

**LEVER
CHARLES
JAMES**

ROLAND CASHEL,
VOLUME I (OF II)

Charles Lever
Roland Cashel, Volume I (of II)

*http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=25451172
Roland Cashel, Volume I (of II):*

Содержание

PREFACE	5
CHAPTER I. DON PEDRO'S GUESTS	10
CHAPTER II. A CHALLENGE – AND HOW IT ENDED	25
CHAPTER III. MR. SIMMS ON LIFE AT THE VILLA	49
CHAPTER IV. THE KENNYFECK HOUSEHOLD	58
CHAPTER V. HOW ROLAND BECAME ENTITLED TO THE GODFREY BROWNE PROPERTY	67
CHAPTER VI. A FRACAS IN THE BETTING-RING	73
CHAPTER VII. PEEPS BEHIND THE CURTAIN	94
CHAPTER VIII. LOVE v. LAW	105
CHAPTER IX. AN EXCITING ADVENTURE	124
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	139

Charles James Lever

Roland Cashel,

Volume I (of II)

To G. P. B. JAMES, Esq.

Dear James, – You, once upon a time, dedicated to me a tale of deep and thrilling interest Let me now inscribe to you this volume on the plea of that classic authority who, in the interchange of armour, “gave Brass for Gold.”

It is, however, far less to repay the obligation of a debt by giving you a “Roland” – not for your “Oliver,” but your “Stepmother” – than for the pleasure of recording one “Fact” in a bulky tome of Fiction, that I now write your name at the head of this page, – that fact being, the warm memory I cherish of all our pleasant hours of intercourse, and the sincere value I place upon the honor of your friendship.

Yours, in all esteem and affection,

CHARLES LEVER.

Palazzo Ximenes, Florence, Oct 20, 1849.

PREFACE

I first thought of this story – I should say I planned it, if the expression were not misleading – when living at the Lake of Como. There, in a lovely little villa – the “Cima” – on the border of the lake, with that glorious blending of Alpine scenery and garden-like luxuriance around me, and little or none of interruption or intercourse, I had abundant time to make acquaintance with my characters and follow them into innumerable situations, and through adventures far more extraordinary and exciting than I dared afterwards to recount.

I do not know how it may be with other story-tellers, but I have to own for myself that the personages of a novel gain over at times a degree of interest very little inferior to that inspired by living and real people, and that this is especially the case when I have found myself in some secluded spot and seeing little of the world. To such an ascendancy has this deception attained, that more than once I have found myself trying to explain why this person should have done that, and by what impulse that other was led into something else. In fact, I have found that there are conditions of the mind in which purely imaginary creations assume the characters of actual people, and act positively as though they were independent of the will that invented them.

Of the strange manner in which imagination can thus assume the mastery, and for a while at least have command over the

mind, I cannot give a stronger instance within my own experience than the mode in which this story was first conceived.

When I began I intended that the action should be carried on in the land where the tale opened. The scene on every side of me had shed its influence, the air was weighty with the perfume of the lime and the orange. To days of dazzling brilliancy there succeeded nights of tropical splendor; with stars of almost preternatural magnitude streaking the calm lake with long lines of light. To people a scene like this with the sort of characters that might befit it, was rather a matter of necessity with me than choice, and it was then that Maritaña revealed herself to me with a charm of loveliness I have never been able to repicture. It was there I bethought me of those passionate natures in which climate and soil and vegetation reproduce themselves, glowing, ardent, and voluptuous as they are. It was there my fancy loved to stray among the changeful incidents of lives of wild adventure and wilder passion; and to imagine the strange discords that could be evoked between the traits of a land that recalled Paradise and the natures that were only angelic in the fall.

I cannot trust to my memory to remind me of the sort of tale I meant to write. I know there was to have been a perfect avalanche of adventure on land and on sea. I know that through a stormy period of daily peril and excitement, the traits of the Northern temperament in Roland himself were to have asserted their superiority over his more impulsive comrades; I know he was to have won that girl's love against a rivalry that set life in

the issue; and I have a vague impression of how such a character might come by action and experience to develop such traits as make men the rulers of their fellows.

Several of the situations occur to me, but not a single clew to the story. There are even now scenes before me of prairie life and lonely rides in passes of the Pampas; of homes where the civilized man had never seen a brother nor heard a native tongue. It is in vain I endeavor to recall anything like a connected narrative. All that I can well remember is the great hold the characters had taken in my mind; how they peopled the landscape around me, and followed me wherever I went.

This was in autumn. As winter drew nigh we moved into an Italian city, much frequented by foreigners, and especially the resort of our countrymen. The new life of this place and the interest they excited, so totally unlike all that I had left at my little villa, effected a complete revolution in my thoughts, utterly routing the belief I had indulged in as to the characters of my story, and the incidents in which they displayed themselves. Up to this all my efforts had been, as it were, to refresh my mind as to a variety of events and people I had once known, and to try if I could not recall certain situations which had interested me. Now the spell was broken, all the charm of the illusion gone, and I awoke to the dreary consciousness of my creatures being mere shadows, and their actions as unreal as themselves.

There is a sort of intellectual bankruptcy in such awakenings; and I know of few things so discouraging as this sudden revulsion

from dream-land to the cold *terra firma* of unadorned fact.

There was little in the city we now lived in to harmonize with “romance.” It was, in fact, all that realism could accomplish with the aids of every taste and passion of modern society. That this life of present-day dissipation should be enacted in scenes where every palace and every street, every monument, and indeed every name recalled a glorious past, may not impossibly have heightened the enjoyment of the drama, but most unquestionably it vulgarized the actors.

Instead of the Orinoco and its lands of feathery palms, I had now before me the Arno and its gay crowds of loungers, the endless tide of equipages, and the strong pulse-beat of an existence that even, in the highways of life, denotes passion and emotion.

What I had of a plan was lost to me from that hour. I was again in the whirlpool of active existence, and the world around me was deep – triple deep – in all cases of loving and hating, and plotting and gambling, of intriguing, countermining, and betraying, as very polite people would know how to do: occupations to watch, which inspire an intensity of interest unknown in any other condition of existence.

Out of these impressions thus enforced came all the characters of my story. Not one was a portrait, though in each and all were traits taken from life. If I suffered myself on one single occasion to amass too many of the characteristics of an individual into a sketch, it was in the picture of the beau of Drumcondra; but

there I was drawing from recollection and not able to correct, as I should otherwise have done, what might seem too close adherence to a model. I have been told that in the character of Linton I have exaggerated wickedness beyond all belief. I am sorry to reply that I made but a faint copy of him who suggested that personage, and who lives and walks the stage of life as I write. One or two persons – not more – who know him whose traits furnished the picture, are well aware that I have neither overdrawn my sketch, nor exaggerated my drawing.

The Kennyfeck young ladies – I am anxious to say – are not from life, nor is Lady Kilgoff, though I have heard surmises to the contrary.

These are all the explanations and excuses that occur to me I have to make of this story. Its graver faults are not within the pale of apology; and for these I only ask indulgence, – the same indulgence that has never been denied me.

CHARLES LEVER.

Trieste, 1872.

CHAPTER I. DON PEDRO'S GUESTS

And thus they lived ye merrie yeare,
For they were a jollie crewe
Of pleasante laddes that knewe no feare,
And – as little of honestie too.

Ballade of Capt. Pike.

Our tale opens on a gorgeous night of Midsummer, at an era so little remote that to name the precise year could have no interest for the reader, and in a region which seemed to combine all that is delightful in climate with whatever is luxuriant and splendid in vegetation. It was upon the bank of a small river, a tributary of the Oronoco, not very distant from the picturesque city of Barcelonetta, that a beautiful villa stood, the elegance of whose architecture and the lavish magnificence of whose decorations were alike evidence that neither taste nor wealth were wanting to its proprietor.

In this land, where Nature had been so prodigal of her gifts, the luxurious appointments of this princely abode seemed to partake of the character of a fairy palace; and the admixture of objects of high art, the treasures of Italian galleries and Spanish collections, with the more vivid realities of the scene, favored this

illusion. The fortunate owner of this paradise was a certain Pedro Rica, who, for something like fourteen years, had been a resident of Columbia. A widower, with an only child, then an infant of scarce a year old, he had arrived in that country, seeking, as he said, by new scenes and new associations, to erase, so far as might be, the painful memory of his late bereavement.

While he gave it to be understood that he was a Spaniard by birth, some averred that he was a Mexican; others, that he was a Texan; and one or two alleged that he was an American of the States, – an assumption that the ease and fluency of his English went far to corroborate. Of whatever nation he came, certain it is that a mystery hung over both his native land and his history; and as he showed little disposition to enlighten the world on these subjects, as is usual in such cases, his neighbors took their revenge by inventing a hundred stories about him, each one only worse than the other. At one time it was said that his wealth was acquired by piracy; at another, that he absconded from a Texan city, with a large sum belonging to the government; forgery, breach of trust, were among the commonest allegations; and the most charitable only averred that he made his money in the slave-trade.

It is but fair to say that the sole foundation for these various rumors lay in the stern distance of his manner, and the cold, almost repulsive, austerity with which he declined all acquaintance with the neighborhood. These traits, added to the voluptuous splendor of a retinue and a style of living infinitely

above all around, gradually estranged from him the few who attempted to form an intimacy, and left him to live – as it seemed he preferred – a life of solitary magnificence; an object of affected pity to many, but of real envy to all.

As his daughter grew up, he was accustomed to visit the sea-coast each summer for some weeks, and from these absences he now usually returned with one or two acquaintances, for the most part officers of the Columbian navy, with whom he had formed an intimacy at the seaside. Such acquaintanceship seemed to increase from year to year, till at last each autumn saw the “Villa de las Noches Entretenidas,” “of the pleasant nights” crowded with guests, whose wild orgies were in strange contrast to the former stillness and quietude within those walls.

A more motley and discordant assemblage it would be hard to conceive, consisting as they did of adventurers from every land of Europe, – the wild and reckless outcast of every clime and country, the beggared speculator, the ruined gambler, the duellist with blood upon his hand, the defaulter with shame upon his forehead; all that good morals reject, and the law pursues, mingled with others whose faults went no further than waste or improvidence, or the more venial sin that they came poor into the world, and were stamped “Adventurers” from the cradle.

A service that never exercised too nice a scrutiny into the habits of its followers, and whose buccaneer life had all the freedom of piracy, with the assumption of a recognized class, offered no mean attraction to the lover of enterprise; and

certainly, if the standard of morals was low, that of daring, reckless adventure was the very opposite.

Amid this pleasant company we must now ask pardon for introducing our reader, with this saving assurance, that he shall not have long to commune with such companionship. It was, as we have said, a summer's night. A sky all glittering with stars spread its dark blue canopy over a scene where, amid the banana, the manioc, and the plantain, flowers of every bright hue were blooming, and fountains gushing; while, through an atmosphere tremulous with the song of the mocking-bird, fire-flies were glancing and glittering.

In the deep piazza before the villa was now assembled a numerous party of men disposed in every attitude of lounging, ease, and abandonment; they seemed, though perhaps after very different estimates, to be enjoying the delicious balm and freshness of the night air. They were of various ages; and although the greater number showed by their dress that they belonged to the naval service, other signs, not less distinctive, pronounced that they were drawn from classes of life as varied as they were numerous; while, here and there, a caballero might be seen attired in the picturesque costume of the Caraccas, his many colored scarf and plumed hat aiding, in no inconsiderable degree, the picturesque effect of a scene Salvator might have painted.

Not only beneath the piazza itself, but on the marble steps, and even beneath them again, on the close-shaven turf, the party lay, sated as it were with splendor, and recruiting strength for new

dissipations. Some sat talking in low and whispering voices, as if unwilling, even by a sound, to break the stilly calm. Others, in perfect silence, seemed to drink in the soothing influence of that tranquil moment, or smoked the cigarettos in dreamy indolence; while at intervals, from the leafy groves, a merry laugh, or the tinkling of a guitar, would mingle with the bubbling murmur of the fountains, making the very stillness yet more still as they ceased. Behind the piazza, and opening by several large windows upon it, could be seen a splendid saloon, resplendent with wax-lights, and still displaying on the loaded table the remnants of a sumptuous repast, amid which vessels of gold and vases of flowers appeared. Here, yet lingered two or three guests, – spirits who set no store on an entertainment if it did not degenerate into debauch.

A broad alley, flanked by tall hedges of the prickly pear, led from the villa to a little mound, on which a chestnut-tree stood, the patriarch of the wood; a splendid tree it was, and worthy of a better destiny than it now fulfilled, as, lighted up by several lanterns suspended from the branches, it spread its shade over a large table where a party were playing at “Monte.”

Even without the suggestive aid of the large heaps of gold beside each player, and piled in the middle of the table, the grave and steadfast faces of some, the excited look of others, and the painful intensity of interest in all, showed that the play was high. Still, although such was the case, and while the players were men whose hot blood and reckless lives did but little dispose them to

put the curb upon their tempers, not a word was spoken aloud; nor did a gesture or a look betray the terrible vacillations of hope and fear the changeful fortune of the game engendered. Standing near the table, but not mingling in the play, stood Don Pedro himself, his sallow and melancholy features fixed upon the game, with an expression that might mean sorrow or deep anxiety, it were difficult to say which.

Beside him, at a small table littered with papers and writing materials, sat his steward, or intendant, a German named Geizheimer, a beetle-browed, white-cheeked, thick-lipped fellow, whose aquiline features and guttural accents told that lending money at enormous interest was no uncongenial occupation. Such was his present, and indeed almost his only duty; for, while Don Pedro seldom or never played, gaming was the invariable occupation of the guests, whose means to support it were freely supplied by the steward; the borrowers either passing a simple note for repayment, or, when the sum was a heavy one, mortgaging their share in the next prize they should capture. Other contracts, it was rumored, were occasionally resorted to, but of such we shall speak anon.

At a short distance from the table, but sufficiently near to observe the game, stood one on whom nothing short of the passion of play could have prevented every eye being bent. But so it was; she stood alone and unmarked, while all the interest was concentrated upon the game. Dressed in a white tunic, or chemise, fastened round the waist by a gold girdle, stood

Maritaña Rica, her large and lustrous black eyes eagerly turned to where two youths were standing intensely occupied by the play. Her neck, arms, and shoulders were bare, in Mexican fashion, and even the mantilla she wore over her head was less as a protection than as a necessary accompaniment of a costume which certainly is of the simplest kind. Except the chemise, she had no other garment, save a jupe of thin lama-wool, beautifully embroidered and studded with precious stones; this terminated below the middle of the leg, displaying an ankle and foot no Grecian statue ever surpassed in beauty.

