,' said I, as I chatted with O'Grady on the morning of the event; 'is there no chance of our getting away in time to see something of the ball at least?'

'None whatever,' replied he despondingly; 'as ill-luck would have it, it's a command-night at the theatre. The duke has disappointed so often, that he is sure to go now, and for the same reason he 'll sit the whole thing out. By that time it will be half-past twelve, we shan't get back here before one; then comes supper; and – in fact, you know enough of the habits of this place now to guess that after that there is very little use of thinking of going anywhere.'

'It is devilish provoking,' said I.

'That it is: and you don't know the worst of it. I 've got rather a heavy book on the Loughrea race, and shall want a few hundreds in a week or so; and, as nothing renders my friend Paul so sulky as not eating his dinners, it is five-and-twenty per cent, at least out of my pocket, from this confounded *contretemps*. There goes De Vere. I say, Dudley, whom have we at dinner to-day?'

'Harrington and the Asgills, and that set,' replied he, with an insolent shrug of his shoulder.

'More of it, by Jove,' said O'Grady, biting his lip. 'One must be as particular before these people as a young sub. at a regimental mess. There's not a button of your coat, not a loop of your aiguillette, not a twist of your sword-knot, little Charley won't note down; and as there is no orderly-book in the drawing-room, he will whisper to his grace before coffee.'

'Whatabore!'

'Ay, and to think that all that time we might have been up to the very chin in fun. The Rooneys to-day will outdo even themselves. They've got half-a-dozen new lords on trial; all the judges; a live bishop; and, better than all, every pretty woman in the capital. I've a devil of a mind to get suddenly ill, and slip off to Paul's for the dessert.'

'No, no, that's out of the question; we must only put up with our misfortunes as well as we can. As for me, the dinner here is, I think, the worst part of the matter.'

'I estimate my losses at a very different rate. First, there is the three hundred, which I should certainly have had from Paul, and which now becomes a very crooked contingency. Then there's the dinner and two bottles – I speak moderately – of such burgundy as nobody has but himself. These are the positive *bonâ fide* losses: then, what do you say to my chance of picking up some lovely girl, with a stray thirty thousand, and the good taste to look out for a proper fellow to spend it with? Seriously, Jack, I must think of something of that kind one of these days. It's wrong to lose time; for, by waiting, one's chances diminish, while becoming more difficult to please. So you see what a heavy blow this is to me: not to mention my little gains at short-whist, which in the half-hour before supper I may fairly set down as a fifty.'

'Yours is a very complicated calculation; for, except the dinner, and I suppose we shall have as good a one here, I have not been able to see anything but problematic loss or profit.'

'Of course you haven't: your English education is based upon grounds far too positive for that; but we mere Irish get a habit of looking at the possible as probable, and the probable as most likely. I don't think we build castles more than our neighbours, but we certainly go live in them earlier; and if we do, now and then, get a chill for our pains, why we generally have another building ready to receive us elsewhere for change of air.'

‘This is, I confess, somewhat strange philosophy.’

‘To be sure it is, my boy; for it is of pure native manufacture. Every other people I ever heard of deduce their happiness from their advantages and prosperity. As we have very little of one or the other, we extract some fun out of our misfortunes; and, what between laughing occasionally at ourselves, and sometimes at our neighbours, we push along through life right merrily after all. So now, then, to apply my theory: let us see what we can do to make the best of this disappointment. Shall I make love to Lady Asgill? Shall I quiz Sir Charles about the review? Or can you suggest anything in the way of a little extemporaneous devilry, to console us for our disappointment? But, come along, my boy, we’ll take a canter; I want to show you Moddiridderoo. He improves every day in his training; but they tell me there is only one man can sit him across a country, a fellow I don’t much fancy, by-the-bye; but the turf, like poverty, leads us to form somewhat strange acquaintances. Meanwhile, my boy, here come the nags; and now for the park till dinner.’

During our ride O’Grady informed me that the individual to whom he so slightly alluded was a Mr. Ulick Burke, a cousin of Miss Bellew. This individual, who by family and connections was a gentleman, had contrived by his life and habits to disqualify himself from any title to the appellation in a very considerable degree. Having squandered the entire of his patrimony on the turf, he had followed the apparently immutable law on such occasions, and ended by becoming a hawk, where he had begun as a pigeon. For many years past he had lived by the exercise of those most disreputable sources, his own wits. Present at every racecourse in the kingdom, and provided with that undercurrent of information obtainable from jockeys and stable-men, he understood all the intrigue, all the low cunning of the course: he knew when to back the favourite, when to give, when to take the odds; and, if upon any occasion he was seen to lay heavily against a well-known horse, the presumption became a strong one, that he was either ‘wrong’ or withdrawn. But his qualifications ended not here; for he was also that singular anomaly in our social condition – a gentleman-rider, ready upon any occasion to get into the saddle for any one that engaged his services; a flat race, or a steeplechase, all the same to him. His neck was his livelihood, and to support, he must risk it. A racing-jacket, a pair of leathers and tops, a heavy-handled whip, and a shot-belt, were his stock-in-trade, and he travelled through the world a species of sporting Dalgetty, minus the probity which made the latter firm to his engagements, so long as they lasted. At least, report denied the quality to Mr. Burke; and those who knew him well scrupled not to say that fifty pounds had exactly twice as many arguments in its favour as five-and-twenty.

So much then in brief concerning a character to whom I shall hereafter have occasion to recur; and now to my own narrative.

O’Grady’s anticipations as to the Castle dinner were not in the least exaggerated; nothing could possibly be more stiff or tiresome; the entertainment being given as a kind of *ex officio* civility, to the commander-of-the-forces and his staff, the conversation was purely professional, and never ranged beyond the discussion of military topics, or such as bore in any way upon the army. Happily, however, its duration was short. We dined at six, and by half-past eight we found ourselves at the foot of the grand staircase of the theatre in Crow Street, with Mr. Jones in the full dignity of his managerial costume waiting to receive us.

‘A little late, I fear, Mr. Jones,’ said his grace with a courteous smile. ‘What have we got?’

‘Your Excellency selected the *Inconstant*, said the obsequious manager; while a lady of the party darted her eyes suddenly towards the duke, and with a tone of marked sarcastic import, exclaimed —

‘How characteristic!’

‘And the after-piece, what is it?’ said the duchess, as she fussed her way upstairs.

‘*Timour the Tartar*, your grace.’

The next moment the thundering applause of the audience informed us that their Excellencies had taken their places. Cheer after cheer resounded through the building, and the massive lustre itself shook under the deafening acclamations of the audience. The scene was truly a brilliant one. The

boxes presented a perfect blaze of wealth and beauty; nearly every person in the pit was in full dress; to the very ceiling itself the house was crammed. The progress of the piece was interrupted, while the band struck up 'God Save the King,' and, as I looked upon the brilliant dress-circle, I could not but think that O'Grady had been guilty of some exaggeration when he said that Mrs. Rooney's ball was to monopolise that evening the youth and the beauty of the capital. The National Anthem over, 'Patrick's Day' was called for loudly from every side, and the whole house beat time to the strains of their native melody, with an energy that showed it came as fully home to their hearts as the air that preceded it. For ten minutes at least the noise and uproar continued; and, although his grace bowed repeatedly, there seemed no prospect to an end of the tumult, when a voice from the gallery called out, 'Don't make a stranger of yourself, my lord; take a chair and sit down.' A roar of laughter, increased as the duke accepted the suggestion, shook the house; and poor Talbot, who all this time was kneeling beside Miss Walstein's chair, was permitted to continue his ardent tale of love, and take up the thread of his devotion where he had left it twenty minutes before.

While O'Grady, who sat in the back of the box, seemed absorbed in his chagrin and disappointment, I myself became interested in the play, which was admirably performed; and Lord Dudley, leaning affectedly against a pillar, with his back towards the stage, scanned the house with his vapid, unmeaning look, as though to say they were unworthy of such attention at his hands.

The comedy was at length over, and her grace, with the ladies of her suite, retired, leaving only the Asgills and some members of the household in the box with his Excellency. He apparently was much entertained by the performance, and seemed most resolutely bent on staying to the last. Before the first act, however, of the after-piece was over, many of the benches in the dress-circle became deserted, and the house altogether seemed considerably thinner.

'I say, O'Grady,' said he, 'what are these good people about? There seems to be a general move among them. Is there anything going on?'

'Yes, your grace,' said Phil, whose impatience now could scarcely be restrained, 'they are going to a great ball in Stephen's Green; the most splendid thing Dublin has witnessed these fifty years.'

'Ah, indeed! Where is it? Who gives it?' 'Mr. Rooney, sir, a very well-known attorney, and a great character in the town.'

'How good! And he does the thing well?' 'He flatters himself that he rivals your grace.' 'Better still! But who has he? What are his people?' 'Every one; there is nothing too high, nothing too handsome, nothing too distinguished for him. His house, like the Holyhead packet, is open to all comers, and the consequence is, his parties are by far the pleasantest thing going. One has such strange rencontres, sees such odd people, hears such droll things; for, besides having everything like a character in the city, the very gravest of Mr. Rooney's guests seems to feel his house as a place to relax and unbend in. Thus, I should not be the least surprised to see the Chief-Justice and the Attorney-General playing small plays, nor the Bishop of Cork dancing Sir Roger de Coverley.'

'Glorious fun, by Jove! But why are you not there, lads? Ah, I see; on duty. I wish you had told me. But come, it is not too late yet. Has Hinton got a card?'

'Yes, your grace.'

'Well, then, don't let me detain you any longer. I see you are both impatient; and 'faith, if I must confess it, I half envy you; and mind and give me a full report of the proceedings to-morrow morning.'

'How I wish your grace could only witness it yourself!'

'Eh? Is it so very good, then?'

'Nothing ever was like it; for, although the company is admirable, the host and hostess are matchless.'

'Egad! you've quite excited my curiosity. I say, O'Grady, would they know me, think ye? Have you no uncle or country cousin about my weight and build?'

‘Ah, my lord, that is out of the question; you are too well known to assume an incognito. But still, if you wish to see it for a few minutes, nothing could be easier than just to walk through the rooms and come away. The crowd will be such, the thing is quite practicable, done in that way.’

‘By Jove, I don’t know; but if I thought – To be sure, as you say, for five minutes or so one might get through. Come, here goes; order up the carriages. Now mind, O’Grady, I am under your management. Do the thing as quietly as you can.’

Elated at the success of his scheme, Phil scarcely waited for his grace to conclude, but sprang down the box-lobby to give the necessary orders, and was back again in an instant.

‘Don’t you think I had better take this star off?’

‘Oh no, my lord, it will not be necessary. By timing the thing well, we’ll contrive to get your grace into the midst of the crowd without attracting observation. Once there, the rest is easy enough.’

Many minutes had not elapsed ere we reached the corner of Grafton Street. Here we became entangled with the line of carriages, which extended more than half-way round Stephen’s Green, and, late as was the hour, were still thronging and pressing onwards towards the scene of festivity. O’Grady, who contrived entirely to engross his grace’s attention by many bits of the gossip and small-talk of the day, did not permit him to remark that the viceregal liveries and the guard of honour that accompanied us enabled us to cut the line of carriages, and taking precedence of all others, arrive at the door at once. Indeed, so occupied was the duke with some story at the moment, that he was half provoked as the door was flung open, and the clattering clash of the steps interrupted the conversation.

‘Here we are, my lord,’ said Phil.

‘Well, get out, O’Grady. Lead on. Don’t forget it is my first visit here; and you, I fancy, know the map of the country.’

The hall in which we found ourselves, brilliantly lighted and thronged with servants, presented a scene of the most strange confusion and tumult; for, such was the eagerness of the guests to get forward, many persons were separated from their friends: turbaned old ladies called in cracked voices for their sons to rescue them, and desolate daughters seized distractedly the arm nearest them, and implored succour with an accent as agonising as though on the eve of shipwreck. Mothers screamed, fathers swore, footmen laughed, and high above all came the measured tramp of the dancers overhead, while fiddles, French horns, and dulcimers scraped and blew their worst, as if purposely to increase the inextricable and maddening confusion that prevailed.