If the deep brown of her skin almost conveyed the reproach – and such it is – of Indian blood, a passing glance at the delicate outline of her features, and, in particular, of her mouth, at once contradicted the suspicion. The lips were beautifully arched, and, although plump and rounded, had none of the fulness of the degraded race. These were now slightly parted, displaying teeth of surprising whiteness, and imparting in the whole expression a character of speaking animation. Although not yet sixteen, her figure had all the graceful development of womanhood, without having entirely lost a certain air of fawn-like elasticity, which, from time to time, her gestures of impatience displayed.

The two young men on whom her interest seemed fixed, were playing in partnership, and, in their highly wrought passion, never once looked up from the board. One, somewhat taller and older by a few years, appeared to exercise the guidance of their play; and it was easy to see, in the swollen and knotted veins of his

forehead, in the clinched hands, and in the tremulous lip, the passionate nature of a confirmed gambler. The younger, whose dress of green velvet, slashed and braided in Mexican taste, and whose wide-leaved sombrero was decorated with a long sash of light blue silk, whose deep gold fringe hung upon his shoulder, was evidently one less enamoured of play, and more than once busied himself in arranging the details of his costume, of which he seemed somewhat vain. It was in one of these moments that his eyes met those of Maritaña fixed steadfastly upon him, and, fascinated by her unmoved stare, he felt his cheek grow hot, and, whether from a sense of shame or a still more tender motive, the blush spread over his face and forehead. Maritaña looked steadily, almost sternly, at him, and then, with a slight toss of her head, so slight that none save he who had watched her intently could read its scornful import, she turned away. The youth did not wait a moment, but, slipping from his place, followed along the alley he had seen her take.

He who remained, unconscious of his friend's departure, continued to mutter about the chances of the game, and speculate on the amount he would dare to hazard. "She is against us every time, Roland!" said he, in a low, half-whispering voice. "Fortune will not smile, woo her how we may! Speak, *amigo mio*, shall we risk all?" As he spoke, he began counting the piles of glittering gold before him, but his hand trembled, and the pieces clung to his moist fingers, so that he was too late for the deal.

"Sixteen hundred," muttered he to himself. "Ten – twenty –

thirty.”

“The bank loses!” cried the croupier, announcing the game.

“Loses!” screamed the young man, in an accent whose piercing agony startled the whole board, – “loses! because it was the only time I had no wager. See, Roland, see how true it is, there is a curse upon us.” He seized the arm of the person at his side, and clinched it with a convulsive energy as he spoke.

“*Saperlote!* my young friend; you ‘ll never change luck by tearing my old uniform,” growled out a rugged-looking German skipper, who, commanding a small privateer, affected the rank and style of a naval officer.

“Oh, is it you, Hans?” said the youth, carelessly; “I thought it had been one of our own fellows. Only think the bank should lose, because I made no stake; see now, watch this. Halt!” cried he to the dealer, in a voice that at once arrested his hand. “You give one no time, sir, to decide upon his game,” said he, with a savage irascibility, which continued bad luck had carried to the highest pitch. “Players who risk their two or three crowns may not object; but, if a man desires to make a heavy stake; it is but common courtesy to wait a moment. A thousand doubloons, the red queen – fifteen hundred,” added he, quickly, – “fifteen, and thirty-five – or eight.” So saying, he pushed with both hands the great heap of gold pieces into the middle of the table; and then, with eyes bloodshot and glaring, he watched each card that fell from the banker’s fingers. When the first row of cards were dealt, all was in his favor, and, as the banker took up the second

pack, a long-suppressed sigh broke from the gambler's bosom. It seemed, at length, as if fortune had grown weary of persecuting him.

"Come, Enrique," said a handsomely dressed and fine-looking man, who stood opposite to him, "luck has turned at last; there is nothing but the queen of spades against you!"

As if by some magic spell he had called the card, the words were not out when it dropped upon the table. A cry of mingled amazement and horror burst from the players, whose natures would seem to recognize some superstitious influence in such marked casualties. As for Enrique, he stood perfectly still and silent; a horrible smile, the ghastly evidence of an hysterical effort, sat upon his rigid features, and at length two or three heavy drops of blood trickled from his nostril and fell upon his shirt.

"Where's Roland?" said he, in a faint whisper, to a young man behind him.

"I saw him with Maritaña, walking towards the three fountains."

Enrique's pallid cheek grew scarlet, and, rudely pushing his way through the crowd, he disappeared from view.

"There goes a man in a good humor to board a prize," said one of the bystanders, coolly, and the play proceeded without a moment's interruption.

With his broad-leaved hat drawn down upon his brows, and his head sunk upon his bosom, he traversed the winding walks with the step of one who knew their every turning; at last he

reached a lonely and unfrequented part of the garden, where the path, leading for some distance along the margin of a small lake, suddenly turned off towards a flower terrace, the midst of which “the three fountains” stood.

Instead of taking the shortest way to the spot, Enrique left the walk and entered a grove of trees, through whose thick shade he proceeded silently and cautiously. The air was calm and motionless, and none save one who had received the education of a prairie hunter could have followed that track so noiselessly. By degrees the wood became open, and his progress more circumspect, when he suddenly halted.

Directly in front of him, not twenty paces from where he stood, was the terrace, over which, in the stilly night air, the fountain threw a light spray-like shower, rustling, as it fell upon the leaves, with a murmuring sound. Lower down, was a little basin surrounded by a border of white marble, and beside this two figures were now standing, whom, by the clear starlight, he could easily recognize to be Roland and Maritaña.

The former, with folded arms, and head bent down as if in thought, leaned against a tree, while Maritaña stood beside the fountain, moving her foot to and fro in the clear water, and, as though entirely engrossed by her childish pastime, never bestowed a look upon her companion. At last she ceased suddenly, and turning abruptly round, so as to stand full in front of him, said, “Well, senhor, am I to hope our pleasant interview is ended, or am I still to hear more of your complaints, – those

gentle remonstrances which sound, to my ears at least, more wearisome than words of downright anger?”

“You have not heard me patiently,” said the youth, advancing towards her, while the slightly shaken tones of his voice contrasted strangely with the assured and haughty accents in which he spoke.

“Patiently!” echoed she, with a scornful laugh. “And where was this same goodly gift to be learned? Among the pleasant company we have quitted, senhor? whose friendships of a night are celebrated by a brawl on the morrow! From the most exemplary crew of the ‘Esmeralda,’ and, in particular, the worthy lieutenant, Don Roland da Castel, who, if report speaks truly, husbands the virtue so rigidly that he cannot spare the smallest portion to expend upon his friends?”

“If my thrift had extended to other matters,” said the youth, bitterly, “mayhap I should not have to listen to language like this?”

“What say you, sir?” cried the girl, passionately, as she stamped upon the ground with a gesture of violent anger. “Do you affect to say that it matters to me whether you stood there as loaded with gold as on the morning you brought back that Mexican prize, and played the hero with such martial modesty; or as poor – as poor – as bad luck at cards can make you? If I loved you, I ‘d have as little care for one event as the other!”

“You certainly thought more favorably of me then than now, Maritaña!” said Roland, diffidently.

“I know not why you say so!”

“At least you accepted my hand in betrothal – ”

“Stay!” cried she, impetuously. “Did I not tell you then, before the assembled witnesses – before my father – what a mockery this same ceremony was; that its whole aim and object was to take advantage of that disgraceful law that can make an unmarried girl a widow, to inherit the fortune of one she never would have accepted as her husband. Speak, sir! – and say, did I not tell you this, and more too, that such a bridal ceremony brought little fortune to the bridegroom; for that already I had been thrice a widowed bride? Nay, more, you heard me swear as solemnly, that while I regarded the act as one of deep profanation, I felt in nowise bound by it. It is idle, then, to speak of our betrothal!”

“It is true, Maritaña, you said all this; although, perhaps, you had not now remembered it, had not some other succeeded to that place in your regard – ”

“There, there!” cried she, stopping him impatiently. “I will not listen again to the bead-roll of your jealousies. People must have loved very little, or too much, to endure that kind of torture. Besides, why tell me of these things? You are, they say, a most accomplished hunter, and can answer me, – if, when in chase of an antelope, a jaguar joins the sport, you do not turn upon him at once, the worthier and nobler enemy, and thus, as it were, protect what had been your prey.”

The youth seemed stung to the quick by this pitiless sarcasm; and, although he made no reply, his hands, convulsively clutched,

bespoke the torrent of agitation within him. "You are right, Maritaña!" said he, after a pause. "It is idle to talk of our betrothal, – I release you."

"Release *me!*" said she, laughing contemptuously; "this is a task I always perform for myself, senhor, and by the shortest method, as thus." As she spoke, she struggled to tear from her finger a ring which resisted all her efforts. At last, by a violent wrench, she succeeded, and holding it up for a second, till the large diamond glittered like a star, she threw it into the still fountain at her feet "There, *amigo mio*, I release you, – never was freedom more willingly accorded!"

"Never was there a slave more weary of his servitude!" said the youth, bitterly. "If Don Pedro Rica but tear his accursed bond, I should feel myself my own again."

"He will scarce refuse you, sir, if the rumor be correct that says you have lost eleven thousand doubloons at play. The wealthy conqueror stands on very different ground from *the* ruined gambler. Go to him at once! Ask back the paper! Tell him you have neither a heart nor a fortune to bestow upon his daughter! That, as a gambler, fettered by the lust for play, you have lost all soul for those hazardous enterprises that win a girl's love and a father's consent."

She waited for a moment, that he might reply; and then, impatient, perhaps, at his silence, added, "I did not think, senhor, you esteemed yourself so rich a prize! Be of good cheer, however! They who are less cognizant of your deserts will be

more eager to secure them.”

With these slighting words she turned away. Roland advanced as if to follow her, but with a contemptuous gesture of the hand she waved him back, and he stood like one spell-bound, gazing after her, till she disappeared in the dark distance.

CHAPTER II. A CHALLENGE – AND HOW IT ENDED

La Diche viene quando no se aguarda.
– *Spanish Proverb.*

(Good luck comes when it is not looked for.)

Roland looked for some minutes in the direction by which Maritaña had gone, and then, with a sudden start, as if of some newly taken resolve, took the path towards the villa. He had not gone far when, at the turn of the way, he came in front of Enrique, who, with hasty steps, was advancing towards him.

“Lost, everything lost!” exclaimed the latter, with a mournful gesture of his hands.

“All gone!” cried Roland.

“Every crown in the world!”

“Be it so; there is an end of gambling, at least!”

“You bear your losses nobly, senhor!” said Enrique, sneeringly; “and, before a fitting audience, might claim the merit of an accomplished gamester. I am, however, most unworthy to witness such fine philosophy. I recognize in beggary nothing but disgrace!”

“Bear it, then, and the whole load, too!” said Roland, sneeringly. “To your solicitations only I yielded in taking my

place at that accursed table. I had neither a passion for play, nor the lust for money-getting; you thought to teach me both, and, peradventure, you have made me despise them more than ever.”

“What a moralist!” cried Enrique, laughing insolently, “who discovers that he has cared neither for his mistress nor his money till he has lost both.”

“What do you mean?” said Roland, trembling with passion.

“I never speak in riddles,” was the cool reply.

“This, then, is meant as insult,” said Roland, approaching closer, and speaking in a still lower voice; “or is it merely the passion of a disappointed gambler?”

“And if it were, *amigo mio*,” retorted the other, “what more fitting stake to set against the anger of a rejected lover?”

“Be it so!” cried Roland, fiercely; “you never caught up a man more disposed to indulge your humor. Shall it be now?”

“Could not so much courage keep warm till daylight?” said Enrique, calmly. “Below the fountains there is a very quiet spot.”

“At sunrise?”

“At sunrise,” echoed Enrique, bowing with affected courtesy, till the streamers from his hat touched the ground.

“Now for my worthy father-in-law elect,” said Roland; “and to see him before he may hear of this business, or I may find it difficult to obtain my divorce.” When the youth arrived at the villa, the party were assembled at supper. The great saloon, crowded with guests and hurrying menials, was a scene of joyous but reckless conviviality, the loud laughter and the louder

voices of the company striking on Roland's ear with a grating discordance he had never experienced before. The sounds of that festivity he had been wont to recognize as the pleasant evidence of free and high-souled enjoyment, now jarred heavily on his senses, and he wondered within himself how long he had lived in such companionship.

Well knowing that the supper-party would not remain long at table, while high play continued to have its hold upon the guests, he strolled into one of the shady alleys, watching from time to time for the breaking up of the entertainment. At last some two or three arose, and, preceded by servants with lighted flambeaux, took the way towards the gaming-table. They were speedily followed by others, so that in a brief space – except by the usual group of hard-drinking souls, who ventured upon no stake save that of health – the room was deserted.

He looked eagerly for Don Pedro, but could not see him, as it was occasionally his practice to retire to his library long before his guests sought their repose. Roland made a circuit of the villa, and soon came to the door of this apartment, which led into a small flower-garden. Tapping gently here, he received a summons to enter, and found himself before Don Pedro, who, seated before a table, appeared deeply immersed in matters of business.

Roland did not need the cold and almost stern reception of his host to make him feel his intrusion very painfully; and he hastened to express his extreme regret that he should

be compelled by any circumstances to trespass on leisure so evidently destined for privacy. "But a few moments' patient hearing," continued he, "will show that, to me at least, the object of this visit did not admit of delay."

"Be seated, senhor; and, if I may ask it without incivility, be brief, for I have weighty matters before me."

"I will endeavor to be so," said Roland, civilly, and resumed: "This evening, Don Pedro, has seen the last of twenty-eight thousand Spanish dollars, which, five weeks since, I carried here along with me. They were my share, as commander of the 'Esmeralda,' when she captured a Mexican bark, in May last. They were won with hard blows and some danger; they were squandered in disgrace at the gaming-table."

"Forgive me," said Don Pedro: "you can scarcely adhere to your pledge of brevity if you permit yourself to be led away by moralizing; just say how this event concerns me, and wherefore the present visit."

Roland became red with anger and shame, and when he resumed it was in a voice tremulous with ill-suppressed passion. "I did not come here for your sympathy, senhor. If the circumstance I have mentioned had no relation to yourself, you had not seen me here. I say that I have now lost all that I was possessed of in the world."

"Again I must interrupt you, Senhor Roland, by saying that these are details for Geizheimer, not for me. He, as you well know, transacts all matters of money, and if you desire a loan,

or are in want of any immediate assistance, I 'm sure you 'll find him in every way disposed to meet your wishes.”

“Thanks, senhor, but I am not inclined for such aid. I will neither mortgage my blood nor my courage, nor promise three hundred per cent for the means of a night at the gambling-table.”

“Then pray, sir, how am I to understand your visit? Is it intended for the sake of retailing to me your want of fortune at play, and charging me with the results of your want of skill or luck?”

“Far from it, senhor. It is simply to make known that I am ruined; that I have nothing left me in the world; and that, as one whose fortune has deserted him, I have come to ask back that bond by which I accepted your daughter's hand in betrothal.”

A burst of laughter from Don Pedro here stopped the speaker, who, with flushed cheek and glaring eyeballs, stared at this sudden outbreak. “Do you know for what you ask me, senhor?” said Rica, smiling insolently.

“Yes, I ask for what you never could think to enforce, – to make me, a beggar, the husband of your daughter.”

“Most true; I never thought of such an alliance. I believe you were told that Columbian law gives these contracts the force of a legal claim, in the event of survivorship; and you flattered yourself, perhaps too hastily, that other ties more binding still might grow from it. If Fortune was as fickle with you here as at the card-table, the fault is not in me.”

“But of what avail is it now?” said Roland, passionately. “If

I died to-morrow, there is not sufficient substance left to buy a suit of mourning for my poor widow.”

“She could, perhaps, dispense with outward grief,” said Pedro, sneeringly.

“I say again,” cried Roland, with increased agitation, “this bond is not worth the paper it is written on. I leave the service; I sail into another latitude, and it is invalid, – a mere mockery!”

“Not so fast, sir,” said Pedro, slowly: “there is a redeeming clause, by which you, on paying seventy thousand doubloons, are released of your contract, with my concurrence. Mark that well, – with my concurrence it must be. Now, I have the opinion of learned counsel, in countries where mayhap your adventurous fancy has already carried you, that this clause embraces the option which side of the contract I should desire to enforce.”

“Such may be your law here; I can have little doubt that any infamy may pass for justice in this favored region,” said Roland; “but I ‘ll never believe that so base a judgment could be uttered where civilization prevails. At all events, I ‘ll try the case. I now tell you frankly, that, tomorrow, I mean to resign my rank and commission in this service; I mean to quit this country, with no intention ever to revisit it. If you still choose to retain a contract whose illegality needs no stronger proof than that it affects to bind one party only, I ‘ll not waste further time by thinking of it.”

“I will keep it, senhor,” interrupted Pedro, calmly. “I knew a youth, once, who had as humble an opinion of his fortunes as you have now; and yet he died, – not in this service, indeed, but

in these seas, – and his fortune well requited the trouble of its claimant.”

“I have no right to trespass longer on you, sir,” said Roland, bowing. “I wish I could thank you for all your hospitality to me with a more fitting courtesy; I must confess myself your debtor without hope of repayment.”

“Have you signified to Don Gomez Noronja your intention to resign?”

“I shall do it within half an hour.”

“You forget that your resignation must be accepted by the Minister; that no peremptory permission can be accorded by a captain in commission, save under a guarantee of ten thousand crowns for a captain, and seven for a lieutenant, the sum to be estreated if the individual quit the service without leave. This, at least, is law you cannot dispute.”

Roland hung down his head, thunderstruck by an announcement which, at one swoop, dashed away all his hopes. As he stood silent and overwhelmed, Don Pedro continued, “You see, sir, that the service knows how to value its officers, even when they set little store by the service. Knowing that young men are fickle and fanciful, with caprices that carry them faster than sound judgment, they have made the enactment I speak of. And, even were you to give the preliminary notice, where will you be when the time expires? In what parallel south of Cape Horn? Among the islands of the Southern Pacific; perhaps upon the coast of Africa? No, no; take my advice: do not abandon your

career; it is one in which you have already won distinction. Losses at play are easily repaired in these seas. Our navy – ”

“Is nothing better than a system of piracy!” broke in Roland, savagely. “So long as, in ignorance of its real character, I walked beneath your flag, the heaviest crime which could be imputed to me was but the folly of a rash-brained boy. I feel that I know better now; I’ll serve under it no more.”

“Dangerous words, these, senhor, if reported in the quarter where they would be noticed.”

Roland turned an indignant glance at him as he uttered this threat, and with an expression so full of passion that Rica, for a few seconds, seemed to feel that he had gone too far. “I did but suggest caution, senhor,” said he, timidly.

“Take care that you practise as well as preach the habit,” muttered Roland, “or you’ll find that you have exploded your own mine.”

This, which he uttered as he left the room, was in reality nothing more than a vague menace; but it was understood in a very different sense by Pedro, who stood pale and trembling with agitation, gazing at the door by which the youth departed. At last he moved forward, and opening it, called out, “Senhor Roland! Roland, come back! Let me speak to you again.” But already he was far beyond hearing, as with all his speed he hastened down the alley.

Don Pedro’s resolves were soon formed; he rang his bell at once, and, summoning a servant, asked if Don Gomez Noronja

was still at table?

“He has retired to his room, senhor,” was the reply.

A few momenta after, Rica entered the chamber of his guest, where he remained in close conversation till nigh daybreak. As he reached his own apartment the sound of horses’ feet and carriage wheels was heard upon the gravel, and, throwing up the window, Rica called out, —

“Is that Don Enrique?”

“Yes, senhor, taking French leave, as you would call it. A bad return for a Spanish welcome; but duty leaves no alternative.”

“Are you for the coast, then?”

“With all speed. Our captain received important despatches in the night We shall be afloat before forty hours. Adios!”

The farewell was cordially re-echoed by Rica, who closed the window, muttering to himself, “So! all will go well at last.”

While Enrique was making all the speed towards the seashore a light calèche and four horses could accomplish, Roland was pacing with impatient steps the little plot of grass where so soon he expected to find himself in deadly conflict with his enemy.

Never was a man’s mind more suited to the purpose for which he waited. Dejected, insulted, and ruined in one night, he had little to live for, and felt far less eager to be revenged of his adversary, than to rid himself of a hated existence. It was to no purpose that he could say, and say truly, that he had never cared for any of these things, of which he now saw himself stripped. His liking for Maritaña had never gone beyond great

admiration for her beauty, and a certain spiteful pleasure in exciting those bursts of passion over which she exercised not the slightest control. It was caprice, not love; the delight of a schoolboy in the power to torment, without the wish to retain. His self-love, then, it was, was wounded on finding that she, with whose temper he had sported, could turn so terribly upon himself. The same feeling was outraged by Enrique, who seemed to know and exult over his defeat. These sources of bitterness, being all aggravated by the insulting manner of Don Pedro, made up a mass of indignant and angry feelings which warred and goaded him almost to madness.

The long-expected dawn broke slowly, and although, a few moments after sunrise, the whole sky became of a rich rose color, these few moments seemed like an age to the impatient thoughts of him who thirsted for his vengeance.

He walked hastily up and down the space, waiting now and again to listen, and then, disappointed, resumed his path, with some gesture of impatience. At last he heard footsteps approaching. They came nearer and nearer; and now he could hear the branches of the trees bend and crack, as some one forced a passage through them. A swelling feeling about the heart bespoke the anxiety with which he listened, when a figure appeared which even at a glance he knew to be not Enrique's. As the man approached he took off his hat respectfully and presented a letter.

“From Don Enrique?” said Roland, and then, tearing open the

paper, he read, —

Amigo Mio, — Not mine the fault that I do not stand before you now instead of these few lines; but Noronja has received news of these Chilian fellows, and sent me to get the craft ready for sea at once. We shall meet, then, in a few hours; and, if so, let it be as comrades. The service and our own rules forbid a duel so long as we are afloat and on duty. Whatever be your humor when next we touch shore again, rely upon finding me ready to meet it, either as an enemy or as

Your friend,

Enrique da Cordova.

A single exclamation of disappointment broke from Roland, but the moment after all former anger was gone. The old spirit of comrade-affection began to seek its accustomed channels, and he left the spot, happy to think how different had been his feeling than if he were quitting it with the blood of his shipmate on his hands.

Although he now saw that his continuance in the service for the present was inevitable, he had fully made up his mind to leave it, and, with it, habits of life whose low excesses had now become intolerable. So long as the spirit of adventure and daring sustained him, so long the respite of a few months' shore life was a season of pleasure and delight; but as by degrees the real character of his associates became clearer, and he saw in them men who cared for enterprise no further than for its gain, and calculated each hazardous exploit by its profit, he felt that he

was now following the career of a bravo who hires out his arm and sells his courage. This revolted every sentiment of his mind, and, come what would, he resolved to abandon it. In these day-dreams of a new existence the memory of two years passed in the Pampas constantly mingled, and he could not help contrasting the happy and healthful contentment of the simple hunter with the voluptuous but cankered pleasures of the wealthy buccaneer. Once more beneath the wooded shades of the tall banana, he thought how free and peaceful his days would glide by, free from the rude conflicts he now witnessed, and the miserable jealousies of these ill-assorted companionships. For some hours he wandered, revolving thoughts like these; and at length turned his steps towards the villa, determined, so long as his captain remained, that he would take up his quarters at Barcelonetta, nor in future accept of the hospitality of Don Rica's house. With this intention he was returning to arrange for the removal of his luggage, when his attention was excited by the loud cracking of whips, and the shrill cries that accompanied the sounds of "The post! the post!"

In a moment every window of the villa was thrown open, and beads, in every species of night-gear, and every stage of sleepy astonishment, thrust out; for the post, be it observed, was but a monthly phenomenon, and the arrival of letters was very often the signal for a total break-up of the whole household.

The long wagon, drawn by four black mules, and driven by a fellow whose wide-tasselled sombrero and long moustaches

seemed to savor more of the character of a melodrama than real life, stopped before the chief entrance of the villa, and was immediately surrounded by the guests, whose hurried wardrobe could only be excused in so mild a climate.

“Anything for me, Truxillo?” cried one, holding up a dollar temptingly between finger and thumb.

“Where are my cigarettes?”

“And my mantle?”

“And my gun?”

“And the senhora’s embroidered slippers?” cried a maid, as she ransacked every corner where the packages lay.

The driver, however, paid little attention to these various demands, but, loosening the bridles of his beasts, he proceeded to wash their mouths with some water fetched from the fountain, coolly telling the applicants that they might help themselves, only to spare something for the people of Barcelonetta, for he knew there was a letter or two for that place.

“What have we here?” cried one of the guests, as a mass of something enveloped in a horse-sheet lay rolled up in the foot of the calèche, where the driver sat.

“Ah, par Dios!” cried the man, laughing, “I had nearly forgotten that fellow. He is asleep, poor devil! He nearly died of cold in the night!”

“Who is he – what is he?”

“A traveller from beyond San Luis in search of Don Pedro.”

“Of me?” said Don Pedro, whose agitation became, in spite

of all his efforts, visible to every one; at the same instant that, pulling back the cloak rudely, he gazed at the sleeping stranger, – “I never saw him before.”

“Come, awake – stir up, senhor!” said the driver, poking the passenger very unceremoniously with his whip. “We are arrived, this is the Villa de las Noches Entretenidas; here is Don Pedro himself!”

“The Lord be praised!” said a short, round-faced little man, who, with a nightcap drawn over his ears, and a huge cravat enveloping his chin, now struggled to look around him. “At last!” sighed he; “I ‘m sure I almost gave up all hope of it.” These words were spoken in English; but even that evidence was not necessary to show that the little plump figure in drab gaiters and shorts was not a Spaniard.

“Are you Don Peter, sir, – are you really Don Peter?” said he, rubbing his eyes, and looking hurriedly around to assure himself he was not dreaming.

“What is your business with me – or have you any?” said Rica, in a voice barely above a whisper.

“Have I! – Did I come six thousand miles in search of you? Oh, dear! oh, dear! I can scarcely think it all over, even now. But still there may be nothing done if he isn’t here.”

“What do you mean?” said Rica, impatiently.

“Mr. Roland Cashel; Roland Cashel, Esq., I should call him now, sir.”

“That ‘s my name!” said the youth, forcing his way through

the crowd, and standing in front of the traveller.

The little man put his hand into a breast-pocket, and drew out a little book, opening which he began to read, comparing the detail, as he went on, with the object before him: —

“Six foot and an inch in height, at least, olive-brown complexion, dark eyes and hair, straight nose, short upper lip, frowns slightly when he speaks; — just talk a little, will you?”

Cashel could not help smiling at the request; when the other added, “Shows his teeth greatly when he laughs.”

“Am I a runaway negro from New Orleans that you have taken my portrait so accurately, sir?”

“Got that at Demerara,” said the little man, putting up the book, “and must say it was very near indeed!”

“I have been at Demerara,” said Cashel, hoping by the admission to obtain some further insight into the traveller’s intentions.

“I know that,” said the little man. “I tracked you thence to St Kitts, then to Antigua. I lost you there, but I got up the scent again in Honduras, but only for a short time, and had to try Demerara again; then I dodged down the coast by Pernambuco, but lost you entirely in June, — some damned Indian expedition, I believe. But I met a fellow at New Orleans who had seen you at St. Louis, and so I tracked away south — ”

“And, in one word, having found me, what was the cause of so much solicitude, sir?” said Cashel, who felt by no means comfortable at such a hot and unwearied pursuit.

“This can all be better said in the house,” interposed Don Rica, who, relieved of any uneasiness on his own account, had suddenly resumed his habitual quiet demeanor.

“So I ‘m thinking too!” said the traveller; “but let me first land my portmanteau; all the papers are there. I have not lost sight of it since I started.”

The parcels were carefully removed under his own inspection, and, accompanied by Don Pedro Rica and Roland, the little man entered the villa.

There could be no greater contrast than that between the calm and placid bearing Don Pedro had now assumed, and the agitated and anxious appearance which Cashel exhibited. The very last interview he had sustained in that same spot still dwelt upon his mind; and when he declined Don Pedro’s polite request to be seated, and stood with folded arms before the table, which the traveller had now covered with his papers, a prisoner awaiting the words of his judgment could not have endured a more intense feeling of anxiety.

“Roland Cashel, born in York, a. d. 18 – , son of Godfrey Cashel and Sarah, his wife,” read the little man; then murmured to himself, “Certificate of baptism, signed by Joshua Gorgeous, Prebendary of the Cathedral; all right, so far. Now we come to the wanderings. Your father was quartered at Port-au-Prince, in the year 18 – , I believe?”

“He was. I was then nine years old,” said Cashel.

“Quite correct; he died there, I understand?”

Cashel assented by a nod.

“Upon which event you joined, or was supposed to join, the ‘Brown Peg,’ a sloop in the African trade, wrecked off Fernando Po same winter?”