‘Sir Peter and Lady Macfarlane!’ screamed the servant at the top of the stairs.

‘Counsellor and Mrs. Blake!’

‘Captain O’Ryan of the Rifles!’

‘Lord Dumboy – ’

‘Dunboyne, you villain!’

‘Ay, Lord Dunboyne and five ladies!’

Such were the announcements that preceded us as we wended our way slowly on, while I could distinguish Mr. Rooney’s voice receiving and welcoming his guests, for which purpose he used a formula, in part derived from the practice of an auction-room.

‘Walk in, ladies and gentlemen, walk in. Whist, tea, dancing, negus, and blind-hookey – delighted to see you – walk in’; and so, *da capo*, only varying the ritual when a lord or a baronet necessitated a change of title.

‘You’re quite right, O’Grady; I wouldn’t have lost this for a great deal,’ whispered the duke.

‘Now, my lord, permit me,’ said Phil. ‘Hinton and I will engage Mr. Rooney in conversation, while your grace can pass on and mix with the crowd.’

‘Walk in, walk in, ladies and – Ah! how are you, Captain? This is kind of you – Mr. Hinton, your humble servant – Whist, dancing, blind-hookey, and negus – walk in – and, Captain Phil,’ added he in a whisper, ‘a bit of supper by-and-by below-stairs.’

‘I must tell you an excellent thing, Rooney, before I forget it,’ said O’Grady, turning the host’s attention away from the door as he spoke, and inventing some imaginary secret for the occasion; while I followed his grace, who now was so inextricably jammed up in the dense mob that any recognition of him would have been very difficult, if not actually impossible.

For some time I could perceive that the duke’s attention was devoted to the conversation about him. Some half-dozen ladies were carrying on a very active and almost acrimonious controversy on the subject of dress; not, however, with any artistic pretension of regulating costume or colour, not discussing the rejection of an old or the adoption of a new mode, but with a much more practical spirit of inquiry they were appraising and valuing each other’s finery, in the most sincere and simple way imaginable.

‘Seven-and-sixpence a yard, my dear; you ‘ll never get it less, I assure you.’ ‘That’s elegant lace, Mrs. Mahony; was it run, ma’am?’ Mrs. Mahony bridled at the suggestion, and replied that, though neither her lace nor her diamonds were Irish – ‘Six breadths, ma’am, always in the skirt,’ said a fat, little, dumpy woman, holding up her satin petticoat in evidence.

‘I say, Hinton,’ whispered the duke, ‘I hope they won’t end by an examination of us. But what the deuce is going on here?’

This remark was caused by a very singular movement in the room. The crowd which had succeeded to the dancers, and filled the large drawing-room from end to end, now fell back to either wall, leaving a space of about a yard wide down the entire centre of the room, as though some performance was about to be enacted or some procession to march there.

‘What can it be?’ said the duke; ‘some foolery of O’Grady’s, depend upon it; for look at him up there talking to the band.’

As he spoke, the musicians struck up the grand march in *Blue Beard*, and Mrs. Paul Rooney appeared in the open space, in all the plenitude of her charms – a perfect blaze of rouge, red feathers, and rubies – marching in solemn state. She moved along in time to the music, followed by Paul, whose cunning eyes twinkled with more than a common shrewdness, as he peered here and there through the crowd. They came straight towards where we were standing; and while a whispered murmur ran through the room, the various persons around us drew back, leaving the duke and myself completely isolated. Before his grace could recover his concealment, Mrs. Rooney stood before him. The music suddenly ceased; while the lady, disposing her petticoats as though the object were to conceal all the company behind her, curtsied down to the very floor.

‘Ah, your grace,’ uttered in an accent of the most melting tenderness, were the only words she could speak, as she bestowed a look of still more speaking softness. ‘Ah, did I ever hope to see the day when your Highness would honour –’

‘My dear madam,’ said the duke, taking her hand with great courtesy, ‘pray don’t overwhelm me with obligations. A very natural, I hope a very pardonable desire, to witness hospitality I have heard so much of, has led me to intrude thus uninvited upon you. Will you allow me to make Mr. Rooney’s acquaintance?’

Mrs. Rooney moved gracefully to one side, waving her hand with the air of a magician about to summons an attorney from the earth, when suddenly a change came over his grace’s features; and, as he covered his mouth with his handkerchief, it was with the greatest difficulty he refrained from an open burst of laughter. The figure before him was certainly not calculated to suggest gravity.

Mr. Paul Rooney for the first time in his life found himself the host of a viceroy, and, amid the fumes of his wine and the excitement of the scene, entertained some very confused notion of certain ceremonies observable on such occasions. He had read of curious observances in the East, and strange forms of etiquette in China, and probably, had the Khan of Tartary dropped in on the evening in question, his memory would have supplied him with some hints for his reception; but, with the representative of Britannic Majesty, before whom he was so completely overpowered, he could not think of, nor decide upon anything. A very misty impression flitted through his mind, that

people occasionally knelt before a Lord Lieutenant; but whether they did so at certain moments, or as a general practice, for the life of him he could not tell. While, therefore, the dread of omitting a customary etiquette weighed with him on the one hand, the fear of ridicule actuated him on the other; and thus he advanced into the presence with bent knees and a supplicating look eagerly turned towards the duke, ready at any moment to drop down or stand upright before him as the circumstances might warrant.

Entering at once into the spirit of the scene, the duke bowed with the most formal courtesy, while he vouchsafed to Mr. Rooney some few expressions of compliment. At the same time, drawing Mrs. Rooney's arm within his own, he led her down the room, with a grace and dignity of manner no one was more master of than himself. As for Paul, apparently unable to stand upright under the increasing load of favours that fortune was showering upon his head, he looked over his shoulder at Mrs. Rooney, as she marched off in triumph, with the same exuberant triumph Young used to throw into Othello, as he passionately exclaims —

‘Excellent wench I perdition catch my soul, but I do love thee!’

Not but that, at the very moment in question, the object of it was most ungratefully oblivious of Mr. Rooney and his affection.

Had Mrs. Paul Rooney been asked on the morning after her ball, what was her most accurate notion of Elysian bliss, she probably would have answered — leaning upon a viceroy's arm in her own ball-room, under the envious stare and jealous gaze of eight hundred assembled guests. Her flushed look, her flashing eye, the trembling hand with which she waved her fan, the proud imperious step, all spoke of triumph. In fact, such was the halo of reverence, such the reflected brightness the representative of monarchy then bore, she felt it a prouder honour to be thus escorted, than if the Emperor of all the Russias had deigned to grace her mansion with his presence. How she loved to run over every imaginable title she conceived applicable to his rank, ‘Your Royal Highness,’ ‘Your Grace,’ ‘Your noble Lordship,’ varying and combining them like a child who runs his erring fingers over the keys of a pianoforte, and is delighted with the efforts of his skill.

While this kingly scene was thus enacting, the ballroom resumed its former life and vivacity. This indeed was owing to O’Grady. No sooner had his scheme succeeded of delivering up the duke into the hands of the Rooneys, than he set about restoring such a degree of turmoil, tumult, noise, and merriment, as, while it should amuse his grace, would rescue him from the annoyance of being stared at by many who never had walked the boards with a live viceroy.

‘Isn’t it gloriously done, Hinton?’ he whispered in my ear as he passed. ‘Now lend me your aid, my boy, to keep the whole thing moving. Get a partner as quick as you can, and let us try if we can’t do the honours of the house, while the master and mistress are basking in the sunshine of royal favour.’

As he spoke, the band struck up ‘Haste to the Wedding!’ The dancers assumed their places — Phil himself flying hither and thither, arranging, directing, ordering, countermanding, providing partners for persons he had never seen before, and introducing individuals of whose very names he was ignorant.

‘Push along, Hinton,’ said he; ‘only set them going. Speak to every one — half the men in the room answer to the name of “Bob,” and all the young ladies are “Miss Magees.” Then go it, my boy; this is a great night for Ireland!’

This happy land, indeed, which, like a vast powder-magazine, only wants but the smallest spark to ignite it, is always prepared for an explosion of fun. No sooner than did O’Grady, taking out the fattest woman in the room, proceed to lead her down the middle to the liveliest imaginable country-dance, than at once the contagious spirit flew through the room, and dancers pressed in from every side. Champagne served round in abundance, added to the excitement; and, as eight-and-thirty couple made the floor vibrate beneath them, such a scene of noise, laughter, uproar, and merriment ensued, as it were difficult to conceive or describe.

CHAPTER X. A FINALE TO AN EVENING

A ball, like a battle, has its critical moment: that one short and subtle point, on which its trembling fate would seem to hesitate, ere it incline to this side or that. In both, such is the time for generalship to display itself – and of this my friend O’Grady seemed well aware; for, calling up his reserve for an attack in force, he ordered strong negus for the band; and ere many minutes, the increased vigour of the instruments attested that the order had been attended to.

‘Right and left!’ ‘Hands across!’ ‘Here we are!’ ‘This way, Peter!’ ‘Ah! Captain, you ‘re a droll crayture!’ ‘Move along, alderman!’ ‘That negus is mighty strong!’ ‘The Lord grant the house is – ’

Such and such like phrases broke around me, as, under the orders of the irresistible Phil, I shuffled down the middle with a dumpy little school-girl, with red hair and red shoes; which, added to her capering motion, gave her a most unhappy resemblance to a cork fairy.

‘You are a trump, Jack,’ said Phil. ‘Never give in. I never was in such spirits in my life. Two bottles of champagne under my belt, and a cheque for three hundred Paul has just given me without a scrape of my pen; it might have been five if I had only had presence of mind.’

‘Where is Miss Bellew all this time?’ inquired I.

‘I only saw her a moment; she looks saucy, and won’t dance.’

My pride, somewhat stimulated by a fact which I could not help interpreting in Miss Bellew’s favour, I went through the rooms in search of her, and at length discovered her in a boudoir, where a whist-party were assembled. She was sitting upon a sofa, beside a tall, venerable-looking old man, to whom she was listening with a semblance of the greatest attention as I entered. I had some time to observe her, and could not help feeling struck how much handsomer she was than I had formerly supposed. Her figure, slightly above the middle size, and most graceful in all its proportions, was, perhaps, a little too much disposed to embonpoint; the character of her features, however, seemed to suit, if not actually to require as much. Her eyes of deep blue, set well beneath her brow, had a look of intensity in them that evidenced thought; but the other features relieved by their graceful softness this strong expression, and a nose short and slightly, very slightly *retroussé*, with a mouth, the very perfection of eloquent and winning softness, made ample amends to those who prefer charms purely feminine to beauty of a severer character. Her hair, too, was of that deep auburn through which a golden light seems for ever playing; and this, contrary to the taste of the day, she wore simply braided upon her temple and cheeks, marking the oval contour of her face, and displaying, by this graceful coquetry, the perfect chiselling of her features. Let me add to this, that her voice was low and soft in all its tones; and, if the provincialism with which she spoke did at first offend my ear, I learned afterwards to think that the breathing intonations of the west lent a charm of their own to all she said, deepening the pathos of a simple story, or heightening the drollery of a merry one. Yes, laugh if you will, ye high-bred and high-born denizens of a richer sphere, whose ears, attuned to the rhythm of Metastasio, softly borne on the strains of Donizetti, can scarce pardon the intrusion of your native tongue in the everyday concerns of life – smile if it so please ye; but from the lips of a lovely woman, a little, *a very little* of the brogue is most seductive. Whether the subject be grave or gay, whether mirth or melancholy be the mood, like the varnish upon a picture, it brings out all the colour into strong effect, brightening the lights, and deepening the shadows; and then, somehow, there is an air of *naïveté*, a tone of simplicity about it, that appeals equally to your heart as your hearing.