“Yes; she was scuttled by the second mate, in a mutiny. But what has all this secret history of me to mean? Did you come here, sir, to glean particulars to write my life and adventures?”

“I crave your pardon most humbly, Mr. Cashel,” said the little man, in a perfect agony of humiliation. “I was only recapitulating a few collateral circumstances, by way of proof. I was, so to say, testing – that is, I was – ”

“Satisfying yourself as to this gentleman’s identity,” added Don Pedro.

“Exactly so, sir; the very words upon the tip of my tongue, – satisfying myself that you were the individual alluded to here” – as he spoke, he drew forth a copy of the “Times” newspaper, whose well-worn and much-thumbed edges bespoke frequent reference – “in this advertisement,” said he, handing the paper to Don Pedro, who at once read aloud, —

“Reward of £500. – Any person giving such information as may lead to the discovery of a young gentleman named Roland Cashel, who served for some years on board of various merchant vessels in the Levant, the African, and the West India trade, and was seen in New Orleans in the autumn of 18 – , will receive the above reward. He was last heard of in Mexico, but it is believed that he has since entered the Chilian or Columbian service. He is well known

in the Spanish Main, and in many of the cities on the coast, as the Caballero.”

Cashel’s face was one burning surface of scarlet as he heard the words of an advertisement which, in his ideas, at once associated him with runaway negroes and escaped felons; and it was with something like suffocation that he restrained his temper as he asked why, and by whose authority, he was thus described?

The little man looked amazed and confounded at a question which, it would seem, he believed his information had long since anticipated.

“Mr. Cashel wishes to know the object of this inquiry, – who sent you hither, in fact,” said Don Rica, beginning himself to lose patience at the slowness of the stranger’s apprehension.

“Mr. Kennyfeck, of Dublin, the law agent, sent me.”

“Upon what grounds, – with what purpose?”

“To tell him that the suit is gained; that he is now the rightful owner of the whole of the Godfrey and Godfrey Browne estates, and lands of Ben Currig, Tulough Callaghan, Knock Swinery, Kildallooran, Tullimeoran, Ballycanderigan, with all the manorial rights, privileges, and perquisites appertaining to, – in a word, sir, for I see your impatience, to something, a mere trifle, under seventeen thousand per annum, not to speak of a sum, at present not exactly known, in bank, besides foreign bonds and securities to a large amount.”

While Mr. Simms recited this, with the practised volubility of one who had often gone over the same catalogue before,

Cashel stood amazed, and almost stupefied, unable to grasp in his mind the full extent of his good fortune, but catching, here and there, glimpses of the truth, in the few circumstances of family history alluded to. Not so, Don Rica; neither confusion nor hesitation troubled the free working of his acute faculties, but he sat still, patiently watching the effect of this intelligence on the youth before him. At length, perceiving that he did not speak, he himself turned towards the stranger, and said, —

“You are, doubtless, a man of the world, sir, and need no apologies for my remarking that good news demands a scrutiny not less searching than its opposite. As the *friend* of Senhor Cashel,” — here he turned a glance beneath his heavy brows at the youth, who, however, seemed not to notice the word, — “as his friend, I repeat, deeply interested in whatever affects him, I may, perhaps, be permitted to ask the details of this very remarkable event.”

“If you mean the trial, sir, — or rather the trials, for there were three at bar, not to mention a suit in equity and a bill of discovery —”

“No, I should be sorry to trespass so far upon you,” interrupted Rica. “What I meant was something in the shape of an assurance, — something like satisfactory proof that this narrative, so agreeable to believe, should have all the foundation we wish it.”

“Nothing easier,” said Mr. Simms, producing an enormous black leather pocket-book from the breast of his coat, and

opening it leisurely on the table before him. "Here are, I fancy, documents quite sufficient to answer all your inquiries. This is the memorandum of the verdict taken at Bath, with the note of the Attorney-General, and the point reserved, in which motion for a new trial was made."

"What is this?" asked Cashel, now speaking for the first time, as he took up a small book of strange shape, and looked curiously at it.

"Check-book of the bank of Fordyce and Grange, Lombard Street," replied Simms; "and here, the authority by which you are at liberty to draw on the firm for the balance already in their hands, amounting to – let me see " – here he rapidly set down certain figures on the corner of a piece of paper, and with the speed of lightning performed a sum in arithmetic – "the sum of one hundred and twenty-three thousand pounds seven and elevenpence, errors excepted."

"This sum is mine!" cried Cashel, as his eyes flashed fire, and his dark cheek grew darker with excitement.

"It is only a moiety of your funded property," said Simms. "Castellan and Biggen, the notaries, certify to a much larger amount in the Three per Cents."

"And I am at liberty to draw at once for whatever amount I require?"

"Within that sum, certainly. Though, if you desire more, I'm sure they'll not refuse your order."

"Leave us for a moment, sir," said Cashel, in an accent whose

trembling eagerness bespoke the agitation he labored under. "I have something of importance to tell this gentleman."

"If you will step this way, sir," said Don Rica, politely. "I have ordered some refreshment in this room, and I believe you will find it awaiting you."

Mr. Simms gladly accepted the offered hospitality, and retired. The door was not well closed, when Don Rica Advanced with extended hands towards Cashel, and said:

"With all my heart I give you joy; such good fortune as this may, indeed, obliterate every little cloud that has passed between us, and make us once more the friends we have ever been."

Cashel crossed his arms on his breast, and coldly replied, "I thank you. But a few hours back, and one-half as much kindness would have made a child of me in feeling. Now it serves only to arouse my indignation and my Anger."

"Are you indeed so unjust, so ungenerous as this!" exclaimed Rica, in a tone whose anguish seemed wrung from the very heart.

"Unjust, – ungenerous! how?" cried Cashel, passionately.

"Both, sir," said Rica, in a voice of almost commanding severity. "Unjust to suppose that in thwarting your last resolve to leave a service in which you have already won fame and honor, I was not your best and truest friend; that in offering every opposition in my power to such a hot-headed resolution, I was not consulting your best interests; ungenerous to imagine that I could feel any other sentiment than delight at your altered fortunes, I, who gave you all that was dearest and nearest to me on earth, my

child, – my Maritaña.”

Had it not been for the passionate emotion of the last few words, Cashel’s anger would have suggested a reply not less indignant than his question; but the sight of the hard, the stern, the unflinching Pedro Rica, as he now stood, – his face covered by his hands, while his strong chest heaved and throbbed with convulsive energy, – this was more than he felt prepared to look on. It was then only by a great effort he could say, “You seem to forget, Senhor Rica, how differently you interpreted this same contract but a few hours ago. You told me then – I think I hear the words still ringing in my ears – that you never thought of such an alliance; that your calculation took a less flattering estimate of my relationship.”

“I spoke in anger, Roland, – anger caused by your passionate resolve. Remember, too, that I preferred holding you to your contract, in preference to allowing you to redeem it by paying the penalty.”

“Easy alternative,” said Cashel, with a scornful laugh; “you scarcely expected a beggar, a ruined gambler, could pay seventy thousand doubloons. But times are changed, sir. I am rich now, – rich enough to double the sum you stipulated for. Although I well know the contract is not worth the pen that wrote it, I am willing to recognize it, at least so far as the forfeit is concerned.”

“My poor child, my darling Maritaña,” said Pedro, but in a voice barely audible. The words seemed the feeble utterance of a breaking heart.

“Sorrow not for her, senhor,” said Cashel, hastily. “She has no griefs herself on such a score. It is but a few hours since she told me so.”

Don Pedro was silent; but a mournful shake of the head and a still more mournful smile seemed to intimate his dissent.

“I tell you, sir, that your own scorn of my alliance was inferior to hers!” cried Cashel, in a voice of deep exasperation. “She even went so far as to say that she was a party to the contract only on the condition of its utter worthlessness. Do not, then, let me hear of regrets for *her*.”

“And you believe this?”

“I believe what I have myself witnessed.”

“What, then, if you be a witness to the very opposite? What if your ears reveal to you the evidence as strongly against, as now you deem it in favor of, your opinion?”

“I do not catch your meaning.”

“I would say, what if from Maritaña’s own lips you heard an avowal of her affection, would you conceive yourself at liberty to redeem a contract to which you were only one party, and by mere money – I care not how large you call the sum – to reject the heart you have made your own?”

“No, no, this cannot be,” cried Cashel, struggling in a conflict of uncertainty and fear.

“I know my daughter, sir,” said Pedro, with an air of pride he well knew when and how to assume.

“If I but thought so,” muttered Cashel to himself; and low as

the words were, Rica heard them.

“I ask you for nothing short of your own conviction, – the conviction of your own ears and eyes. You shall, if you please, remain concealed in her apartment while I question her on the subject of this attachment. If you ever supposed me base enough to coerce her judgment, you know *her* too well to believe it to be possible. But I will not insult myself by either supposition. I offer you this test of what I have said: accept it if you will, and with this condition, that you shall then be free to tear this contract, if you like, but never believe that I can barter the acknowledged affection of my child, and take money for her misery.”

Cashel was moved by the truth-like energy of the words he heard; the very aspect of emotion in one he had never seen save calm, cold, and self-possessed, had its influence on him, and he replied, “I consent.” So faintly, however, were the words uttered that he was obliged to repeat them ere they reached Don Pedro’s ears.

“I will come for you after supper this evening,” said Rica. “Let me find you in the arbor at the end of the ‘hacienda.’ Till then, *adios*.” So saying, he motioned to Cashel to follow the stranger. Roland obeyed the suggestion, and they parted.

CHAPTER III. MR. SIMMS ON LIFE AT THE VILLA

He told them of men that cared not a d – n
For the law or the new police,
And had very few scruples for killing a lamb,
If they fancied they wanted the fleece.

Sir Peter's Lament

When Roland Cashel rejoined Mr. Simms, he found that worthy individual solacing himself for the privations of prairie travel, by such a breakfast as only Don Pedro's larder would produce. Surrounded by various dishes whose appetizing qualities might have suffered some impairment from a more accurate knowledge of their contents, – sucking monkeys and young squirrels among the number, – he tasted and sipped, and sipped again, till between the seductions of sangaree and Curaçoa punch, he had produced that pleasing frame of mind when even a less gorgeous scene than the windows of the villa displayed before him would have appeared delightful. Whether poor Mr. Simms's excess – and such we are compelled to confess it was – could be excused on the score of long fasting, or the consciousness that he had a right to some indulgence in the hour of victory, he assuredly revelled in the fullest enjoyment

of this luxurious banquet, and, as Cashel entered the room, had reached the delicious dreamland of misty consciousness, where his late adventures and his former life became most pleasingly commingled, and jaguars, alligators, gambusinos, and rancheros, danced through his brain in company with Barons of the Exchequer and Masters in Chancery.

Elevated by the scenes of danger he had passed through, – some real, the far greater number imaginary, – into the dignity of a hero, he preferred rather to discuss prairie life and scenes in the Havannah, to dwelling on the topics so nearly interesting to Cashel. Nor was Roland a very patient listener to digressions, which, at every moment, left the high-road, and wandered into every absurd by-path of personal history.

“I always thought, sir,” said Simms, “and used to say it everywhere, too, what a splendid change for you this piece of good fortune would be, springing at a bound, as a body might say, from a powder-monkey into the wealth of a peer of the realm; but, egad, when I see the glorious life you lead hereabouts, such grog, such tipple, capital house, magnificent country, and, if I may pronounce from the view beneath my window, no lack of company, too! I begin to feel doubts about it.”

If Cashel was scarcely pleased at the allusions to himself in this speech, he speedily forgave them in his amusement at the commentary Simms passed on life at the villa; but yet would willingly have turned from either theme to that most engrossing one, – the circumstances of his altered fortune. Simms, however,

was above such grovelling subjects; and, as he sat, glass in hand, gazing out upon the garden, where strolling parties came and went, and loitering groups lingered in the shade, he really fancied the scene a perfect paradise.

“Very hard to leave this, you’ll find it!” exclaimed Simms. “I can well imagine life here must be rare fun. How jolly they do seem down there!” said he, with a half-longing look at the strange figures, who now and then favored him with a salute or a gesture of the hand, as they passed.

“Come, let us join them,” said Cashel, who, despairing of recalling him to the wished-for topic, was fain to consent to indulge the stranger’s humor.

“All naval men?” asked Simms, as they issued forth into the lawn.

“Most of them are sailors!” said Cashel, equivocating.

“That’s a fine-looking old fellow beneath the beech-tree, with the long Turkish pipe in his mouth. He’s captain of a seventy-four, I take it.”

“He’s a Greek merchantman,” whispered Cashel; “don’t look so hard at him, for he observes you, and is somewhat irascible in temper, if stared at.”

“Indeed! I should n’t have thought – ”

“No matter, do as I tell you; he stabbed a travelling artist the other day, who fancied he was a fine study, and wished to make a drawing of his head.”

Simms’s jaw dropped suddenly, and a sickly faintness stole

over him, that even all his late potatoes could not supply courage enough to hear such a story unmoved.

“And who is he, sir, yonder?” asked he, as a youth, with no other clothing than a shirt and trousers, was fencing against a tree, practising, by bounds and springs, every imaginable species of attack and assault.

“A young Spaniard from the Basque,” said Cashel, coolly; “he has a duel to-morrow with some fellow in Barcelonetta, and he ‘s getting his wrist into play.” Then calling out, he said, “Ah, José, you mean to let blood, I see!”

“He’s only a student,” said the youth, with an insolent toss of his head. “But who have we here?”

“A friend and countryman of mine, Mr. Simms,” said Cashel, introducing the little man, who performed a whole circuit round the young Spaniard in salutations.

“Come to join us?” asked the youth, surveying him with cool impertinence. “What in the devil’s name hast thou done that thou shouldst leave the Old World at thy time of life? Virtuous living or hypocrisy ought to have become a habit with thee ere now, old boy, eh?”

“He’s only on a visit,” said Cashel, laughing; “he can return to good society, not like all of us here.”

“Would you infer from that, sir – ”

“Keep your temper, José,” said Cashel, with an indescribable assumption of insolent superiority; “or, if you cannot, keep your courage for the students, whose broils best suit you.”

“You presume somewhat too far on your skill with the rapier, Senhor Cashel,” said the other, but in a voice far less elevated than before.

“You can test the presumption at any moment,” said Cashel, insolently; “now, if you like it.”

“Oh, Mr. Cashel! oh, Mr. Roland! for mercy’s sake, don’t!” exclaimed Simms.