Seeing that the conversation in which she was engaged seemed to engross her entire attention, I was about to retire without addressing her, when suddenly she turned round and her eyes met mine. I accordingly came forward, and, after a few of the commonplace civilities of the moment, asked her to dance.

‘Pray, excuse me, Mr. Hinton; I have declined already several times. I have been fortunate enough to meet with a very old and dear friend of my father – ’

‘Who is much too attached to his daughter to permit her to waste an entire evening upon him. No, sir, if you will allow me, I will resign Miss Bellew to your care.’

She said something in a low voice, to which he muttered in reply. The only words which I could catch – ‘No, no; very different, indeed; this is a most proper person’ – seemed, as they were accompanied by a smile of much kindness, in some way to concern me; and the next moment Miss Bellew took my arm and accompanied me to the ball-room.

As I passed the sofa where the duke and Mrs. Rooney were still seated, his grace nodded familiarly to me, with a gesture of approval; while Mrs. Paul clasped both her hands before her with a movement of ecstasy, and seemed about to bestow upon us a maternal blessing. Fearful of incurring a scene, Miss Bellew hastened on, and, as her arm trembled within mine, I could perceive how deeply the ridicule of her friend’s position wounded her own pride.

Meanwhile, I could just catch the tones of Mrs. Rooney’s voice, explaining to the duke Miss Bellew’s pedigree. ‘One of the oldest families of the land, your grace; came over with Romulus and Remus; and, if it were not for Oliver Cromwell and the Danes – ’ The confounded fiddles lost the rest, and I was left in the dark, to guess what these strange allies had inflicted upon the Bellew family.

The dancing now began, and only between the intervals of the cotillon had I an opportunity of conversing with my partner. Few and brief as these occasions were, I was delighted to find in her a tone and manner quite different from anything I had ever met before. Although having seen scarcely anything of the world, her knowledge of character seemed an instinct, and her quick appreciation of the ludicrous features of many of the company was accompanied by a naïve expression, and at the same time a witty terseness of phrase, that showed me how much real intelligence lay beneath that laughing look. Unlike my fair cousin, Lady Julia, her raillery never wounded: hers were the fanciful combinations which a vivid and sparkling imagination conjures up, but never the barbed and bitter arrows of sarcasm. Catching up in a second any passing absurdity, she could laugh at the scene, yet seem to spare the actor. Julia, on the contrary, with what the French call *l’esprit moqueur*, never felt that her wit had hit its mark till she saw her victim writhing and quivering beneath her.

There is always something in being the partner of the belle of a ball-room. The little bit of envy and jealousy, whose limit is to be the duration of a waltz or quadrille, has somehow its feeling of pleasure. There is the reflective flattery in the thought of a fancied preference, that raises one in his own esteem; and, as the muttered compliments and half-spoken praises of the bystanders fall upon your ears, you seem to feel that you are a kind of shareholder in the company, and ought to retire from business with your portion of the profits. Such, I know, were some of my feelings at the period in question; and, as I pulled up my stock and adjusted my sash, I looked upon the crowd about me with a sense of considerable self-satisfaction, and began really for the first time to enjoy myself.

Scarcely was the dance concluded, when a general movement was perceptible towards the door, and the word ‘supper,’ repeated from voice to voice, announced that the merriest hour in Irish life had sounded. Delighted to have Miss Bellew for my companion, I edged my way into the mass, and was borne along on the current.

The view from the top of the staircase was sufficiently amusing: a waving mass of feathers of every shape and hue, a crowd of spangled turbans, bald and powdered heads, seemed wedged inextricably together, swaying backwards and forwards with one impulse, as the crowd at the door of the supper-room advanced or receded. The crash of plates and knives, the jingling of glasses, the popping of champagne corks, told that the attack had begun, had not even the eager faces of those nearer the door indicated as much. *Nulli oculi retrorsum*, seemed the motto of the day, save when some anxious mother would turn a backward and uneasy glance towards the staircase, where her daughter, preferring a lieutenant to a lobster, was listening with elated look to his tale of love and glory. ‘Eliza, my dear, sit next me.’ – ‘Anna, my love, come down here.’ These brief commands, significantly as they were uttered, would be lost to those for whom intended, and only served to amuse the bystanders, and awaken them to a quicker perception of the passing flirtation. Some philosopher

has gravely remarked, that the critical moments of our life are the transitions from one stage or state of our existence to another; and that our fate for the future depends in a great measure upon those hours in which we emerge from infancy to boyhood, from boyhood to manhood, from manhood to maturer years. Perhaps the arguments of time might be applied to place, and we might thus be enabled to show how a staircase is the most dangerous portion of a building. I speak not here of the insecurity of the architecture, nor, indeed, of any staircase whose well-tempered light shines down at noonday through the perfumed foliage of a conservatory; but of the same place, a blaze of lamplight, about two in the morning, crowded, crammed, and creaking by an anxious and elated throng pressing towards a supper-room. Whether it is the supper or the squeeze, the odour of balmy lips, or the savoury smell of roast ducks – whether it be the approach to silk tresses, or *sillery mousseux* – whatever the provocation, I cannot explain it; but the fact remains: one is tremendously given in such a place, at such a time, to the most barefaced and palpable flirtation. So strongly do I feel on this point, that, were I a lawgiver, I would never award damages for a breach of contract, where the promise was made on a staircase.

As for me, my acquaintance with Miss Bellew was not of more than an hour's standing. During that time we had contrived to discuss the ball-room, its guests, its lights, its decorations, the music, the dancers – in a word, all the commonplaces of an evening party; thence we wandered on to Dublin, society in general, to Ireland, and Irish habits, and Irish tastes; quizzed each other a little about our respective peculiarities, and had just begun to discuss the distinctive features which characterise the softer emotions in the two nations, when the announcement of supper brought us on the staircase. *À propos*, or *mal à propos*, this turn of our conversation, let the reader decide by what I have already stated; so it was, however, and in a little nook of the landing I found myself with my fair companion's arm pressed closely to my side, engaged in a warm controversy on the trite subject of English coldness of manner. Advocating my country, I deemed that no more fitting defence could be entered, than by evidencing in myself the utter absence of the frigidity imputed. Champagne did something for me; Louisa's bright eyes assisted; but the staircase, the confounded staircase, crowned all. In fact, the undisguised openness of Miss Bellew's manner, the fearless simplicity with which she had ventured upon topics a hardened coquette would not dare to touch upon, led me into the common error of imputing to flirtation what was only due to the untarnished freshness of happy girlhood.

Finding my advances well received, I began to feel not a little proud of my success, and disposed to plume myself upon the charm of my eloquence, when, as I concluded a high-flown and inflated phrase of sentimental absurdity, she suddenly turned round, fixed her bright eyes upon me, and burst out into a fit of laughter.

'There, there! pray don't try that! No one but an Irishman ever succeeds in blarney. It is our national dish, and can never be seasoned by a stranger.'

This pull-up, for such it most effectually was, completely unmanned me. I tried to stammer out an explanation, endeavoured to laugh, coughed, blundered, and broke down; while, merciless in her triumph, she only laughed the more, and seemed to enjoy my confusion.

With such a failure hanging over me, I felt happy when we reached the supper-room; and the crash, din, and confusion about us once more broke in upon our conversation. It requires far less nerve for the dismounted jockey, whose gay jacket has been rolled in the mud of a racecourse, resuming his saddle, to ride in amid the jeers and scoffs of ten thousand spectators, than for the gallant who has blundered in the full tide of a flirtation, to recover his lost position, and sustain the current of his courtship. The sarcasm of our sex is severe enough, Heaven knows; but no raillery, no ridicule, cuts half so sharp or half so deep as the bright twinkle of a pretty girl's eye, when, detecting some exhibition of dramatised passion, some false glitter of pinchbeck sentiment, she exchanges her look of gratified attention for the merry mockery of a hearty laugh. No tact, no *savoir faire*, no knowledge of the world, no old soldierism that ever I heard of, was proof against this. To go back is bad; to stand still, worse; to go on, impossible.

The best – for I believe it is the only thing to do – is to turn approver on your own misdeeds, and join in the laughter against yourself. Now this requires no common self-mastery, and an *aplomb* few young gentlemen under twenty possess – hence both my failure and its punishment.

That staircase which, but a moment before, I wished might be as long as a journey to Jerusalem, I now escaped from with thankfulness. Concealing my discomfiture as well as I was able, I hustled about, and finally secured a place for my companion at one of the side-tables. We were too far from the head of the table, but the clear ringing of his grace's laughter informed me of his vicinity; and, as I saw Miss Bellew shrink from approaching that part of the room, I surrendered my curiosity to the far more grateful task of cultivating her acquaintance.

All the ardour of my attentions – and I had resumed them with nearly as much warmth, although less risk of discomfiture, for I began to feel what before I had only professed – all the preoccupation of my mind, could not prevent my hearing high above the crash and clatter of the tables the rich roundness of Mrs. Rooney's brogue, as she recounted to the duke some interesting trait of the O'Toole family, or adverted to some classical era in Irish history, when, possibly, Mæcenas was mayor of Cork, or Diogenes an alderman of Skinner's Alley.

'Ah, my dear! – the Lord forgive me! I mean your grace.'

'I shall never forgive you, Mrs. Rooney, if you change the epithet.'

'Ah, your grace's worship, them was fine times; and the husband of an O'Toole, in them days, spent more of his time harrying the country with his troops at his back, than driving about in an old gig full of writs and latitats, with a process-server behind him.'

Had Mr. Rooney, who at that moment was carving a hare in total ignorance of his wife's sarcasm, only heard the speech, the chances are ten to one he would have figured in a steel breastplate and an iron head-piece before the week was over. I was unable to hear more of the conversation, notwithstanding my great wish to do so, as a movement of those next the door implied that a large instalment of the guests who had not supped would wait no longer, but were about to make what Mr. Rooney called a forcible entry on a summary process, and eject the tenant in possession.

We accordingly rose, and all (save the party around the viceroy) along with us, once more to visit the ball-room, where already dancing had begun. While I was eagerly endeavouring to persuade Miss Bellew that there was no cause or just impediment to prevent her dancing the next set with me, Lord Dudley de Vere lounged affectedly forward, and mumbled out some broken indistinct phrases, in which the word da-ance was alone audible. Miss Bellew coloured slightly, turned her eyes towards me, curtsied, took his arm, and the next moment was lost amid the crowd.

I am not aware of any readier method of forming a notion of perpetual motion than watching the performance of Sir Roger de Coverley at an evening party in Dublin. It seems to be a point of honour never to give in; and thus the same complicated figures, the same mystic movements that you see in the beginning, continue to succeed each other in a never-ending series. You endeavour in vain to detect the plan, to unravel the tangled web of this strange ceremony; but somehow it would seem as if the whole thing was completely discretionary with the dancers, there being only one point of agreement among them, which is, whenever blown out of breath, to join in a vigorous hands-round; and, the motion being confined to a shuffling of the feet, and a shaking of the elbows, little fatigue is incurred. To this succeeds a capering forward movement of a gentleman, which seemingly magnetises an opposite lady to a similar exhibition; then, after seizing each other rapturously by the hands, they separate to run the gauntlet in and out down the whole line of dancers, to meet at the bottom, when, apparently reconciled, they once more embrace. What follows, the devil himself may tell. As for me, I heard only laughing, tittering, now and then a slight scream, and a cry of 'Behave, Mr. Murphy!' etc.; but the movements themselves were conic sections to me, and I closed my eyes as I sat alone in my corner, and courted sleep as a short oblivion to the scene. Unfortunately I succeeded; for, wild and singular as the gestures, the looks, and the voices were before, they now became to my dreaming senses something too terrible. I thought myself in the centre of some hobgoblin orgie, where demons,

male and female, were performing their fantastic antics around me, grinning hideously, and uttering cries of menacing import. Tarn O'Shanter's vision was a respectable tea-party of Glasgow matrons compared to my imaginings; for so distorted were the pictures of my brain, that the leader of the band, a peaceable-looking old man in shorts and spectacles, seemed to me like a grim-visaged imp, who flourished his tail across the strings of his instrument in lieu of a bow.