“Never fear,” interposed Cashel; “that excellent young man has better principles than you fancy, and never neglects, though he sometimes forgets, himself.”

So saying, he leisurely passed his arm beneath Simms’s, and led him forward.

“Good day, Senhor Cashel,” said a tall and well-dressed man, who made his salutations with a certain air of distinction that induced Simms to inquire who and what he was.

“A general in the service of one of the minor States of Germany,” said Cashel; “a man of great professional skill, and, it is said, of great personal bravery.”

“And in what capacity is he here?”

“A refugee. His sentence to be shot was commuted to imprisonment for life. He made his escape from Spandau, and came here.”

“What was his crime?”

“Treachery, – the very basest one can well conceive; he commanded the fort of Bergstein, which the French attacked on their advance in the second Austrian campaign. The assailants

had no heavy artillery, nor any material for escalade; but they had money, and gold proved a better battering-train than lead. Plittersdorf – that’s the general’s name – fired over their heads till he had expended all his ammunition, and then surrendered, with the garrison, as prisoners of war. The French, however, exchanged him afterwards, and he very nearly paid the penalty of his false faith.”

“And now is he shunned, – do people avoid him?”

“How should they? How many here are privileged to look down on a traitor? Is it the runaway merchant, the defaulting bank clerk, the filching commissary, that can say shame to one whose crime stands higher in the scale of offence? The best we can know of any one here is, that his rascality took an aspiring turn; and yet there are some fellows one would not like to think ill of. Here comes one such; and as I have something like business to treat of with him, I ‘ll ask you to wait for me, on this bench, till I join you.”

Without waiting for any reply, Cashel hastened forward, and taking off his hat, saluted a sallow-looking man of some eight-and-forty or fifty years of age, who, in a loose morning-gown, and with a book in his hand, was strolling along in one of the alleys.

“Ha, lieutenant,” said the other, as, lifting up his eyes, he recognized Cashel, – “making the most of these short hours of pleasure, eh? You ‘ve heard the news, I suppose; we shall be soon afloat again.”

“So I’ve heard, captain!” replied Cashel; “but I believe we have taken our last cruise together.”

“How so, lad? *You* look well, and in spirits; and as for myself, I never felt in better humor than to try a bout with our friends on the western coast.”

“You have no friend, captain, can better like to hear you say so; and as for me, the chances of fortune have changed. I have discovered that I need neither risk head nor limbs for gold; a worthy man has arrived here to-day with tidings that I am the owner of a large estate, and more money than I shall well know how to squander, and so – ”

“And so you ‘ll leave us for the land where men have learned that art? Quite right, Cashel. At your age a man can accustom himself to any and everything; at mine – a little later – at mine, for instance, the task is harder. I remember myself, some years ago, fancying that I should enjoy prodigiously that life of voluptuous civilization they possess in the Old World, where men’s wants are met ere they are well felt, and hundreds – ay, thousands – are toiling and thinking to minister to the rich man’s pleasures. It so chanced that I took a prize a few weeks after; she was a Portuguese barque with specie, broad doubloons and gold bars for the mint at Lisbon, and so I threw up my command and went over to France and to Paris. The first dash was glorious; all was new, glittering, and splendid; every sense steeped in a voluptuous entrancement; thought was out of the question, and one only could wonder at the barbarism that before seemed to represent

life, and sorrow for years lost and wasted in grosser enjoyment. Then came a reaction, at first slight, but each day stronger; the headache of the debauch, the doubt of your mistress's fidelity, your friend's truth, your own enduring good fortune, – all these lie in wait together, and spring out on you in some gloomy hour, like Malays boarding a vessel at night, and crowding down from maintop and mizen! There is no withstanding; you must strike or fly. I took the last alternative, and, leaving my splendid quarters one morning at daybreak, hastened to Havre. Not a thought of regret crossed me; so quiet a life seemed to sap my very courage, and prey upon my vitals; that same night I swung once more in a hammock, with the rushing water beside my ear, and never again tried those dissipations that pall from their very excess; for, after all, no pleasure is lasting which is not dashed with the sense of danger.”

While he was yet speaking, a female figure, closely veiled, passed close to where they stood, and, without attracting any notice, slipped into Cashel's hand a slip of paper. Few as the words it contained were, they seemed to excite his very deepest emotion, and it was with a faltering voice he asked the captain by what step he could most speedily obtain his release from the service?

A tiresome statement of official forms was the answer; but Roland's impatience did not hear it out, as he said, —

“And is there no other way, – by gold, for instance?”

A cold shrug of the shoulders met this sally, and the captain

said, —

“To corrupt the officials of the Government is called treason by our laws, and is punishable by death, just like desertion.” \

“Therefore is desertion the better course, as it involves none but one,” said Cashel, laughing, as he turned away.

CHAPTER IV. THE KENNYFECK HOUSEHOLD

Man, being reasonable, must dine out;
The best of life is but a dinner-party.

Amphytrion, Canto IV.

It was about half-past six of an autumn evening, just as the gray twilight was darkening into the gloom that precedes night, that a servant, dressed in the most decorous black, drew down the window-blinds of a large and splendidly furnished drawing-room of a house in Merrion Square, Dublin.

Having arranged certain portly deep-cushioned chairs into the orderly disorder that invites social groupings, and having disposed various other articles of furniture according to those notions of domestic landscape so popular at the present day, he stirred the fire and withdrew, – all these motions being performed with the noiseless decorum of a church.

A glance at the apartment, even by the fitful light of the coal-fire, showed that it was richly, even magnificently, furnished. The looking-glasses were immense in size, and framed with all that the most lavish art of the carver could display. The hangings were costly Lyons silk, the sofas, tables, and cabinets were all exquisite specimens of modern skill and elegance, while the

carpet almost rose above the foot in the delicate softness of its velvet pile. A harp, a grand pianoforte, and several richly-bound and gilded volumes strewed about gave evidence of tastes above the mere voluptuous enjoyment of ease, and in one window stood an embroidery-frame, with its unfinished labor, from which the threads depended in that fashion, that showed it had lately occupied the fair hands of the artist.

This very enviable apartment belonged to Mr. Mountjoy Kennyfeck, the leading solicitor of Dublin, a man who, for something more than thirty years, had stood at the head of his walk in the capital, and was reputed to be one of its most respected and richest citizens. Mrs. Mountjoy Kennyfeck – neither for our own nor our reader’s convenience dare we omit the “prénom” – was of a western family considerably above that of her liege lord and master in matter of genealogy, but whose quarterings had so far survived the family acres that she was fain to accept the hand of a wealthy attorney, after having for some years been the belle of her county, and the admired beauty of Castle balls and drawing-rooms.

It had been at first, indeed, a very hard struggle for the O’Haras to adopt the style and title of Kennyfeck, and poor Matilda was pitied in all the moods and tenses for exchanging the riotous feudalism of Mayo for the decorous quietude and wealthy *insouciance* of a Dublin mansion; and the various scions of the house did not scruple to express very unqualified opinions on the subject of her fall; but Time – that heals so much – Time and Mr.

Kennyfeck's claret, of which they all drank most liberally during the visits to town, assuaged the rancor of these prejudices, and "Matty," it was hinted, might have done worse; while some hardy spirit averred that "Kennyfeck, though not one of ourselves, has a great deal of the gentleman about him, notwithstanding."

A word of Mr. Kennyfeck himself, and even a word will almost suffice. He was a very tall, pompous-looking personage, with a retiring forehead and a large prominent nose; he wore a profusion of powder, and always dressed in the most scrupulous black; he spoke little, and that slowly; he laughed never. It was not that he was melancholy or depressed; it seemed rather that his nature had been fashioned in conformity with the onerous responsibilities of his pursuit, and that he would have deemed any exhibition of mirthful emotion unseemly and unbecoming one who, so to say, was a kind of high priest in the temple of equity. Next to the Chancellor's he venerated the decisions of Mrs. Kennyfeck; after Mrs. Kennyfeck came the Master of the Rolls. This was his brief and simple faith, and it is astonishing in what simple rules of guidance men amass vast fortunes, and obtain the highest suffrages of civic honor and respect!

Mr. Kennyfeck's family consisted of two daughters: the eldest had been a beauty for some years, and, even at the period our tale opens, had lost few of her attractions. She was tall, dark-haired, and dark-eyed, with an air of what in the Irish capital is called "decided fashion" about her, but in less competent circles might have been called almost effrontery. She looked strangers

very steadily in the face, spoke with a voice full, firm, and unabashed, – no matter what the subject, or who the audience, – and gave her opinions on people and events with a careless indifference to consequences that many mistook for high genius rebellious against control.

Olivia, three years younger than her sister, had just come out; and whether that her beauty – and she was very handsome – required a different style, or that she saw more clearly “the mistake” in Miss Kennyfeck’s manner, but she took a path perfectly her own. She was tenderness itself; a delicacy too susceptible for this work-a-day world pervaded all she said and did, – a retiring sensitiveness that she knew, as she plaintively said, would never “let her be loved,” overlaid her nature, and made her the victim of her own feelings. Her sketches, everlasting Madonnas dissolved in tears; her music, the most mournful of the melodies; her reading, the most disastrously ending of modern poems, – all accorded with this tone, which, after all, scarcely consorted well with a very blooming cheek, bright hazel eyes, and an air and carriage that showed a full consciousness of her captivations, and no small reliance on her capacity to exercise them.

A brief interval after the servant left the room, the door opened, and Mrs. Kennyfeck entered. She was dressed for dinner, and if not exactly attired for the reception of a large company, exhibited, in various details of her costume, unequivocal signs of more than common care. A massive

diamond brooch fastened the front of her dark velvet dress, and on her fingers several rings of great value glittered. Miss Kennyfeck, too, who followed her, was, though simply, most becomingly dressed; the light and floating material of her robe contrasting well with the more stately folds of the matronly costume of her mother.

“I am surprised they are not here before this,” said Mrs. Kennyfeck, lying back in the deep recess of a luxurious chair, and placing a screen between herself and the fire. “Your father said positively on the 5th, and as the weather has been most favorable, I cannot understand the delay. The packets arrive at four, I think?”

“Yes, at four, and the carriage left this at three to fetch them.”

“Read the note again, – he writes so very briefly always. I ‘m sure I wish the dear man would understand that I am not a client, and that a letter is not exactly all it might be, because it can be charged its thirteen-and-fourpence, or six-and-eightpence, whatever it is.”

Miss Kennyfeck took an open note from the chimney, and read: —

Dear Mrs. Kennyfeck, – We have made all the necessary arrangements in London, and shall leave on the 2nd, so as to arrive at Merrion Square by the 5th. Mr. C – would, I believe, rather have remained another day in town; but there was no possibility of doing so, as the “Chancellor” will sit on Tuesday. Love to the girls, and believe me, yours very truly,

M. Kennyfeck.

Invite Jones and Softly to meet us at dinner.

The clock on the mantelpiece now struck seven; and scarcely had the last chime died away as a carriage drove up to the door.

“Here they come, I suppose,” said Mrs. Kennyfeck, with a half-sigh.

“No, mamma; it is a hackney-coach. Mr. Jones, or Mr. Softly, perhaps.”

“Oh, dear! I had forgotten them. How absurd it was to ask these people, and your father not here.”

The door opened, and the servant announced the Rev. Mr. Knox Softly. A very tall, handsome young man entered, and made a most respectful but cordial salutation to the ladies. He was in look and mien the *beau idéal* of health, strength, and activity, with bright, full blue eyes, and cheeks rosy as the May. His voice, however, was subdued to the dulcet accent of a low whisper, and his step, as he crossed the room, had the stealthy noiselessness of a cat's approach.

“Mr. Kennyfeck quite restored, I hope, from the fatigue of his journey?”

“We ‘ve not seen him yet,” replied his lady, almost tartly. “He ought to have been here at four o’clock, and yet it’s past seven.”

“I think I hear a carriage.”

“Another – ,” hackney, Miss Kennyfeck was about to say, when she stopped herself, and, at the instant, Counsellor Clare Jones was announced.

This gentleman was a rising light of the Irish bar, who had the good fortune to attract Mr. Kennyfeck's attention, and was suddenly transferred from the dull duties of civil bills and declarations to business of a more profitable kind. He had been somewhat successful in his college career, – carried off some minor honors; was a noisy member of a debating society; wrote leaders for some provincial papers; and with overbearing powers of impudence, and a good memory, was a very likely candidate for high forensic honor.

Unlike the first arrival, the Counsellor had few, if any, of the forms of good society in his manner or address. His costume, too, was singularly negligent; and as he ran a very dubious hand through a mass of thick and tangled hair on entering, it was easy to see that the greatest part of his toilet was then and there performed. The splashed appearance of his nether garments, and of shoes that might have done honor to snipe-shooting, also showed that the carriage which brought him was a mere ceremonial observance, and, as he would himself say, "the act of conveyance was a surplusage."

Those who saw him in court pronounced him the most unabashed and cool of men; but there was certainly a somewhat of haste and impetuosity in his drawing-room manner that even a weak observer would have ascribed to awkwardness.

"How do you do, Mrs. Kennyfeck? – how do you do, Miss Kennyfeck? – glad to see you. Ah! Mr. Softly, – well, I hope? Is he come – has he arrived?" A shake of the head replied

in the negative. "Very strange; I can't understand it. We have a consultation with the Solicitor-General to-morrow, and a meeting in chambers at four."

"I should n't wonder if Mr. Cashel detained papa; he is very young, you know, and London must be so new and strange to him, poor lad!"

"Yes; but your father would scarce permit it," said Mrs. Kennyfeck, smartly. "I rather think it must have been some accidental circumstance; coaches are constantly upsetting, and post-horses cannot always be had."

Mr. Knox Softly smiled benignly, as though to say in these suggestions Mrs. Kennyfeck was displaying a very laudable spirit of uncertainty as to the course of human events.

"Here 's Olivia," said Mrs. Kennyfeck, as her younger daughter entered. "Let us hear her impressions, – full of forebodings, I don't doubt."

Miss Olivia Kennyfeck performed her salutations to the guests with the most faultless grace, throwing into her courtesy to the curate a certain air of filial reverence very pretty to behold, and only a little objectionable on the score of the gentleman's youth and personal attractions; and then, turning to her mother said, —

"You are not uneasy, mamma, I hope? Though, after all, this is about the period of the equinox."

"Nonsense, child! packets are never lost nowadays in the Irish Channel. It's merely some sudden freak of gayety, – some London distraction detains them. Will you touch that bell, Mr.

Clare Jones? It is better to order dinner.”