I must confess that the dancers, without any wish on my part to detract from their efforts, had not the entire merit of this transmutation. Fatigue, for the hour was late, chagrin at being robbed of my partner, added to the heat and the crowd, had all their share in the mystification. Besides, if I must confess it, Mr. Rooney's champagne was strong. My friend O'Grady, however, seemed but little of my opinion; for, like the master-spirit of the scene, he seemed to direct every movement and dictate every change – no touch of fatigue, no semblance of exhaustion about him. On the contrary, as the hour grew later, and the pale grey of morning began to mingle with the glare of wax-lights, the vigour of his performance only increased, and several new steps were displayed, which, like a prudent general, he seemed to have kept in reserve for the end of the engagement. And what a sad thing is a ball as it draws towards the close! What an emblem of life at a similar period!

How much freshness has faded! how much of beauty has passed away! how many illusions are dissipated! how many dreams the lamplight and chalk floors have called into life fly like spirits with the first beam of sunlight! The eye of proud bearing is humbled now; the cheek, whose downy softness no painter could have copied, looks pale, and wan, and haggard; the beaming looks, the graceful bearing, the elastic step, where are they? Only to be found where youth – bright, joyous, and elastic youth-unites itself to beauty.

Such were my thoughts as the dancers flew past, and many whom I had remarked at the beginning of the evening as handsome and attractive, seemed now without a trace of either – when suddenly Louisa Bellew came by, her step as light, her every gesture as graceful, her cheek as blooming, and her liquid eye as deeply beaming as when first I saw her. The excitement of the dance had slightly flushed her face, and heightened the expression its ever-varying emotions lent it.

Handsome as I before had thought her, there was a look of pride about her now that made her lovely to my eyes. As I continued to gaze after her, I did not perceive for some time that the guests were rapidly taking their leave, and already the rooms were greatly thinned. Every moment now, however, bore evidence of the fact: the unceasing roll of carriages to the door, the clank of the steps, the reiterated cry to drive on, followed by the call for the next carriage, all betokened departure. Now and then, too, some cloaked and hooded figure would appear at the door of the drawing-room, peering anxiously about for a daughter, a sister, or a friend who still lingered in the dance, averring it 'was impossible to go, that she was engaged for another set.' The disconsolate gestures, the impatient menaces of the shawled spectres – for, in truth, they seemed like creatures of another world come back to look upon the life they left – are of no avail: the seductions of the 'major' are stronger than the frowns of mamma, and though a rowing may come in the morning, she is resolved to have a reel at night.

An increased noise and tumult below-stairs at the same moment informed me that the supper-party were at length about to separate. I started up at once, wishing to see Miss Bellew again ere I took my leave, when O'Grady seized me by the arm and hurried me away.

'Come along, Hinton! Not a moment to lose; the duke is going.'

'Wait an instant,' said I, 'I wish to speak to –'

'Another time, my dear fellow; another time. The duke is delighted with the Rooneys, and we are going to have Paul knighted!'

With these words he dragged me along, dashing down the stairs like a madman. As we reached the door of the dining-room we found his grace, who, with one hand on Lord Dudley's shoulder, was endeavouring to steady himself by the other.

'I say, O'Grady, is that you? Very powerful Burgundy this – It 's not possible it can be morning!'

‘Yes, your grace – half-past seven o’clock.’

‘Indeed, upon my word, your friends are very charming people. What did you say about knighting some one? Oh, I remember: Mr. Rooney, wasn’t it? Of course, nothing could be better!’

‘Come, Hinton, have you got a sword?’ said O’Grady; ‘I’ve mislaid mine somehow. There, that’ll do. Let us try and find Paul now.’

Into the supper-room we rushed; but what a change was there! The brilliant tables, resplendent with gold plate, candelabras, and flowers, were now despoiled and dismantled. On the floor, among broken glasses, cracked decanters, pyramids of jelly, and pagodas of blancmange, lay scattered in every attitude the sleeping figures of the late guests. Mrs. Rooney alone maintained her position, seated in a large chair, her eyes closed, a smile of Elysian happiness playing upon her lips. Her right arm hung gracefully over the side of the chair, where lately his grace had kissed her hand at parting. Overcome, in all probability, by the more than human happiness of such a moment, she had sunk into slumber, and was murmuring in her dreams such short and broken phrases as the following: – ‘Ah, happy day! – What will Mrs. Tait say? – The lord mayor, indeed! – Oh, my poor head! I hope it won’t be turned. – Holy Agatha, pray for us! your grace, pray for us I – Isn’t he a beautiful man? Hasn’t he the darling white teeth?’

‘Where’s Paul?’ said O’Grady; ‘where’s Paul, Mrs. Rooney?’ as he jogged her rather rudely by the arm.

‘Ah, who cares for Paul?’ said she, still sleeping; ‘don’t be bothering me about the like of him.’

‘Egad! this is conjugal, at any rate,’ said Phil

‘I have him!’ cried I; ‘here he is!’ as I stumbled over a short, thick figure, who was propped up in a corner of the room. There he sat, his head sunk upon his bosom, his hands listlessly resting on the floor. A large jug stood beside him, in the concoction of whose contents he appeared to have spent the last moments of his waking state. We shook him, and called him by his name, but to no purpose; and, as we lifted up his head, we burst out a-laughing at the droll expression of his face; for he had fallen asleep in the act of squeezing a lemon in his teeth, the half of which not only remained there still, but imparted to his features the twisted and contorted expression that act suggests.

‘Are you coming, O’Grady?’ now cried the duke impatiently.

‘Yes, my lord,’ cried Phil, as he rushed towards the door. ‘This is too bad, Hinton: that confounded fellow could not possibly be moved. I’ll try and carry him.’ As he spoke, he hurried back towards the sleeping figure of Mr. Rooney, while I made towards the duke.

As Lord Dudley had gone to order up the carriages, his grace was standing alone at the foot of the stairs, leaning his back against the banisters, his eyes opening and shutting alternately as his head nodded every now and then forward, overcome by sleep and the wine he had drunk. Exactly in front of him, but crouching in the attitude of an Indian monster, sat Corny Delany. To keep himself from the cold, he had wrapped himself up in his master’s cloak, and the only part of his face perceptible was the little wrinkled forehead, and the malicious-looking fiery eyes beneath it, firmly fixed on the duke’s countenance.

‘Give me your sword,’ said his grace, turning to me, in a tone half sleeping, half commanding; ‘give me your sword, sir!’

Drawing it from the scabbard, I presented it respectfully.

‘Stand a little on one side, Hinton. Where is he? Ah! quite right. Kneel down, sir; kneel down, I say!’ These words, addressed to Corny, produced no other movement in him than a slight change in his attitude, to enable him to extend his expanded hand above his eyes, and take a clearer view of the duke.

‘Does he hear me, Hinton? Do you hear me, sir?’

‘Do you hear his grace?’ said I, endeavouring with a sharp kick of my foot to assist his perceptions.

‘To be sure I hear him,’ said Corny; ‘why wouldn’t I hear him?’

‘Kneel down, then,’ said I.

‘Devil a bit of me’ll kneel down. Don’t I know what he’s after well enough? *Ach na bocklish!* Sorrow else he ever does nor make fun of people.’

‘Kneel down, sir!’ said his grace, in an accent there was no refusing to obey. ‘What is your name?’

‘Oh, murther! Oh, heavenly Joseph!’ cried Corny, as I hurled him down upon his knees, ‘that I ‘d ever live to see the day!’

‘What is his d – d name?’ said the duke passionately.

‘Corny, your grace – Corny Delany.’

‘There, that’ll do,’ as with a hearty slap of the sword, not on his shoulder, but on his bullet head, he cried out, ‘Rise, Sir Corny Delany!’

‘Och, the devil a one of me will ever get up out of this same spot. Oh, wirra, wirra! how will I ever show myself again after this disgrace?’

Leaving Corny to his lamentations, the duke walked towards the door. Here above a hundred people were now assembled, their curiosity excited in no small degree by a picket of light dragoons, who occupied the middle of the street, and were lying upon the ground, or leaning on their saddles, in all the wearied attitudes of a night-watch. In fact, the duke had forgotten to dismiss his guard of honour, who had accompanied him to the theatre, and thus had spent the dark hours of the night keeping watch and ward over the proud dwelling of the Rooneys. A dark frown settled on the duke’s features as he perceived the mistake, and muttered between his teeth, ‘How they will talk of this in England!’ The next moment, bursting into a hearty fit of laughter, he stepped into the carriage, and amid a loud cheer from the mob, by whom he was recognised, drove rapidly away.

Seated beside his grace, I saw nothing more of O’Grady, whose efforts to ennoble the worthy attorney only exposed him to the risk of a black eye; for no sooner did Paul perceive that he was undergoing rough treatment than he immediately resisted, and gave open battle.

O’Grady accordingly left him, to seek his home on foot, followed by Corny, whose cries and heart-rending exclamations induced a considerable crowd of well-disposed citizens to accompany them to the Castle gate. And thus ended the great Rooney ball.

CHAPTER XI. A NEGOTIATION

From what I have already stated, it may be inferred that my acquaintance with the Rooneys was begun under favourable auspices. Indeed, from the evening of the ball the house was open to me at all hours; and, as the hour of luncheon was known to every loungeur about town, by dropping in about three o'clock one was sure to hear all the chit-chat and gossip of the day. All the dinners and duels of the capital, all its rows and runaway matches, were there discussed, while future parties of pleasure were planned and decided on, the Rooney equipages, horses, servants, and cellar being looked upon as common property, the appropriation of which was to be determined on by a vote of the majority.

At all these domestic parliaments O'Grady played a prominent part. He was the speaker and the whipper-in; he led for both the government and the opposition; in fact, since the ever-memorable visit of the viceroy his power in the house was absolute. How completely they obeyed, and how implicitly they followed him, may be guessed, when I say that he even persuaded Mrs. Rooney herself not only to abstain from all triumph on the subject of their illustrious guest, but actually to maintain a kind of diplomatic silence on the subject; so that many simple-minded people began to suspect his grace had never been there at all, and that poor Mrs. Rooney, having detected the imposition, prudently held her tongue and said nothing about the matter. As this influence might strike my reader as somewhat difficult in its exercise, and also as it presents a fair specimen of my friend's ingenuity, I cannot forbear mentioning the secret of its success.

When the duke awoke late in the afternoon that followed Mrs. Rooney's ball, his first impression was one bordering on irritation with O'Grady. His quick-sightedness enabled him at once to see how completely he had fallen into the trap of his worthy aide-de-camp; and although he had confessedly spent a very pleasant evening, and laughed a great deal, now that all was over, he would have preferred if the whole affair could be quietly consigned to oblivion, or only remembered as a good joke for after dinner. The scandal and the éclat it must cause in the capital annoyed him considerably; and he knew that before a day passed over, the incident of the guard of honour lying in bivouac around their horses would furnish matter for every caricature-shop in Dublin. Ordering O'Grady to his presence, and with a severity of manner in a great degree assumed, he directed him to remedy, as far as might be, the consequences of this blunder, and either contrive to give a totally different version of the occurrence, or else by originating some new subject of scandal to eclipse the memory of this unfortunate evening.

O'Grady promised and pledged himself to everything; vowed that he would give such a turn to the affair that nobody would ever believe a word of the story; assured the duke (God forgive him!) that however ridiculous the Rooneys at night, by day they were models of discretion; and at length took his leave to put his scheme into execution, heartily glad to discover that his grace had forgotten all about Corny and the knighthood, the recollection of which might have been attended with very grave results to himself.

So much for his interview with the duke. Now for his diplomacy with Mrs. Rooney!

It was about five o'clock on the following day when O'Grady cantered up to the door. Giving his horse to his groom, he dashed boldly upstairs, passed through the ante-chamber and the drawing-room, and tapping gently at the door of a little boudoir, opened it at the same moment and presented himself before Mrs. Paul.

That amiable lady, reclining *à la* Princess O'Toole, was gracefully disposed on a small sofa, regarding with fixed attention a little plaster bust of his grace, which, with considerable taste and propriety, was dressed in a blue coat and bright buttons, with a star on the breast, a bit of sky-blue satin representing the ribbon of the Bath. Nothing was forgotten; and a faint attempt was even made to represent the colouring of the viceregal nose, which I am bound to confess was not flattered in the model.

‘Ah, Captain, is it you?’ said Mrs. Paul, with a kind of languishing condescension very different from her ordinary reception of a Castle aide-de-camp. ‘How is his grace this evening?’

Drawing his chair beside her, Phil proceeded to reply to her questions and assure her that whatever her admiration for the duke, the feeling was perfectly mutual. ‘Egad,’ said he, ‘the thing may turn out very ill for me when the duchess finds out that it was all my doing. Speaking in confidence to you, my dear Mrs. Paul, I may confess that although without exception she is the most kind, amiable, excellent soul breathing, yet she has one fault. We all have our faults.’

‘Ah!’ sighed Mrs. Rooney, as she threw down her eyes as though to say, ‘That’s very true, but you will not catch me telling what mine is.’

‘As I was observing, there never was a more estimable being save in this one respect – You guess it? I see you do.’

‘Ah, the creature, she drinks!’

The captain found it not a little difficult to repress a burst of laughter at Mrs. Rooney’s suggestion. He did so, however, and proceeded: ‘No, my dear madam, you mistake. Jealousy is her failing; and when I tell you this, and when I add, that unhappily for her the events of last night may only afford but too much cause, you will comprehend the embarrassment of my present position.’

Having said this, he walked up and down the room for several minutes as if sunk in meditation, while he left Mrs. Rooney to ruminate over an announcement, the bare possibility of which was ecstasy itself. To be the rival of a peeress; that peeress a duchess; that duchess the lady of the viceroy! These were high thoughts indeed. What would Mrs. Riley say now? How would the Maloneys look? Wouldn’t Father Glynn be proud to meet her at the door of Liffey Street Chapel in full pontificals as she drove up, who knows but with a guard of honour beside her? Running on in this way, she had actually got so far as to be discussing with herself what was to be done with Paul – not that her allegiance was shaken towards that excellent individual – not a single unworthy thought crossed her mind – far from it. Poor Mrs. Rooney was purity herself; she merely dreamed of those outward manifestations of the viceroy’s preference, which were to procure for her consideration in the world, a position in society, and those attentions from the hands of the great and the titled, which she esteemed at higher price than the real gifts of health, wealth, and beauty, so bounteously bestowed upon her by Providence.

She had come then to that difficult point in her mind as to what was to be done with Paul; what peculiar course of training could he be submitted to, to make him more presentable in the world; how were they to break him off whisky-and-water and small jokes? Ah,’ she was thinking, ‘it’s very hard to make a real gentleman out of such materials as grog and drab gaiters,’ when suddenly O’Grady, wiping his forehead with his handkerchief, and then flourishing it theatrically in the air, exclaimed —

‘Yes, Mrs. Rooney, everything depends on you. His grace’s visit – I have just been with him talking the whole thing over – must be kept a profound secret. If it ever reach the ears of the duchess we are ruined and undone.’

Here was a total overthrow to all Mrs. Paul’s speculations; here was a beautiful castle uprooted from its very foundation. All her triumph, all her vaunted superiority over her city acquaintances was vanishing like a mirage before her! What was the use of his coming after all? What was the good of it, if not to be spoken of, if not talked over at tea, written of in notes, discussed at dinner, and displayed in the morning papers? Already was her brow contracted, and a slight flush of her cheek showed the wily captain that resistance was in preparation.

‘I know, my dear Mrs. Paul, how gratifying it would be for even the highest of the land to speak of his grace’s condescension in such terms as you might speak; but then, after all, how very fleeting such a triumph! Many would shrug their shoulders, and not believe the story. Some of those who believed would endeavour to account for it as a joke: one of those odd wild fancies the duke is ever so fond of’ – here she reddened deeply. ‘In fact, the malevolence and the envy of the world will give a thousand turns to the circumstance. Besides that, after all, they would seem to have some reason on

their side; for the publicity of the affair must for ever prevent a repetition of the visit; whereas, on the other side, by a little discretion, by guarding our own secret' – here Phil looked knowingly in her eyes, as though to say they had one – 'not only will the duke be delighted to continue his intimacy, but from the absence of all mention of the matter, all display on the subject, the world will be ten times more disposed to give credence to the fact than if it were paraphrased in every newspaper in the kingdom.'

This was hitting the nail on the head with a vengeance. Here was a picture, here a vision of happiness! Only to think of the duke dropping in, as a body might say, to take his bit of dinner, or his dish of tea in the evening, just in a quiet, homely, family way! She thought she saw him sitting with his feet on the fender, talking about the king and the queen, and the rest of the royal family, just as he would of herself and Paul; and her eyes involuntarily turned towards the little bust, and two round full tears of pure joy trickled slowly down her cheeks.

Yielding at length to these and similar arguments, Mrs. Rooney gave in her adhesion, and a treaty was arranged and agreed upon between the high contracting parties, which ran somewhat to this effect: —

In the first place, for the enjoyment of certain advantages to be hereafter more fully set forth, the lady was bound to maintain in all large companies, balls, dinners, drums, and *déjeuners*, a rigid silence regarding the duke's visit to her house, never speaking of, nor alluding to it, in any manner whatever, and, in fact, conducting herself in all respects as if such a thing had never taken place.

Secondly, she was forbidden from making any direct inquiries in public respecting the health of the duke or the duchess, or exercising any overt act of personal interest in these exalted individuals.

Thirdly, so long as Mrs. Rooney strictly maintained the terms of the covenant, nothing in the foregoing was to preclude her from certain other privileges – namely, blushing deeply when the duke's name was mentioned, throwing down her eyes, gently clasping her hands, and even occasionally proceeding to a sigh; neither was she interdicted from regarding any portion of her domicile as particularly sacred in consequence of its viceregal associations. A certain arm-chair might be selected for peculiar honours, and preserved inviolate, etc.

And lastly, nevertheless, notwithstanding that in all large assemblies Mrs. Rooney was to conduct herself with the reserve and restrictions aforesaid, yet in small *réunions de famille*— this O'Grady purposely inserted in French, for, as Mrs. Paul could not confess her ignorance of that language, the interpretation must rest with himself – she was to enjoy a perfect liberty of detailing his grace's advent, entering into all its details, discussing, explaining, expatiating, inquiring with a most minute particularity concerning his health and habits, and, in a word, conducting herself in all respects, to use her own expressive phrase, 'as if they were thick since they were babies.'

Armed with this precious document, formally signed and sealed by both parties, O'Grady took his leave of Mrs. Rooney – not, indeed, in his usual free-and-easy manner, but with the respectful and decorous reserve of one addressing a favourite near the throne. Nothing could be more perfect than Phil's profound obeisance, except perhaps the queenly demeanour of Mrs. Rooney herself; for, with the ready tact of a woman, she caught up in a moment the altered phase of her position, and in the reflective light of O'Grady's manner she learned to appreciate her own brilliancy.

'From this day forward,' muttered O'Grady, as he closed the door behind him and hurried downstairs – 'from this day forward she 'll be greater than ever. Heaven help the lady mayoress that ventures to shake hands with her, and the attorney's wife will be a bold woman that asks her to a tea-party henceforth!'

With these words he threw himself upon his horse and cantered off towards the park to inform the duke that all was happily concluded, and amuse him with a sight of the great Rooney treaty, which he well knew would throw the viceroy into convulsions of laughter.

CHAPTER XII. A WAGER

In a few weeks after the events I have mentioned, the duke left Ireland to resume his parliamentary duties in the House of Lords, where some measure of considerable importance was at that time under discussion. Into the hands of the lords justices, therefore, the government *ad interim* was delivered; while upon Mrs. Paul Rooney devolved the more pleasing task of becoming the leader of fashion, the head and fountain of all the gaities and amusements of the capital. Indeed, O'Grady half hinted that his grace relied upon her to supply his loss, which manifestation of his esteem, so perfectly in accordance with her own wishes, she did not long hesitate to profit by.

Had a stranger, on his first arrival in Dublin, passed along that part of Stephen's Green in which the 'Hotel Rooney,' as it was familiarly called, was situated, he could not have avoided being struck, not only with the appearance of the house itself, but with that of the strange and incongruous assembly of all ranks and conditions of men that lounged about its door. The house, large and spacious, with its windows of plate-glass, its Venetian blinds, its gaudily gilt and painted balcony, and its massive brass knocker, betrayed a certain air of pretension, standing as it did among the more sombre-looking mansions where the real rank of the country resided. Clean windows and a bright knocker, however – distinctive features as they were in the metropolis of those days – would not have arrested the attention of the passing traveller to the extent I have supposed, but that there were other signs and sights than these.

At the open hall door, to which you ascended by a flight of granite steps, lounged some half-dozen servants in powdered heads and gaudy liveries – the venerable porter in his leather chair, the ruddy coachman in his full-bottomed wig, tall footmen with bouquets in their button-holes, were here to be seen reading the morning papers, or leisurely strolling to the steps to take a look at the weather, and cast a supercilious glance at the insignificant tide of population that flowed on beneath them; a lazy and an idle race, they toiled not, neither did they spin, and I sincerely trust that Solomon's costume bore no resemblance to theirs.

More immediately in front of the house stood a mixed society of idlers, beggars, horseboys, and grooms, assembled there from motives of curiosity or gain. Indeed, the rich odour of savoury viands that issued from the open kitchen windows and ascended through the area to the nostrils of those without, might in its appetising steam have brought the dew upon the lips of greater gourmands than they were. All that French cookery could suggest to impart variety to the separate meals of breakfast, luncheon, dinner, and supper, here went forward unceasingly; and the beggars who thronged around the bars, and were fed with the crumbs from the rich man's table, became by degrees so habituated to the delicacies and refinements of good living, that they would have turned up their noses with contempt at the humble and more homely fare of the respectable shopkeeper. Truly, it was a strange picture to see these poor and ragged men as they sat in groups upon the steps and on the bare flagway, exposed to every wind of heaven, the drifting rain soaking through their frail and threadbare garments, yet criticising, with practical acumen, the savoury food before them. Consommés, ragouts, pâtés, potages, jellies, with an infinity of that smaller grapeshot of epicurism with which fine tables are filled, all here met a fair and a candid appreciation.

A little farther off, and towards the middle of the street, stood another order of beings, who, with separate and peculiar privileges, maintained themselves as a class apart; these were the horseboys, half-naked urchins, whose ages varied from eight to fourteen, but whose looks of mingled cunning and drollery would defy any guess as to their time of life, who here sported in all the wild, untrammelled liberty of African savages. The only art they practised was to lead up and down the horses of the various visitors whom the many attractions of the Hotel Rooney brought daily to the house. And here you saw the proud and pampered steed, with fiery eye and swelling nostrils, led about by this ambulating mass of rags and poverty, whose bright eye wandered ever from his own tattered

habiliments to the gorgeous trappings and gold embroidery of the sleek charger beside him. In the midst of these, such as were not yet employed, amused themselves by cutting summersets, standing on their heads, walking crab-fashion, and other classical performances, which form the little distractions of life for this strange sect.

Jaunting-cars there were too, whose numerous fastenings of rope and cordage looked as though they were taken to pieces every night and put together in the morning; while the horse, a care-worn and misanthropic-looking beast, would turn his head sideways over the shaft to give a glance of compassionating scorn at the follies and vanities of a world he was sick of. Not so the driver: equally low in condition, and fully as ragged in coat, the droll spirit that made his birthright was, with him, a lamp that neither poverty nor penury could quench. Ever ready with his joke, never backward with his repartee, prepared to comfort you by assurances of the strength of his car and the goodness of his horse, while his own laughing look gave the lie to his very words, he would persuade you that with him alone there was safety, while it was a risk of life and limb to travel with his rivals.