There was something peremptory in the lady's tone and manner that rather damped the efforts at small-talk, – never very vigorous or well-sustained at these ante-dinner moments; nor were any of the party very sorry when the servant announced that the soup was served.

CHAPTER V. HOW ROLAND BECAME ENTITLED TO THE GODFREY BROWNE PROPERTY

The sherry iced, – the company still colder.
Bell: Images.

The party who now took their seats at table were not made of those ingredients whose admixture accomplishes a social meeting. Their natures, pursuits, and tastes were only sufficiently unlike to suggest want of agreement, without possessing the broad contrasts that invite conversation by their own contrariety. Besides this, there was a sense of constraint over every one, from the absence of the host and his expected guest; and lastly, the very aspect of a gorgeously decorated table, with vacant places, has always a chilling influence over those who sit around. A certain amount of propinquity is as essential to conversation as good roads and easy distances are a necessary condition to a visiting neighborhood. If you cannot address him or her who sits beside you without attracting the attention of the whole table to your remark, you are equally debarred from the commonplaces that induce table-talk, or the smart thing that cannot well be said too publicly.

The dinner here proceeded in very stately quietude, nor

were the efforts of Mr. Jones to introduce a conversational spirit at all successful; indeed, that gifted gentleman would have willingly exchanged the unexceptionable cookery and admirably conditioned wine before him for the riotous freedom of a bar mess, – where sour sherry and nisi-prius jokes abounded, and Father Somebody’s song was sure to give the scene a conviviality that only yielded its fascination to blind hookey or spoiled five.

Far otherwise the curate. The angelic smile that sat upon his features mechanically; his low, soft, liquid voice; his gentle gestures; and even his little sallies of pleasantry, were in perfect accord with the decorous solemnity of a scene where the chink of a cut decanter, or the tingling sound of a silver dish-cover, were heard above the stillness of the company.

If, then, Mr. Knox Softly accompanied the ladies to the door, and followed them out with his eyes with an expression beaming regretfulness at their departure, the Counsellor, very differently minded, surrounded himself with an array of the dessert-dishes and decanters, and prepared to discuss his wine and walnuts to his perfect contentment.

“You have never met this Mr. Roland Cashel, I believe?” said Mr. Softly, as he filled a very large claret glass and tasted it enjoyably.

“Never,” replied Jones, whose teeth were busily engaged in smashing almonds and filberts, in open defiance of a tray of silver nutcrackers before him. “I don’t think he has been in Ireland since a mere child, and very little in England.”

“Then his recovery of the estate was quite unexpected?”

“Mere accident Kennyfeck came upon the proofs when making some searches for a collateral claim. The story is very short. This lad’s father, whose name was Godfrey Cashel, was a poor lieutenant in the 81st, and quartered at Bath, when he chanced to discover that a rich old bachelor there, a certain Godfrey Browne, was a distant relation of his mother. He lost no time in making his acquaintance and explaining the relationship, which, however, brought him no more substantial benefit than certain invitations to dinner and whist parties, where the unfortunate lieutenant lost his half-crowns.

“At length a note came one morning inviting him to breakfast and to ‘transact a little matter of business.’ Poor Godfrey read the words with every commentary that could flatter his hopes, and set out in better spirits than he had known for many a year before. What, then, was his dismay to discover that he was only wanted to witness the old gentleman’s will! – a very significant proof that he was not to benefit by its provisions.

“With a very ill-repressed sigh, the poor lieutenant threw a glance over the half-opened leaves, where leasehold, and copyhold, and freehold, and every other ‘hold’ figured among funded property, consols, and reduced annuities, – with money lent on mortgages, shares in various companies, and What not, – a list only to be equalled by the long catalogue of those ‘next of kin,’ who, to the number of seventeen, were mentioned as reversionary heirs.

“You are to sign your name here, Mr. Cashel,” said the solicitor, pointing to a carefully-scratched portion of the parchment, where already the initials were pencilled for his guidance.

“Faith! and it’s at the other side of the book I’d rather see it,” said the lieutenant, with a sigh.

“Not, surely, after seventeen others!” exclaimed the astonished attorney.

“Even so, – a chance is better than nothing.”

“What’s that he’s saying?” interposed the old man, who sat reading his newspaper at the fire. The matter was soon explained by the attorney, and when he finished, Cashel added: “That’s just it; and I’m to sail for the Cape on the 4th of next month, and if you ‘ll put me down among the rest of the fellows, I ‘ll send you the best pipe of Constantia you ever tasted, as sure as my name is Godfrey Cashel.”

“The old man threw his spectacles up on his forehead, wiped his eyes, and then, replacing his glasses, took a deliberate survey of the poor lieutenant who had proposed such a very ‘soft’ bargain. ‘Eh! Clinchet,’ said he to the attorney, ‘can we do this for him?’

“Nothing easier, sir; let the gentleman come in last, as residuary legatee, and it alters nothing.”

“I suppose you count on your good luck,” said old Browne, grinning.

“Oh, then, it’s not from my great experience that way,” said

Cashel. 'I've been on the "Duke's list" for promotion seventeen years already, and, for all I see, not a bit nearer than the first day; but there's no reason my poor boy should be such an unfortunate devil. Who knows but fortune may make amends to him one of these days? Come, sir, is it a bargain?'

"To be sure. I'm quite willing; only don't forget the Constantia. It's a wine I like a glass of very well indeed, after my dinner.'

"The remainder is easily told; the lieutenant sailed for the Cape, and kept his word, even though it cost him a debt that mortgaged his commission. Old Browne gave a great dinner when the wine arrived, and the very first name on the list of legatees, his nephew, caught a fever on his way home from it, and died in three weeks.

"Kennyfeck could tell us, if he were here, what became of each of them in succession; four were lost, out yachting, at once; but, singular as it may seem, in nineteen years from the day of that will, every life lapsed, and, stranger still, without heirs; and the fortune has now descended to poor Godfrey Cashel's boy, the lieutenant himself having died in the West Indies, where he exchanged into a native regiment. That is the whole story; and probably in a romance one would say that the thing was exaggerated, so much more strange is truth than fiction."

"And what kind of education did the young man get?"

"I suppose very little, if any. So long as his father lived, he of course held the position of an officer's son, – poor, but in

the rank of gentleman. After that, without parents, – his mother died when he was an infant, – he was thrown upon the world, and, after various vicissitudes, became a cabin boy on board of a merchantman; then he was said to be a mate of a vessel in the African trade employed on the Gold Coast, – just as probably a slaver; and, last of all, he was lieutenant in the Columbian navy, – which, I take it, is a very good name for piracy. It was in the Havannah we got a trace of him, and I assure you, strange as it may sound, Kennyfeck's agent had no small difficulty in persuading him to abandon that very free-and-easy service, to assume the rights and immunities of a very large property.

“Kennyfeck was to meet him on his arrival in England, about ten days ago, and they spent a few days in London, and were – But hark! there comes a carriage now, – yes, I know the step of his horses; here they are!”

CHAPTER VI. A FRACAS IN THE BETTING-RING

Ne'er mind his torn, ill-fashioned doublet,
Beshrew me! if he 's not a pretty man.

Don Lopez.

The movement and bustle in the hall showed that Mr. Jones's surmise was correct; for scarcely had the carriage stopped than the street-door was flung wide open, and Mr. Pearse, the butler, followed by a strong detachment of bright-liveried menials, stood bowing their respectful compliments to their master and his guest. As Mr. Kennyfeck entered the house, he walked slowly and with difficulty, endeavoring at the same time to avoid all scrutiny of his appearance as he passed through the crowded hall; but, although his hat was pressed firmly over his brows, it could not entirely conceal a very suspiciously tinted margin around one eye; while the care with which he defended his left arm, and which he carried in his waistcoat, looked like injury there also.

He, however, made an attempt at a little sprightliness of manner, as, shaking his companion's hand with cordial warmth, he said, —

“Welcome to Ireland, Mr. Cashel. I hope I shall very often experience the happiness of seeing you under this roof.”

The person addressed was a remarkably handsome young man, whose air and carriage bespoke, however, much more the confidence that results from a sense of personal gifts, and a bold, daring temperament, than that more tempered ease which is the consequence of fashionable breeding.

Mr. Kennyfeck's felicitations on their arrival were scarce uttered ere Cashel had sufficiently recovered from his surprise at the unexpected magnificence of the house to make any reply; for, although as yet advanced no further than the hall, a marble group by Canova, a centre lamp of costly Sèvres, and some chairs of carved ebony served to indicate the expensive style of the remainder of the mansion.

While Cashel, then, muttered his acknowledgments, he added to himself, but in a voice scarcely less loud, —

“Devilish good crib, this, Master Kennyfeck.”

“Pearse,” said the host, “is dinner ready?”

“My mistress and the young ladies have dined, sir; but Mr. Jones and Mr. Softly are in the parlor.”

“Well, let us have something at once; or, would you prefer, Mr. Cashel, making any change in your dress first?”

“I say dinner above all things,” said the youth, disencumbering himself of a great Mexican mantle.

“Perfectly right; quite agree with you,” said Kennyfeck, endeavoring to assume a little of his guest's dash; “and here we are. Ah, Jones, how d'ye do? Mr. Cashel, this is my friend Mr. Jones. Mr. Softly, very glad to see you. Mr. Softly. — Mr. Cashel.

Don't stir, I beg; keep your places. We 'll have a bit of dinner here, and join you at your wine afterwards. Meanwhile, I 'll just step upstairs, and be back again in a moment; you'll excuse me, I 'm sure."

"Oh, certainly," replied Cashel, who appeared as if he could excuse anything with a better grace than the ceremonious slowness of the butler's arrangements.

There was a pause of a few seconds as Mr. Kennyfeck left the room, broken, at last, by Mr. Jones asking if they had not been detained by contrary winds.

"No, I think not; I fancy the weather was pretty average kind of weather. Had we been expected here earlier?"

"Yes; Mrs. Kennyfeck mentioned to me Monday, and afterwards Tuesday, as the very latest day for your arrival."

Cashel made no remark; and, soon after, Mr. Pearse's entrance with the soup put an end to the conversation. "Mr. Kennyfeck desired me to say, sir, not to wait for him; he'll be down presently."

"What do you call this soup?"

"Mock-turtle, sir."

"Rather too much Madeira in it for my taste; but that sha' n't prevent my having a glass of wine. Will you permit me, gentlemen?"

The parties bowed politely; but still the intercourse did not progress; and in the exchanged glances of those at the large table, and the sidelong looks Cashel occasionally threw towards them,

it was easy to see that neither party had made way with the other.

“I fear Kennyfeck is not going to make his appearance,” said Cashel, as he seemed to hesitate about proceeding with his dinner.

“I should n’t advise you waiting,” cried Jones; “the fish is growing cold.”

“I suspect Mr. Kennyfeck is fatigued by his journey, sir,” said Mr. Softly, in his most bland of voices; “I thought I remarked it by his face.”

“Oh, did you?” said Cashel, with a very peculiar look of knowingness.

“Yes; you are aware, Mr. Cashel,” interrupted Jones, “our friend is n’t much used to that kind of thing. I suppose it’s some years since he has had so much knocking about as in these last few days.”

“I fancy so,” said Cashel, with a significant smile that puzzled the lawyer exceedingly, and he ate on without making a further remark.

The two or three efforts made by Jones and Softly to converse together were, like nearly all similar attempts at perfect ease and self-possession, complete failures, and gradually slid down into monosyllables, and then to silence; when Cashel, who seemed to be enjoying his venison and Bordeaux with perfect zest, leaned back in his chair and said, “What kind of place is this same good city of Dublin? What goes forward here?”

As this question was more directly addressed to Jones, that

gentleman prepared himself, not unwillingly, for an elaborate reply.

“Dublin, Mr. Cashel,” said he, pretty much in the same tone he would have used in opening an address to a jury, —

“Dublin is a city which, from a great variety of causes, will always be exposed to every variable and opposing criticism. To begin: it is provincial — ”

“Is it slow?” interrupted Cashel, who had listened to this exordium with palpable signs of impatience.

“If you mean, has it its share of those habits of dissipation, those excesses so detrimental alike to health and fortune — ”

“No, no; I merely ask what goes on here, — how do people amuse themselves?” said Cashel, fencing to avoid any very lengthened exposure of the other’s views.

“They dine, dance, drink tea, talk politics and scandal, like other folk; but if you ask, what are the distinguishing features of the society — ”

“What kind of sport does the country afford?” interrupted Roland, somewhat unceremoniously.

“Hunting, shooting, fishing, coursing — ”

“What do you mean by hunting, — a fox, is it?”

“Yes, fox-hunting and hare-hunting, too.”

A very insolent laugh was Cashel’s answer, as, turning to Mr. Softly, he said, “Well, I own, all this does strike me as a very tiresome kind of life. Do you like Ireland, sir?”

“I feel a deep interest in it,” said the curate, with a most solemn

manner.

“Yes, that’s all very well; but do you like it?”

“Were it not for its darkness,” said Mr. Softly, sighing, “I should say I liked it.”

“Darkness,” echoed Cashel, – “darkness; why, hang it, you are pretty far north here. What is the darkness you speak of?”

“I alluded to popery, sir, – to the obscuring mists of superstition and ignorance,” replied Mr. Softly, with a kind of energetic timidity that made himself blush.

“Oh – I perceive – yes – I understand,” muttered Cashel, who certainly felt all the awkwardness of a man caught in a lie.

“We have a very agreeable society among the bar men,” said Jones, returning to the charge in a new direction; “a great deal of pleasantry and fun goes on at our messes.”

“Droll fellows, I suppose,” said Cashel, carelessly. “I remember I knew a lawyer once; he was a mate of a small clipper in the African trade, – mischievous kind of devil he was too, – always setting the slaves by the ears, and getting money for settling the differences. They played him a good trick at last.” Here he laughed heartily at the recollection for several minutes.

“What was it?” asked Jones, in some curiosity to learn how the bar was respected on the banks of the Niger.

“They painted him black and sold him at Cuba,” said Cashel, who once more broke out into laughter at the excellence of the jest.

Jones’s and Softly’s eyes met with a most complete accordance

in the glances exchanged. Meanwhile, Cashel, drawing his chair towards the larger table, filled his glass and proceeded to smash his walnuts with all the easy contentment of a man who had dined well.

“I perceive Mr. Kennyfeck is not likely to join us,” said Softly, with a half suggestive look towards the door.

“Tired, perhaps,” said Jones, affecting what he opined to be the cool indifference of the highest fashion.

“More than that, I suspect,” said Cashel, with a most unfeigned carelessness. “Did you remark his eye?”

“Yes!” exclaimed both together. “What could that mean?”