These formed the ordinary *dramatis persono*, while every now and then some flashy equipage, with armorial bearings and showy liveries, would scatter the crowd right and left, set the led horses lashing among the bystanders, and even break up the decorous conviviality of a dinner-party gracefully disposed upon the flags. Curricles, tandems, tilburies, and dennets were constantly arriving and departing. Members of Daly's with their green coats and buff waistcoats, whiskered dragoons and plumed aides-de-camp, were all mixed up together, while on the open balcony an indiscriminate herd of loungers telegraphed the conversation from the drawing-room to the street, and thus all the *bons mots*, all the jests, all the witticisms that went forward within doors, found also a laughing auditory without; for it is a remarkable feature of this singular country, that there is no turn of expression whose raillery is too delicate, no repartee whose keenness is too fine, for the appreciation of the poorest and meanest creature that walks the street. Poor Paddy, if the more substantial favours of fortune be not your lot, nature has linked you by a strong sympathy with tastes, habits, and usages which, by some singular intuition, you seem thoroughly to comprehend. One cannot dwell long among them without feeling this, and witnessing how generally, how almost universally, poverty of condition and wealth of intellect go hand in hand together; and, as it is only over the bleak and barren surface of some fern-clad heath the wildfire flashes through the gloom of night, so it would seem the more brilliant firework of fancy would need a soil of poverty and privation to produce it.

But, at length, to come back, the Rooneys now were installed as the great people of the capital. Many of the *ancien régime*, who held out sturdily before, and who looked upon the worthy attorney in the light of a usurper, now gave in their allegiance, and regarded him as the true monarch. What his great prototype effected by terror, he brought about by turtle; and, if Napoleon consolidated his empire and propped his throne by the bayonets of the grand army, so did Mr. Rooney establish his claims to power by the more satisfactory arguments which, appealing not only to the head, but to the stomach, convince while they conciliate. You might criticise his courtesy, but you could not condemn his claret. You might dislike his manners, but you could not deny yourself his mutton. Besides, after all, matters took pretty much the same turn in Paris as in Dublin; public opinion ran strong in both cases. The mass of the world consists of those who receive benefits, and he who confers them deserves to be respected. We certainly thought so; and among those of darker hue who frequented Mr. Rooney's table, three red-coats might daily be seen, whose unchanged places, added to their indescribable air of at-homeishness, bespoke them as the friends of the family.

O'Grady, at Mrs. Rooney's right hand, did the honours of the soup; Lord Dudley, at the other end of the table, supported Mr. Rooney, while to my lot Miss Bellew fell. But, as our places at table never changed, there was nothing marked in my thus every day finding myself beside her, and resuming my place on our return to the drawing-room. To me, I confess, she formed the great attraction of the house. Less imbued than my friend O'Grady with the spirit of fun, I could not have gone on from day to day to amuse myself with the eccentricities of the Rooneys, while I could not,

on the other hand, have followed Lord Dudley's lead, and continued to receive the hospitalities of a house while I sneered at the pretensions of its owner.

Under any circumstances Louisa Bellew might be considered a very charming person; but, contrasted with those by whom she was surrounded, her attractions were very great. Indeed, her youth, her light-heartedness, and the buoyancy of her spirit, concealed to a great degree the sorrow it cost her to be associated with her present hosts; for, although they were kind to her, and she felt and acknowledged their kindness, yet the humiliating sense of a position which exposed her to the insolent familiarity of the idle, the dissipated, or the underbred visitors of the house, gradually impressed itself upon her manner, and tempered her mild and graceful nature with a certain air of hauteur and distance. A circumstance, slight in itself, but sufficiently indicative of this, took place some weeks after what I have mentioned.

Lord Dudley de Vere, who, from his rank and condition, was looked upon as a kind of privileged person in the Rooney family, sitting rather later than usual after dinner, and having drunk a great deal of wine, offered a wager that, on his appearance in the drawing-room, not only would he propose for, but be accepted by, any unmarried lady in the room. The puppyism and coxcombry of such a wager might have been pardoned, were it not that the character of the individual, when sober, was in perfect accordance with this drunken boast. The bet, which was for three hundred guineas, was at once taken up; and one of the party running hastily up to the drawing-room, obtained the names of the ladies there, which, being written on slips of paper, were thrown into a hat, thus leaving chance to decide upon whom the happy lot was to fall.

'Mark ye, Upton,' cried Lord Dudley, as he prepared to draw forth his prize – 'mark ye, I didn't say I'd marry her.'

'No, no,' resounded from different parts of the room; 'we understand you perfectly.'

'My bet,' continued he, 'is this: I have booked it.' With these words he opened a small memorandum-book and read forth the following paragraph: – 'Three hundred with Upton that I don't ask and be accepted by any girl in Paul's drawing-room this evening, after tea; the choice to be decided by lottery. Isn't that it?'

'Yes, yes, quite right, perfectly correct,' said several persons round the table. 'Come, my lord, here is the hat.'

'Shake them up well, Upton.'

'So here goes,' said Herbert, as affectedly tucking up the sleeve of his coat, he inserted two fingers and drew forth a small piece of paper carefully folded in two. 'I say, gentlemen, this is your affair; it doesn't concern me.' With these words he threw it carelessly on the table, and resuming his seat, leisurely filled his glass, and sipped his wine.

'Come, read it, Blake; read it up! Who is she?'

'Gently, lads, gently; patience for one moment. How are we to know if the wager be lost or won? Is the lady herself to declare it?'

'Why, if you like it; it is perfectly the same to me.'

'Well, then,' rejoined Blake, 'it is – Miss Bellew!'

No sooner was the name read aloud, than, instead of the roar of laughter which it was expected would follow the announcement, a kind of awkward and constrained silence settled on the party. Mr. Rooney himself, who felt shocked beyond measure at this result, had been so long habituated to regard himself as nothing at the head of his own table, accepting, not dictating, its laws, that, much as he may have wished to do so, did not dare to interfere to stay any further proceedings. But many of those around the table who knew Sir Simon Bellew, and felt how unsuitable and inadmissible such a jest as this would be, if practised upon *his* daughter, whispered among themselves a hope that the wager would be abandoned, and never thought of more by either party.

'Yes, yes,' said Upton, who was an officer in a dragoon regiment, and although of a high family and well connected, was yet very limited in his means. 'Yes, yes, I quite agree. This foolery might be

very good fun with some young ladies we know, but with Miss Bellow the circumstances are quite different; and, for *my* part, I withdraw from the bet.'

'Eh – aw! Pass down the claret, if you please. You withdraw from the bet, then? That means you may pay me three hundred guineas; for d – n me, if I do! No, no; I am not so young as that. I haven't lost fifteen thousand on the Derby without gaining some little insight into these matters. Every bet is a p. p., if not stated to be the reverse. I leave it to any gentleman in the room.'

'Come, come, De Vere,' said one, 'listen to reason, my boy!'

'Yes, Dudley,' cried another, 'only think over the thing. You must see – '

'I only wish to see a cheque for three hundred. And I 'll not be done,'

'Sir!' said Upton, springing from his chair, as the blood mounted to his face and temples, 'did you mean that expression to apply to me?'

'Sit down, Mr. Upton, for the love of Heaven! Sit down; do, sir; his lordship never meant it at all. See, now, I'll pay the money myself. Give me a pen and ink. I'll give you a cheque on the bank this minute. What the devil signifies a trifle like that!' stammered out poor Paul, as he wiped his forehead with his napkin, and looked the very picture of terror. 'Yes, my lord and gentlemen of the jury, we agree to pay the whole costs of this suit.'

A perfect roar of laughter interrupted the worthy attorney, and as it ran from one end of the table to the other, seemed to promise a happier issue to this unpleasant discussion.

'There, now,' said honest Paul, 'the Lord be praised, it is all settled! So let us have another cooper up, and then we 'll join the ladies.'

'Then I understand it thus,' said Lord Dudley: 'you pay the money for Mr. Upton, and I may erase the bet from my book?'

'No, sir!' cried Upton passionately. 'I pay my own wagers; and if you still insist – '

'No, no, no!' cried several voices; while, at the same time, to put an end at once to any further dispute, the party suddenly rose to repair to the drawing-room.

On passing through the hall, chance, or perhaps design, on Lord Dudley's part, brought him beside Upton. 'I wish you to understand, once more,' said he, in a low whisper, 'that I consider this bet to hold.'

'Be it so,' was the brief reply, and they separated.

O'Grady and myself, having dined that day in the country, only arrived in the Rooneys' drawing-room as the dinner-party was entering it. Contrary to their wont, there was less of loud talking, less of uproarious and boisterous mirth, as they came up the stairs, than usual O'Grady remarked this to me afterwards. At the time, however, I paid but little attention to it. The fact was, my thoughts were principally running in another channel. Certain innuendoes of Lord Dudley de Vere, certain broad hints he had ventured upon even before Mrs. Rooney, had left upon my mind a kind of vague, undecided impression that, somehow or other, I was regarded as their dupe. Miss Bellow's manner was certainly more cordial, more kind to me than to any of the others who visited the house. The Rooneys themselves omitted nothing to humour my caprices, and indulge my fancies, affording me, at all times, opportunities of being alone with Louisa, joining in her walks, and accompanying her on horseback. Could there be anything in all this? Was this the quarter in which the mine was to explode? This painful doubt hanging upon my mind I entered the drawing-room.

The drawing-room of 42 Stephen's Green had often afforded me an amusing study. Its strange confusion of ranks and classes; its *mélange* of lordly loungers and city beauties; the discordant tone of conversation, where each person discussed the very thing he knew least of; the blooming daughters of a lady mayoress talking 'fashion and the musical glasses'; while the witless scion of a noble house was endeavouring to pass himself as a sayer of good things. These now, however, afforded me neither interest nor pleasure; bent solely upon one thought, eager alone to ascertain how far Louisa Bellow's manner towards me was the fruit of artifice, or the offspring of an artless and unsuspecting mind, I

left O'Grady to entertain a whole circle of turbaned ladies, while I directed my course towards the little boudoir where Louisa usually sat.

In a house where laxity of etiquette and a freedom of manner prevailed to the extent I have mentioned, Miss Bellow's more cautious and reserved demeanour was anything but popular; and, as there was no lack of beauty, men found it more suitable to their lounging and indolent habits to engage those in conversation who were less *exigeante* in their demands for amusement, and were equally merry themselves, as mercifully disposed when the mirth became not only easy but free.

Miss Bellew, therefore, was permitted to indulge many of her tastes unmolested; and as one of these was to work at embroidery in the small room in question, few persons intruded themselves upon her – and even they but for a short time, as if merely paying their required homage to a member of the family.

As I approached the door of the boudoir, my surprise was not a little to hear Lord Dudley de Vere's voice, the tones of which, though evidently subdued by design, had a clear distinctness that made them perfectly audible where I stood.

'Eh! you can't mean it, though. 'Pon my soul, it is too bad! You know I shall lose my money if you persist.'

'I trust Lord Dudley de Vere is too much of a gentleman to make my unprotected position in this house the subject of an insolent wager. I'm sure nothing in my manner could ever have given encouragement to such a liberty.'

'There, now, I knew you didn't understand it. The whole thing was a chance; the odds were at least eighteen to one against you – ha, ha! I mean in your favour. Devilish good mistake that of mine. They were all shaken up in a hat. You see there was no collusion – could be none.'