“A slight bit of a scrimmage we had on the way from town; a – ”

“Mr. Kennyfeck engaged in a row!” cried Softly, almost incredible at the tidings.

“Yes. I fancy that is about the best word for it,” said Cashel, sipping his wine. “I suppose one ought not to mention these kind of things; but of course they are safe with you. They ‘ll never go further, I am certain.”

“Oh, never, – not a syllable,” chimed in the two.

“Well, then, on our way here, I learned that there were to be races a few miles from Coventry, and as I saw our friend Kennyfeck had no fancy for the sight, I just slipped a few half-crowns into the postboy’s hand, and told him to drive there instead of taking the Liverpool road. Away we went at a good pace, and in less than an hour reached the course. I wish you saw

the old gentleman's face when he awoke from a sound nap, and saw the grand stand, with its thousand faces, all in a row, and the cords, the betting-ring, and the whole circumstance of a race-ground. By good luck, too, the sharp jerk of our pull-up smashed a spring, and so we had nothing for it but to leave the chaise and wait till it could be repaired. While my servant was away in search of some kind of a drag or other, to go about the field, – there was no walking, what with the crowd and the press of horses, not to speak of the mud that rose over the ankles, – we pushed on, – that is, I did, with a stout grip of Kennyfeck's arm, lest he should escape, – we pushed on, into the ring. Here there was rare fun going forward, every fellow screaming out his bets, and booking them as fast as he could. At first, of course, the whole was all ancient Greek to me. I neither knew what they meant by the 'favorite,' or 'the odds,' or 'the field;' but one somehow always can pick up a thing quickly, if it be but 'game,' and so, by watching here, and listening there, I managed to get a kind of inkling of the whole affair, and by dint of some pushing and elbowing, I reached the very centre of the ring, where the great dons of the course were betting together.

“‘Taurus even against the field,’ cried one.

“‘Taurus against the field,’ shouted another.

“And this same cry was heard on every side.

“‘Give it in fifties, – hundreds if you like better,’ said a young fellow mounted on a smart-looking pony, to his friend, who appeared to reflect on the offer. ‘Come, hurry on, man. Let's have

a bet, just to give one an interest in the race.’ The other shook his head, and the first went on, ‘What a slow set, to be sure! Is no one willing to back the field, even? Come, then, here ‘s a hundred pound to any man who ‘ll take the field against Taurus, for two thousand.’

“‘Let me have your cob,’ said I, ‘and I ‘ll take the bet.’

“He turned round in his saddle, and stared at me as if I were something more or less than human, while a very general roar of laughing ran around the entire circle.

“‘Come away, come away at once,’ whispered Kennyfeck, trembling with fright.

“‘Yes, you had better move off, my friend,’ said a thickset, rough-looking fellow, in a white coat.

“‘What say you to five thousand, sir; does that suit your book?’ cried the young fellow to me, in a most insolent tone.

“‘Oh, let him alone, my Lord,’ said another. ‘Take no notice of him.’

“‘I say, Grindle,’ cried a tall thin man with moustaches, ‘who let these people inside the ring?’

“‘They forces their way, my Lud,’ said a little knocker-kneed creature, in a coat four times too big for him, ‘and I says to Bill, de – pend upon it, Bill, them’s the swell mob.’

“The words were scarcely out of the fellow’s mouth when a general cry of the ‘swell mob’ resounded on every side, and at once they closed upon us, some pushing, others elbowing, driving, and forcing, so that what with the dense crowd, and the

tight hold Kennyfeck now kept of me, I was pinioned, and could do nothing. At last, by a vigorous twist, I shook them off from me, and laid two of the foremost at my feet. This I did with a Mexican trick I saw they knew nothing about. You first make a feint at the face, and then, dropping on the knee, seize the fellow by both legs, and hurl him back on his head, – just stand up, I ‘ll not hurt you.”

“Thank you, – I understand the description perfectly,” said Mr. Softly, pale with terror at the proposed experiment.

“Well, the remainder is soon told. They now got in upon us, and of course I need n’t say we got confoundedly thrashed. Kennyfeck was tumbled about like a football; every one that had nothing else to do had a kick at him, and there ‘s no saying how it might have ended had not a certain Sir George Somebody recognized our poor friend, and rescued him. I ‘m not quite sure that I was quite myself about this time; Kennyfeck has some story of my getting on some one’s horse, and riding about the course in search of the originators of the fray. The end of it, however, was, we reached Liverpool with sorer bones than was altogether pleasant, and although, when Kennyfeck went to bed, I went to the theatre, the noise only increased my headache, and it needed a good night’s sleep to set me all right again.”

“Mr. Kennyfeck taken for one of the swell mob!” exclaimed Softly, with a sort of holy horror that seemed to sum up his whole opinion of the narrative.

“Very bad, was n’t it?” said Cashel, pushing the wine past; “but

he's a capital fellow, – took the whole thing in such good part, and seems only anxious that the story should n't get abroad. Of course I need n't repeat my caution on that subject?"

"Oh, certainly not! Shall we join the ladies?" said Mr. Jones, as he surveyed his whiskers and arranged the tie of his cravat before the glass.

"I'm quite ready," said Cashel, who had quietly set down in his own mind that the ladies of the Kennyfeck family were a kind of female fac-simile of the stiff-looking old attorney, and, therefore, felt very few qualms on the subject of his disordered and slovenly appearance.

Scarcely had Cashel entered the drawing-room than he found his hand grasped in Mr. Kennyfeck's, when, with a most dulcet accent, he said, —

"I knew you 'd forgive me, – I told Mrs. Kennyfeck you'd excuse me for not joining you at dinner; but I was really so fatigued. Mrs. Kennyfeck – Mr. Cashel. My daughter, Mr. Cashel. My daughter Olivia. Well, now, have you dined heartily? – I hope my friends here took care of you."

"I thank you. I never dined better, – only sorry not to, have had your company. We have our apologies to make, Mrs. Kennyfeck, for not being earlier; but, of course, you 've heard that we did our very utmost."

"Oh, yes, yes! I explained everything," interrupted Kennyfeck, most eager to stop a possible exposure. "Mrs. Kennyfeck knows it all."

Although Cashel's manner and address were of a kind to subject him to the most severe criticism of the ladies of the Kennyfeck family, they evinced the most laudable spirit in their hospitable and even cordial reception of him, Mrs. Kennyfeck making room for him to sit on the sofa beside her, – a post of honor that even the Castle aides-de-camp only enjoyed by great favor; while the daughters listened with an attention as flattering to *him* as it was galling to the other two guests.

Mr. Softly, however, resigned himself to this neglect as to a passing cloud of forgetfulness, and betook himself to the columns of the "Morning Post" for consolation, occasionally glancing over the margin to watch the laughing group around the fire. As for Jones; Mr. Kennyfeck had withdrawn with that gentleman into a window, where the tactics of some bill in equity engaged their attention, – manifestly, however, to the young barrister's discontent, as his frequent stolen looks towards the ladies evidenced.

It was the first time that the Kennyfecks had ever deigned to listen to any one whose claims to a hearing rested on higher grounds than the light gossip and small-talk of the capital, the small fashionable chit-chat of a provincial city, and which bears the same resemblance to the table-talk of the greater metropolis as do larks to ortolans, when disguised in the same kind of sauce; only those accustomed to the higher flavor being able to detect the difference. It was, then, with as much surprise as pleasure that they found themselves listening to the narratives in

which not a single noble or lordly personage figured, nor one singular incident occurred reflecting on the taste, the wealth, or the morals of their acquaintance. It was no less a novelty, too, for Cashel to find any one a listener to descriptions of scenes and habits in whose familiarity he saw nothing strange or remarkable; so that when the young ladies, at first attracted by mere curiosity, became gradually more and more interested in his stories, his flattered vanity gave new warmth to an enthusiasm always ardent, and he spoke of prairie life and adventure with a degree of eloquence and power that might have captivated even less indulgent auditors.

It was, besides, the first time that they ever had seen great wealth unallied with immense pretension. Cashel, perhaps from character, or that his accession to fortune was too recent, and his consequent ignorance of all that money can do, whichever of these the cause, was certainly the most unassuming young man they had ever met. In comparison with him, the aides-de-camp were princes of the blood; even Mr. Jones put forth a degree of pretension on the score of his abilities, which stood in strong contrast with the unaffected and simple modesty of Roland Cashel.

It is but fair to all parties to add that dark and flashing eyes, shaded by long and drooping lashes, a high and massive forehead; a brown, almost Spanish complexion, whose character was increased by a pair of short coal-black moustaches, – did not detract from the merit of tales, which, as they chiefly related

to feats of personal daring and address, were well corroborated by the admirable symmetry and handsome proportions of the relater.

Story followed story. Now the scene lay in the low and misty swamps of the Niger, where night resounds with the dull roar of the beasts of prey, and the heavy splash of the sluggish alligator on the muddy shore; now, it was in the green wood of the Spice Islands, amid an atmosphere scented with perfume, and glittering with every gorgeous hue of plumage and verdure. At one moment he would describe a chase at sea, with all its high and maddening excitement, as each new vicissitude of success or failure arose; and then he would present some little quiet picture of shore life in a land where the boundless resources of Nature supply, even anticipate, the wants and luxuries of man.

Whatever the interest, and occasionally it rose to a high pitch, that attended his narratives of danger and daring, the little sketches he gave from time to time of the domestic life of these far-away people, seemed to attract the most delighted attention of his fair hearers, particularly where his narrative touched upon the traits, whether of beauty, dress, or demeanor, that distinguish the belles of New Spain.

“How difficult,” said Miss Kennyfeck, “I could almost say, how impossible, to leave a land so abounding in the romance of life, for all the dull and commonplace realities of European existence.”

“How hard to do so without leaving behind the heart that could

feel such ecstasies,” murmured Olivia, with a half-raised eyelid, and a glance that made Cashel flush with delight.

“How shall we ever make Ireland compensate you for quitting so lovely a country!” said Mrs. Kennyfeck, with a smile rarely accorded to anything lower than a viscount.

“We have a Mexican proverb, madam,” said Cashel, gayly, “which says, ‘Wherever the sun shines, bright eyes shine also.’ But enough of these tiresome memories, in which my egotism will always involve me. Shall we have a fandango?”

“I don’t know it; I never saw it danced.”

“Well, the manolo, then.”

“Nor that either,” said both girls, laughing.

“Well, will you learn? I’ll teach you the manolo. It’s very simple. If you ‘ll play the air, Miss Kennyfeck, – it runs thus.” Here he opened the pianoforte, and, after a few chords, struck with a masterly finger, he played a little Spanish dance; but with a spirit of execution, and in such an exciting character of time and measure, that a general exclamation of delight broke from the whole room, Mr. Jones himself forgetting all rivalry, and Mr. Softly laying down his newspaper to listen, and for a moment carried away by the fascination of the spirit-stirring melody.

“That is the manolo; come, now, and let me teach you, first the air, and then the dance.”

“Oh, I never could succeed to give it that character of bold and haughty defiance it breathes from you,” said Miss Kennyfeck.

“Nay, nay, a man’s hand is always so rude and heavy, it needs

the taper finger of a lady,” – here Cashel bent, and kissed the hand he held, but with such a deference and respect in the salute, that deprived the action, so novel to our eyes, of any appearance of a liberty, – “of a lady,” he resumed, “to impart the ringing brilliancy of the saucy manolo.”

“Then play it over once more, and I ‘ll try,” said Miss Kennyfeck, who was a most accomplished musician, and had even already caught up the greater part of the air.

Cashel obeyed, and again the plaudits followed even more enthusiastically than the first time. With a precision that called forth many a hearty “bravo” from Roland, Miss Kennyfeck played over the air, catching up all the spirit of its transitions from gay to plaintive, and from tender to a strain bold, daring, and energetic.

“Now for the dance,” exclaimed Cashel, eagerly, as he busied himself in removing chairs and pushing back sofas. “Will you be kind enough to assist me with this table?”

Mr. Softly, the gentleman thus addressed, rose to comply, his face exhibiting a very amusing struggle between shame and astonishment at the position he occupied. The space cleared, Roland took Olivia’s hand, and led her forward with an air of exceeding deference.

“Now, Miss Kenny feck, the step is the easiest thing in the world. It goes so, – one – two; one – two – three; and then change – Exactly, quite right; you have it perfectly. This is, as it were, an introduction to the dance; but the same step is preserved

throughout, merely changing its time with the measure.”

It would be as impossible to follow as it would be unfair to weary the reader with the lesson which now began; and yet we would like to linger on the theme, as our memory brings up every graceful gesture and every proud attitude of the fascinating manolo. Representing, as it does, by pantomimic action a little episode of devotion, in which pursuit and flight, entreaty, rejection, seductive softness, haughty defiance, timid fear, and an even insolent boldness alternate and succeed each other, all the movements which expressive action can command, whether of figure or feature, are called forth. Now, it is the retiring delicacy of shrinking, timid loveliness, half hoping, half fearing, to be pursued; now the stately defiance of haughty beauty, demanding homage as its due. At one moment the winning seductiveness that invites pursuit, and then, sudden as the lightning, the disdain that repels advance.

Not the least interesting part of the present scene was to watch how Olivia, who at first made each step and gesture with diffidence and fear, as she went on, became, as it were, seized with the characteristic spirit of the measure; her features varying with each motive of the music, her eyes at one instant half closed in dreamy languor, and at the next flashing in all the brilliancy of conscious beauty. As for Roland, forgetting, as well he might, all his functions as teacher, he moved with the enthusiastic spirit of the dance, – his rapturous gaze displaying the admiration that fettered him; and when at last, as it were, yielding to long-proved

devotion, she gave her hand, it needed the explanation of its being a Mexican fashion to excuse the ardor with which he pressed it to his lips.

Mrs. Kennyfeck's applause, however, was none the less warm; and if any of the company disapproved, they prudently said nothing, – even Mr. Softly, who only evidenced his feeling by a somewhat hasty resumption of the “Morning Post,” while the elder sister, rising from the piano, whispered, as she passed her sister, “Bad jockey-ship, Livy, dear, to make fast running so early.”

“And that is the – What d’ye call it, Mr. Cashel?” said Mrs. Kennyfeck.

“The manolo, madam. It is of Italian origin, rather than Spanish, – Calabrian, I fancy; but, in Mexico, it has become national, and well suits the changeful temper of our Spanish belles, and the style of their light and floating costume.”

“Yes, I suspect it has a better effect with short drapery than with the sweeping folds of our less picturesque dress,” said Miss Kennyfeck, who, for reasons we must not inquire, took a pleasure in qualifying her approval.