'My lord, this impertinence becomes past enduring; and if you persist –'

'Well, then, why not enter into the joke? It'll be a devilish expensive one to me if you don't; that I promise you. What a confounded fool I was not to draw out when Upton wished it! D – n it! I ought to have known there is no trusting to a woman.' As he said this, he walked twice or thrice hurriedly to and fro, muttering as he went, with ill-suppressed passion: 'Laughed at, d – n me! that I shall be, all over the kingdom. To lose the money is bad enough; but the ridicule of the thing, that's the devil! Stay, Miss Bellew, stop one minute; I have another proposition to make. Begad, I see nothing else for it. This, you know, was all a humbug – mere joke, nothing more. Now, I can't stand the way I shall be quizzed about it at all. So, here goes! hang me, if I don't make the proposition in real earnest! There, now, say yes at once, and we 'll see if I can't turn the laugh against them.'

There was a pause for an instant, and then Miss Bellew spoke. I would have given worlds to have seen her at that moment; but the tone of her voice, firm and unshaken, sank deep into my heart.

'My lord,' said she, 'this must now cease; but, as your lordship is fond of a wager, I have one for your acceptance. The sum shall be your own choosing. Whatever it be, I stake it freely, that, as I walk from this room, the first gentleman I meet – you like a chance, my lord, and you shall have one – will chastise you before the world for your unworthy, unmanly insult to a weak and unoffending girl.'

As she spoke, she sprang from the room, her eyes flashing with indignant fire, while her cheek, pale as death, and her heaving bosom, attested how deep was her passion. As she turned the corner of the door, her eyes met mine. In an instant the truth flashed upon her mind. She knew I had overheard all that passed. She gasped painfully for breath; her lips moved with scarce a sound; a violent trembling shook her from head to foot, and she fell fainting to the ground.

I followed her with my eyes as they bore her from the room; and then, without a thought for anything around me, I hurriedly left the room, dashed downstairs, and hastened to my quarters in the Castle.

CHAPTER XIII. A NIGHT OF TROUBLE

Until the moment when I reached the room and threw myself into a chair, my course respecting Lord Dudley de Vere seemed to present not a single difficulty. The appeal so unconsciously made to me by Miss Bellew, not less than my own ardent inclination, decided me on calling him out. No sooner, however, did calm reflection succeed to the passionate excitement of the moment, than at once I perceived the nicety of my position. Under what possible pretext could I avow myself as her champion, not as of her own choosing? for I knew perfectly well that the words she uttered were merely intended as a menace, without the slightest idea of being acted on. To suffer her name, therefore, to transpire in the affair would be to compromise her in the face of the world. Again, the confusion and terror she evinced when she beheld me at the door proved to me that, perhaps of all others, I was the last person she would have wished to have been a witness to the interview.

What was to be done? The very difficulty of the affair only made my determination to go through with it the stronger. I have already said my inclination also prompted me to this course. Lord Dudley's manner to me, without being such as I could make a plea for resenting, had ever been of a supercilious and almost offensive character. If there be anything which more deeply than another wounds our self-esteem, it is the assumed superiority of those whom we heartily despise. More than once he ventured upon hinting at the plans of the Rooneys respecting me, suggesting that their civilities only concealed a deeper object; and all this he did with a tone of half insolence that irritated me ten times more than an open affront. Often and often had I promised myself that a day of retribution must come. Again and again did I lay this comfort to my heart – that, one time or other, his habitual prudence would desert him; that his transgression would exceed the narrow line that separates an impertinent freedom from an insult, and then – Now this time had come at last. Such a chance might not again present itself, and must not be thrown away.

My reasonings had come to this point, when a tremendous knocking at my door, and a loud shout of 'Jack! Jack Hinton!' announced O'Grady. This was fortunate. He was the only man whom I knew well enough to consult in such a matter; and of all others, he was the one on whose advice and counsel I could place implicit reliance.

'What the deuce is all this, my dear Hinton?' said he, as he grasped my hand in both of his. 'I was playing whist with the tabbies when it occurred, and saw nothing of the whole matter. She fainted, didn't she? What the deuce could you have said or done?'

'Could I have said or done! What do you mean, O'Grady?'

'Come, come, be frank with me; what was it? If you are in a scrape, I am not the man to leave you in it.'

'First of all,' said I, assuming with all my might a forced and simulated composure, 'first of all, tell me what you heard in the drawing-room.'

'What I heard? Egad, it was plain enough. In the beginning, a young lady came souse down upon the floor; screams and smelling-bottles followed; a general running hither and thither, in which confusion, by-the-bye, our adversaries contrived to manage a new deal, though I had four by honours in my hand. Old Miss Macan upset my markers, drank my negus, and then fainted off herself, with a face like an apothecary's rose.'

'Yes, yes; but,' said I impatiently, 'what of Miss Bellew?'

'What of her! that you must know best. You know, of course, what occurred between you.'

'My dear O'Grady,' said I, with passionate eagerness, 'do be explicit. What did they say in the drawing-room? What turn has been given to this affair?'

'Faith, I can't tell you; I am as much in the dark as my neighbours. After the lady was carried out and you ran away, they all began talking it over. Some said you had been proposing an elopement: others said you hadn't. The Rileys swore you had asked to have your picture back again; and old

Mrs. Ram, who had planted herself behind a curtain to overhear all, forgot, it seems, that the window was open, and caught such a cold in her head, and such a deafness, that she heard nothing. She says, however, that your conduct was abominable; and in fact, my dear Hinton, the whole thing is a puzzle to us all.'

'And Lord Dudley de Vere,' said I, 'did he offer no explanation?'

'Oh yes, something pretty much in his usual style; pulled up his stock, ran his fingers through his hair, and muttered some indistinct phrases about lovers' quarrels.'

'Capital!' exclaimed I with delight; 'nothing could be better, nothing more fortunate than this! Now, O'Grady, listen to my version of the matter, and then tell me how to proceed in it.'

I here detailed to my friend every circumstance that had occurred from the moment of my entering to my departure from the drawing-room. 'As to the wager,' said I, 'what it was when made, and with whom, I know not.'

'Yes, yes; I know all that,' interrupted O'Grady; 'I have the whole thing perfectly before me. Now let us see what is to be done: and first of all, allow me to ring the bell for some sherry and water – that's the head and front of a consultation.'

When O'Grady had mixed his glass, sipped, corrected, and sipped again, he beat the bars of the grate a few moments contemplatively with the poker, and then turning to me, gravely said: 'We must parade him, Jack, that's certain. Now for the how. Our friend Dudley is not much given to fighting, and it will be rather difficult to obtain his consent. Indeed, if it had not been for the insinuation he threw out, after you had left the room, I don't well see how you could push him to it.'

'Why, my dear O'Grady, wasn't there quite cause enough?'

'Plenty, no doubt, my dear Jack, as far as feeling goes; but there are innumerable cases in this life which, like breaches of trust in law, escape with slight punishment. Not but that, when you owe a man a grudge, you have it always in your power to make him sensible of it; and among gentlemen there is the same intuitive perception of a contemplated collision as you see at a dinner-party, when one fellow puts his hand on a decanter; his friend at the end of the table smiles, and cries, "With pleasure my boy!" There is one thing, however, in your favour.'

'What is that?' said I eagerly.

'Why, he has lost his wager; that's pretty clear; and, as that won't improve his temper, it's possible – mind, I don't say more, but it's possible he may feel better disposed to turn his irritation into valour; a much more common process in metaphysical chemistry than the world wots of. Under these circumstances the best thing to do, as it strikes me, is to try the cause, as our friend Paul would say, on the general issue; that is, to wait on Herbert; tell him we wish to have a meeting; that, after what has passed – that 's a sweet phrase isn't it? and has got more gentlemen carried home on a door than any other I know – that after what has passed, the thing is unavoidable, and the sooner it comes off the better. He can't help referring me to a friend, and he can scarcely find any one that won't see the thing with our eyes. It's quite clear Miss Bellow's name must be kept out of the matter; and now, my boy, if you agree with me, leave the whole affair in my hands, tumble into bed, and go to sleep as fast as you can.'

'I leave it all to you, Phil,' said I, shaking his hand warmly, 'and to prove my obedience, I'll be in bed in ten minutes.'

O'Grady finished the decanter of sherry, buttoned up his coat, and slapping his boots with his cane, sauntered downstairs, whistling an Irish quick step as he went.

When I had half accomplished my undressing, I sat down before the fire, and, unconsciously to myself, fell into a train of musing about my present condition. I was very young; knew little of the world: the very character of my education had been so much under the eye and direction of my mother, that my knowledge was even less than that of the generality of young men of my own time of life. It is not surprising, then, if the events which my new career hurried so rapidly one upon another, in some measure confused me. Of duelling I had, of course, heard repeatedly, and had learned to

look upon the necessity of it as more or less imperative upon every man in the outset of his career. Such was, in a great measure, the tone of the day; and the man who attained a certain period of life, without having had at least one affair of honour, was rather suspected of using a degree of prudent caution in his conduct with the world than of following the popular maxim of the period, which said, 'Be always ready with the pistol.'

The affair with Lord De Vere, therefore, I looked upon rather as a lucky hit; I might as well make my *début* with him as with any other. So much, then, for the prejudice of the period. Now, for my private feelings on the subject, they were, I confess, anything but satisfactory. Without at all entering into any anticipation I might have felt as to the final result, I could not avoid feeling ashamed of myself for my total ignorance about the whole matter; not only, as I have said, had I never seen a duel, but I never had fired a pistol twice in my life. I was naturally a nervous fellow, and the very idea of firing at a word, would, I knew, render me more so. My dread that the peculiarity of my constitution might be construed into want of courage, increased my irritability; while I felt that my endeavour to acquit myself with all the etiquette and punctilio of the occasion would inevitably lead me to the commission of some mistake or blunder.

And then, as to my friends at home, what would my father say? His notions on the subject I knew were very rigid, and only admitted the necessity of an appeal to arms as the very last resort. What account could I give him, sufficiently satisfactory, of my reasons for going out? How would my mother feel, with all her aristocratic prejudices, when she heard of the society where the affair originated, when some glowing description of the Rooneys should reach her? and this some kind friend or other was certain to undertake. And, worse than all, Lady Julia, my high-born cousin, whose beauty and sarcasm had inspired me with a mixture of admiration and dread – how should I ever bear the satirical turn she would give the whole affair? Her malice would be increased by the fact that a young and pretty girl was mixed up in it; for somehow, I must confess, a kind of half-flirtation had always subsisted between my cousin and me. Her beauty, her wit, her fascinating manner, rendered me at times over head and ears in love with her; while, at others, the indifference of her manner towards me, or, still worse, the ridicule to which she exposed me, would break the spell and dissipate the enchantment.

Thoughts like these were far from assuring me, and contributed but little towards that confidence in myself I stood so much in need of. And, again, what if I were to fall? As this thought settled on my mind, I resolved to write home. Not to my father, however: I felt a kind of constraint about unburdening myself to him at such a moment. My mother was equally out of the question; in fact, a letter to her could only be an apologetic narrative of my life in Ireland – softening down what she would call the atrocities of my associates, and giving a kind of Rembrandt tint to the Rooneys, which might conceal the more vivid colouring of their vulgarity. At such a moment I had no heart for this: such trifling would ill suit me now. To Lady Julia, then, I determined to write: she knew me well. Besides, I felt that, when I was no more, the kindness of her nature would prevail, and she would remember me but as the little lover that brought her bouquets from the conservatory; who wrote letters to her from Eton; who wore her picture round his neck at Sandhurst, and, by-the-bye, that picture I had still in my possession: this was the time to restore it. I opened my writing-desk and took it out. It was a strange love-gift, painted when she was barely ten years old. It represented a very lovely child, with blue eyes, and a singular regularity of feature, like a Grecian statue. The intensity of look that after years developed more fully, and the slight curl of the lip that betrayed the incipient spirit of mockery, were both there; still was she very beautiful I placed the miniature before me and fixed my eyes upon it. Carried away by the illusion of the moment, I burst into a rhapsody of proffered affection, while I vindicated myself against any imputation my intimacy with Miss Bellew might give rise to. As I proceeded, however, I discovered that my pleading scarce established my innocence even to myself; so I turned away, and once more sat down moodily before the fire.

The Castle clock struck two. I started up, somewhat ashamed of myself at not having complied with O'Grady's advice, and at once threw myself on my bed, and fell sound asleep. Some confused impression upon my mind of a threatened calamity gave a gloomy character to all my dreams, and more than once I awoke with a sudden start and looked about me. The flickering and uncertain glare of the dying embers threw strange goblin shapes upon the wall and on the old oak floor. The window-curtains waved mournfully to and fro, as the sighing night wind pierced the openings of the worn casements, adding, by some unknown sympathy, to my gloom and depression; and although I quickly rallied myself from these foolish fancies, and again sank into slumber, it was always again to wake with the same unpleasant impressions, and with the same sights and sounds about me. Towards morning, however, I fell into a deep, unbroken sleep, from which I was awakened by the noise of some one rudely drawing my curtains. I looked up, as I rubbed my eyes: it was Corny Delany, who, with a mahogany box under his arm, and a little bag in his hand, stood eyeing me with a look, in which his habitual ill-temper was dashed with a slight mixture of scorn and pity.

'So you are awake at last!' said he; "faith, and you sleep sound, and" – this he muttered between his teeth – 'and maybe it's sounder you'll sleep to-morrow night! The Captain bid me call you at seven o'clock, and it's near eight now. That blaguard of a servant of yours wouldn't get up to open the door till I made a cry of fire outside, and puffed a few mouthfuls of smoke through the keyhole!'

'Well done, Corny! But where's the Captain?' 'Where is he? Sorrow one o'me knows! Maybe at the watch-house, maybe in George's Street barrack, maybe in the streets, maybe – Och, troth! there's many a place he might be, and good enough for him any of them. Them's the tools, well oiled; I put flints in them.'

'And what have you got in the bag, Corny?'

'Maybe you'll see time enough. It's the lint, the sticking-plaster and the bandages, and the turn-an'-twist.' This, be it known, was the Delany for tourniquet. 'And, 'faith, it's a queer use to put the same bag to; his honour the judge had it made to carry his notes in. Ugh, ugh, ugh! a bloody little bag it always was! Many's the time I seen the poor craytures in the dock have to hould on by the spikes, when they'd see him put his hands in it! It's not lucky, the same bag! Will you have some brandy-and-water, and a bit of dry toast? It's what the Captain always gives them the first time they go out. When they're used to it, a cup of chocolate with a spoonful of whisky is a fine thing for the hand.'

I could scarce restrain a smile at the notion of dieting a man for a duel, though, I confess, there seemed something excessively bloodthirsty about it. However, resolved to give Corny a favourable impression of my coolness, I said, 'Let me have the chocolate and a couple of eggs.'

He gave a grin a demon might have envied, as he muttered to himself, 'He wants to try and die game, ugh, ugh!' With these words he waddled out of the room to prepare my breakfast, his alacrity certainly increased by the circumstance in which he was employed.

No sooner was I alone than I opened the pistol-case to examine the weapons. They were, doubtless, good ones; but a ruder, more ill-fashioned, clumsy pair it would be impossible to conceive. The stock, which extended nearly to the end of the barrel, was notched with grooves for the fingers to fit in, the whole terminating in an uncouth knob, inlaid with small pieces of silver, which at first I imagined were purely ornamental. On looking closer, however, I perceived that each of them contained a name and a date, with an ominous phrase beneath, which ran thus: 'Killed!' or thus: 'Wounded!'

'Egad,' thought I, 'they are certainly the coolest people in the world in this island, and have the strangest notions withal of cheering a man's courage!'

It was growing late, meanwhile; so that without further loss of time I sprang out of bed, and set about dressing, huddling my papers and Julia's portrait into my writing-desk. I threw into the fire a few letters, and was looking about my room lest anything should have escaped me, when suddenly the quick movement of horses' feet on the pavement beneath drew me to the window. As I looked out, I could just catch a glimpse of O'Grady's figure as he sprang from a high tandem; I then heard his foot as he mounted the stairs, and the next moment he was knocking at my door. 'Holloa!' cried

he, 'by Jove, I have had a night of it! Help me off with the coat, Jack, and order breakfast, with any number of mutton-chops you please; I never felt so voracious in my life. Early rising must be a bad thing for the health, if it makes a man's appetite so painful.'

While I was giving my necessary directions, O'Grady stirred up the fire, drew his chair close to it, and planting his feet upon the fender, and expanding his hands before the blaze, called out —

'Yes, yes, quite right — cold ham and a devilled drumstick by all means; the mulled claret must have nothing but cloves and a slice of pine-apple in it; and, mind, don't let them fry the kidneys in champagne; they are fifty times better in moselle: we'll have the champagne *au naturel*, There, now, shut the door; there's a confounded current of air comes up that cold staircase. So, come over, my boy; let me give you all the news, and to begin: —

'After I parted with you, I went over to De Vere's quarters, and heard that he had just changed his clothes and driven over to Clare Street. I followed immediately; but, as ill-luck would have it, he left that just five minutes before, with Watson of the Fifth, who lives in one of the hotels near. This, you know, looked like business; and, as they told me they were to be back in half an hour, I cut into a rubber of whist with Darcy and the rest of them, where, what between losing heavily, and waiting for those fellows, I never got up till half-past four; when I did, it was minus Paul's cheque, all the loose cash about me, and a bill for one hundred and thirty to Vaughan. Pleasant, all that wasn't it? Monk, who took my place, told me that Herbert and Watson were gone out together to the park, where I should certainly find them. Off, then, I set for the Phoenix, and, just as I was entering the gate of the Lodge, a chaise covered with portmanteaus and hat-boxes drove past me. I had just time to catch a glimpse of De Vere's face as the light fell suddenly upon it; I turned as quickly as possible, and gave chase down Barrack Street. We flew, he leading, and I endeavouring to keep up; but my poor hack was so done up, between waiting at the club and the sharp drive, that I found we couldn't keep up the pace. Fortunately, however, a string of coal-cars blocked up Essex Bridge, upon which my friend came to a check, and I also. I jumped out immediately, and running forward, just got up in the nick, as they were once more about to move forward, "Ah, Dudley," cried I, "I've had a sharp run for it, but by good fortune have found you at last" I wish you had seen his face as I said these words; he leaned forward in the carriage, so as completely to prevent Watson, who was with him, overhearing what passed?

"May I ask," said he, endeavouring to get up a little of his habitual coolness; "may I ask, what so very pressing has sent you in pursuit of me?"

"Nothing which should cause your present uneasiness," replied I, in a tone and a look he could not mistake.

"Eh — aw! don't take you exactly; anything gone wrong?"

"You've a capital memory, my lord, when it suits you; pray call it to your aid for a few moments, and it will save us both a deal of trouble. My business with you is on the part of Mr. Hinton, and I have to request you will, at once, refer me to a friend."

"Eh! you want to fight? Is that it? I say, Watson, they want to make a quarrel out of that foolish affair I told you of."

"Is Major Watson your friend on this occasion, my lord?"

"No; oh no; that is, I didn't say — I told Watson how they walked into me for three hundred at Rooney's. Must confess I deserved it richly for dining among such a set of fellows; and, as I have paid the money and cut the whole concern, I don't see what more's expected of me."

"We have very little expectation, my lord, but a slight hope, that you'll not disgrace the cloth you wear and the profession you follow."

"I say, Watson, do you think I ought to take notice of these words?"

"Would your lordship like them stronger?"

"One moment, if you please, Captain O'Grady," said Major Watson, as, opening the door of the chaise, he sprang out. "Lord Dudley de Vere has detailed to me, and of course correctly, the

whole of his last night's proceedings. He has expressed himself as ready and anxious to apologise to your friend for any offence he may have given him – in fact, that their families are in some way connected, and any falling out would be a very unhappy thing between them; and, last of all, Lord Dudley has resigned his appointment as aide-de-camp, and resolved on leaving Ireland; in two hours more he will sail from this. So I trust, that under every circumstance, you will see the propriety of not pressing the affair any further.”

“With the apology – ”

“That» of course,” said Watson.

“I say,” cried Herbert, “we shall be late at the Pigeon-house; it’s half-past seven.”

‘Watson whispered a few words into his ear; he was silent for a second, and a slight crimson flush settled on his cheek.

“It won’t do for me if they talk of this afterwards; but tell him – I mean Hinton – that I am sorry; that is, I wish him to forgive – ”

“There, there,” said I impatiently, “drive on! that is quite enough!”

‘The next moment the chaise was out of sight, and I leaned against the balustrade of the bridge, with a sick feeling at my heart I never felt before. Vaughan came by at the moment with his tandem, so I made him turn about and set me down; and here I am, my boy, now that my qualmishness has passed off, ready to eat you out of house and home, if the means would only present themselves.’

Here ended O’Grady’s narrative, and as breakfast very shortly after made its appearance, our conversation dropped into broken, disjointed sentences; the burden of which, on his part, was that, although no man would deserve more gratitude from the household and the garrison generally than myself for being the means of exporting Lord De Vere, yet that under every view of the case all effort should be made to prevent publicity, and stop the current of scandal such an event was calculated to give rise to in the city.

‘No fear of that, I hope,’ said I.

‘Every fear, my dear boy. We live in a village here: every man hears his friend’s watch tick, and every lady knows what her neighbour paid for her paste diamonds. However, be comforted! your reputation will scarcely stretch across the Channel; and one’s notoriety must have strong claims before it pass the custom-house at Liverpool.’

‘Well, that is something; but hang it, O’Grady, I wish I had had a shot at him.’

‘Of course you do: nothing more natural, and at the same time, if you care for the lady, nothing more *mal à propos*. Do what you will, her name will be mixed up in the matter; but had it gone further she must have been deeply compromised between you. You are too young, Jack, to understand much of this; but take my word for it – fight about your sister, your aunt, your maternal grandmother, if you like, but never for the girl you are about to marry. It involves a false position to both her and yourself. And now that I am giving advice, just give me another cutlet. I say, Corny, any hot potatoes?’

‘Thim was hot awhile ago,’ said Corny, without taking his hands from his pockets.

‘Well, it is pleasant to know even that. Put that pistol-case back again. Ah! there goes Vaughan; I want a word with him.’

So saying, he sprang up, and hastened downstairs.

‘What did he say I was to do with the pistols?’ said Corny, as he polished the case with the ample cuff of his coat.

‘You are to put them by: we shan’t want them this morning.’

‘And there is to be no devil after all,’ said he with a most fiendish grin. ‘Ugh, ugh! didn’t I know it? Ye’s come from the wrong side of the water for that. It’s little powder ye blaze, for all your talking.’

Taking out one of the pistols as he spoke, he examined the lock for a few minutes patiently, and then muttered to himself: ‘Wasn’t I right to put in the ould flints? The devil a more ye ‘d he doing I guessed nor making a flash in the pan!’

It was rather difficult, even with every allowance for Mr. Delany's temper, to submit to his insolence patiently. After all, there was nothing better to be done; for Corny was even greater in reply than attack, and any rejoinder on my part would unquestionably have made me fare the worse. Endeavouring, therefore, to hum a tune, I strolled to the window and looked out; while the imperturbable Corny, opening the opposite sash, squibbed off both pistols previous to replacing them in the box.

I cannot say what it was in the gesture and the action of this little fiend; but somehow the air of absurdity thus thrown over our quarrel by this ludicrous termination hurt me deeply; and Corny's face as he snapped the trigger was a direct insult. All my self-respect, all my self-approval gave way in a moment, and I could think of nothing but cross Corny's commentary on my courage.

'Yes,' said I, half aloud, 'it is a confounded country! If for nothing else, that every class and condition of man thinks himself capable to pronounce upon his neighbour. Hard drink and duelling are the national péñates; and Heaven help him who does not adopt the religion of the land! My English servant would as soon have thought of criticising a chorus of Euripides as my conduct; and yet this little wretch not only does so, but does it to my face, superadding a sneer upon my country!'

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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