“I never saw it appear more graceful,” said Cashel, with a blunt abruptness far more flattering than a studied compliment.

Olivia blushed; Mrs. Kennyfeck looked happy, and the elder sister bit her lips, and threw up her eyebrows, with an expression we cannot attempt to render in words.

“May I not have the honor of introducing you to the manolo?”

said Cashel, presenting himself before her with a deep bow.

“Thank you, I prefer being a spectator; besides, we could have no music, – my sister does not play.”

Olivia blushed; and, in her hasty look, there was an expression of gently conveyed reproach, as though to say, “This is unfair.”

“Do you like music, Mr. Cashel?” continued Miss Kennyfeck, who saw the slight cloud of disappointment that crossed Roland’s features. “Oh, I ‘m certain you do, and I know you sing!”

“Yes,” said Cashel, carelessly, “as every one sings in that merry land I come from; but I fear the wild carol-lings of a ranchero would scarce find acceptance in the polished ears of Europe.”

“What are the melodies like, then?” asked Miss Kennyfeck, throwing into the question a most eager interest.

“You shall hear, if you like,” said Roland, taking up a guitar, and striking a few full chords with a practised hand. “This is one of the war-songs;” and without further preface he began. Had he even been less gifted than he was as to voice and musical taste, there was enough in the bold and manly energy of his manner, in the fiery daring of his dark eyes, and the expressive earnestness of his whole bearing, to attract the admiration of his hearers. But, besides these advantages, he was not unskilled in the science of music, and even made so poor an instrument a full and masterly accompaniment, imitating, as few but Spaniards can do, the distant sound of drums, the dropping fire of cannon, the wild abrupt changes of battle, and the low plaintive sounds of

suffering and defeat; so that, as he concluded, the whole character of the performance had ceased to be regarded as a mere musical display, but had the absolute effect of a powerfully told story.

The Kennyfecks had often been called on in society to award their praises to amateur performances, in whose applause, be it said, *en passant*, a grateful sense of their being concluded always contributes the enthusiasm; but real admiration and pleasure now made them silent, and as their eyes first turned on the singer and then met, there was a world of intelligence in that one quiet, fleeting glance that revealed more of secret thought and feeling than we, as mere chroniclers of events, dare inquire into.

Whether it was that this silence, prolonged for some seconds, suggested the move, or that Mr. Jones began to feel how ignoble a part he had been cast for in the whole evening's entertainment, but he rose to take his leave at once, throwing into his manner a certain air of easy self-sufficiency, with which in the "courts" he had often dismissed a witness under cross-examination, and by a mere look and gesture contrived to disparage his testimony.

None, save Miss Kennyfeck, perceived his tactic. She saw it, however, and, with a readiness all her own, replied by a slight elevation of the eyebrow. Jones saw his "signal acknowledged," and went home contented. Poor man, he was not the first who has been taken into partnership because his small resources were all "ready," and who is ejected from the firm when wider and grander speculations are entered on. I am not certain either that he will be the last!

Mr. Softly next withdrew, his leave-taking having all the blended humility and cordiality of his first arrival; and now Mr. Kennyfeck was awakened out of a very sound nap by his wife saying in his ear, "Will you ask Mr. Cashel if he 'll take a biscuit and a glass of wine before he retires?"

The proposition was politely declined, and after a very cordial hand-shaking with all the members of the family, Cashel said his good-night and retired.

CHAPTER VII. PEEPS BEHIND THE CURTAIN

Ich möchte ihn im Schlafrock sehen.

Der Reisende Teufel.

(I 'd like to see him in his robe-de-chambre.)

(The Travelling Devil.)

There has always appeared to us something of treachery, not to speak of indelicacy, in the privileges authors are wont to assume in following their characters into their most secret retirement, watching there their every movement and gesture, overhearing their confidential whisperings, – nay, sometimes sapping their very thoughts, for the mere indulgence of a prying, intrusive curiosity.

For this reason, highly appreciating, as we must do, the admirable wit of the “Diable Boiteux,” and the pleasant familiar humor of the “Hermite de la Chaussée d’Antin,” we never could entirely reconcile ourselves to the means by which such amusing views of life were obtained, while we entertain grave doubts if we, – that is, the world at large, – have any right to form our judgments of people from any other evidence than what is before the public. It appears to us somewhat as if, that following Romeo or Desdemona into the Green-room, we should be severe upon the want of keeping which suggested the indulgence of a cigar or

a pot of porter, and angry at the high-flown illusions so grossly routed and dispelled.

“Act well your part; there all the honour lies,” said the poet moralist; but it’s rather hard to say that you are to “act” it off as well as on the stage; and if it be true that no man is a hero to his valet, the valet should say nothing about it; and this is the very offence we think novel-writers commit, everlastingly stripping off the decorations and destroying the illusions they take such trouble to create, for little else than the vain boastfulness of saying, See, upon what flimsy materials I can move you to sentiments of grief, laughter, pity, or contempt. Behold of what vulgar ingredients are made up the highest aspirations of genius, – the most graceful fascinations of beauty.

Having denounced, by this recorded protest, the practice, and disclaiming, as we must do, all desire to benefit by its enjoyment, we desire our reader, particularly if he be of the less worthy gender, to feel a due sense of the obligation he owes us, if we claim his company for half an hour on such a voyage of discovery. Step softly, there is no excuse for noise, as the stair-carpet is thick, and not a sound need be heard. Gently, as you pass that green door, – that is the bedroom of Mr. and Mrs. Kennyfeck. We will not linger there, nor invade the sanctity of those precincts, within which the monotonous tones of Mrs. K. are heard, revelling in that species of domestic eloquence which, like the liberty of the press, is oftener pleasant to those who employ, than to those who receive its judgments. Here for a

few minutes let us stay. This is Roland Cashel's apartment; and, strange enough, instead of sleeping, he is up at his table, writing, too, – he, of all men the least epistolary. There may be no great indication of character in mere handwriting, but the manner, the gesture, the degree of rapidity of the writer, as seen at the moment, are all full of individuality. Mark, then, with what speed his pen moves; not the daisy-cutting sling of the accomplished rider, but the slashing gallop of the heavy charger. Many a blot, never an erasure, – so, there it goes, – “Yours ever, Roland Cashel.” And now, he begins another.

Come, these are no times for squeamishness. Let us anticipate “Sir James,” and read before he seals it.

Dublin. My dear Comrade, – We are neither of us very gifted letter-writers, but events are always enough to tell, even when style be wanting; and here am I, so overwhelmed by the rush of new sensations that I know not where to begin, or how to tell what has really happened since we parted, nor distinguish actual stubborn facts from my own fancies. My brief note from Porto Giacomo told you that I had succeeded to something like fifteen thousand pounds a year. I believe it is rather more, with a good round sum, I don't know how much, in bank; and now, here I am, just arrived, but marvellously at home, in the house of the worthy fellow that has established my claim.

If I only knew so much of my good luck, I 'd say it was no bad thing to be pleasantly domesticated in a capital mansion, with every refinement and luxury at hand, and

two such girls, the daughters! Oh, *amigo mio*, you'd think wondrous little of the Barcelonetta belles, if I could show you these damsels! Such tempting shyness; such shrinking, playful modesty; and then so frank, without that slap-dash abruptness! Never mind, – I own freely that Maritaña is lovely; there is not such a mouth – as to a foot – well, well. I wish I could take a peep at you all again, just as night closes, and she comes out to take her walk upon the grass, and hear her singing as she went, or watch her as she danced the manolo, which – by the way – one of the girls here caught up wonderfully, and in almost an instant too. But the manolo, with a long, sweeping, flounced, and furbelowed petticoat! Only think of the absurdity! Not but she looked exceedingly pretty the while, but how much better had she, if one could only have cut half a yard off her drapery!

Have you received the pistols I sent from London? I hope you 'll think them handsome, – I know they are true, having tried them at thirty-five, and even fifty paces. The yataghan I 'm certain you 'll admire; it has the peculiar handle and hilt you 're fond of. Pray let our friends on the Chilian side learn something of the qualities of the blade itself. I have been thinking since about the emeralds – and perhaps Maritaña may refuse them. If so, do what you will with them so that I hear no more of the matter. And now for the bond: release me from that tie by all means. It is not that I really feel it in the light of a contract, – Maritaña never did; but I have it ever on my mind, like a debt. I give you full powers: draw upon me for the sum you please, and I promise not to dishonor the check. Pedro likes a good bargain, and don't

balk him!

I don't know what your own views are in that quarter, but I tell you frankly that Maritaña has higher and bolder aspirations than either you or I were likely to aid her in attaining. She is a proud girl, Enrique, and will never care for any man that is not able and willing to elevate her into a very different sphere from that she moves in. I never actually loved her, – I certainly do not do so now, – and yet I cannot get her out of my head.

Before I forget it, let me ask you to pay Ruy Dias two hundred doubloons for me. The horse I killed was not worth forty; but, these are not times for bargaining, and the fellow didn't want to part with the beast Alconetti – the Italian in the Plaza – has something against me, – pay it too; and now that I am on the subject of debts, whenever you next cruise off Ventillanos, send a party on shore to catch the dean, and give him four-and-twenty with a rope's end, – say it is from me; he 'll know why, and so shall you, when you inform me that it has been cleverly effected.

Above all, my dear boy, write; I so long to hear about you all, and to know all that has happened since I left you.

Send the old trunks with my uniform to the agents in the Havannah; I 'd like to see them once more. François may keep anything else of mine, except what you would like to select as a "souvenir." Don't let Rica write to me. I feel I should have no chance in a correspondence with him; nor need I have any, because whatever you say, I agree to, – remember that.

If you can manage about the emeralds, it would be the

most gratifying news to me. You might tell her that we are so certain of never meeting again, and that all is now over forever, and so on, – it would have an air of unkindness to reject them. Besides, I see no reason why she should! No matter; I needn't multiply reasons, where, if one will not suffice, a thousand must fail, and the chances are, if she suspect my anxiety on the subject, it will decide her against me. Do it, then, all in your own way.

Have I said all I wanted? Heaven knows! My head is full; my heart, too, is not without its load. I wish you were here. I wish it for many reasons. I already begin to suspect you are right about the sudden effect a spring into wealth may produce; but I hope that all you said on that score may not be true. If I thought so, I 'd – No matter, I 'll endeavor to show that you are unjust, and that is better. Yours ever,

Roland Cashel.

Don Enrique da Cordova,

Lieutenant of the Columbian frigate "Esmeralda." Care of Messrs. Eustache et Le Moine, merchants, Havannah.

The next epistle which followed was far more brief. It was thus: —

Messrs. Vanderhaeghen und Droek, Antwerp.

Enclosed is an order on Hamerton for seventeen thousand four hundred and forty-eight gulden, principal and interest for three years, of an unjust demand made by you on me before the tribunal of Bruges.

You failed, even with all the aid of your knavish laws and more knavish countrymen, to establish this iniquitous claim,

and only succeeded in exhibiting yourselves as rogues and swindlers, – good burgher-like qualities in your commercial city.

I have now paid what I never owed; but there still remains between us an unsettled score. Let my present punctuality guarantee the honorable intentions I entertain of settling it one day; till when, as you have shown yourselves my enemy,
Believe me to be yours, Roland Cashel.

The order on the banker ran as follows: —

Pay to Vanderhaeghen und Droek, two of the greatest knaves alive, seventeen thousand four hundred and forty-eight gulden, being the principal and interest for three years of a dishonest claim made upon Roland Cashel. To Hamerton and Co., Cheapside.

With all that soothing consciousness we hear is the result of good actions, Cashel lay down on his bed immediately on concluding this last epistle, and was fast asleep almost before the superscription was dried.

And now, worthy reader, another peep, and we have done. Ascending cautiously the stairs, you pass through a little conservatory, at the end of which a heavy cloth curtain conceals a door. It is that of a dressing-room, off which, at opposite sides, two bedrooms lie. This same dressing-room, with its rose-colored curtains and ottoman, its little toilet-tables of satin-wood, its mirrors framed in alabaster, its cabinets of buhl, and the book-shelves so coquettishly curtained with Malines lace, is the common property of the two sisters whom we so lately

introduced to your notice.

There were they wont to sit for hours after the return from a ball, discussing the people they had met, their dress, their manner, their foibles and flirtations; criticising with no mean acuteness all the varied games of match-making mammas and intriguing aunts, and canvassing the schemes and snares so rife around them. And oh, ye simple worshippers of muslin-robed innocence! oh, ye devoted slaves of ringleted loveliness and blooming freshness! bethink ye what wily projects lie crouching in hearts that would seem the very homes of careless happiness; what calculations; what devices; how many subtleties that only beauty wields, or simple man is vanquished by!

It was considerably past midnight as the two girls sat at the fire, their dressing-gowns and slippered feet showing that they had prepared for bed; but the long luxuriant hair, as yet uncurled, flowed in heavy masses on their neck and shoulders. They did not, as usual, converse freely together; a silence and a kind of constraint sat upon each, and although Olivia held a book before her, it was less for the purpose of reading than as a screen against the fire, while her sister sat with folded arms and gently drooping head, apparently lost in thought. It was after a very lengthened silence, and in a voice which showed that the speaker was following up some train of thought, Miss Kennyfeck said, —

“And do you really think him handsome, Olivia?”

“Of whom are you speaking, dear?” said Olivia, with the very softest accent.

Miss Kennyfeck started; her pale cheeks became slightly red as, with a most keen irony, she replied, "Could you not guess? Can I mean any one but Mr. Clare Jones?"

"Oh, he's a downright fright," answered the other; "but what could have made you think of him?"

"I was not thinking of him, nor were you either, sister dear," said Miss Kennyfeck, fixing her eyes full upon her; "we were both thinking of the same person. Come, what use in such subterfuges? Honesty, Livy, may not be the 'best policy,' but it has one great advantage, – it saves a deal of time; and so I repeat my question, do you think him handsome?"

"If you mean Mr. Cashel, dearest," said the younger, half bashfully, "I rather incline to say he is. His eyes are very good; his forehead and brow –"

"There, – no inventory, I beg, – the man is very well-looking, I dare say, but I own he strikes me as *tant soit peu sauvage*. Don't you think so?"

"True, his manners –"

"Why, he has none; the man has a certain rakish, free-and-easy demeanor that, with somewhat more breeding, would rise as high as 'tigerism,' but now is detestable vulgarity."

"Oh, dearest, you are severe."

"I rather suspect that you are partial."

"I, my dear! not I, in the least. He is not, by any means, the style of person I like. He can be very amusing, perhaps; he certainly is very odd, very original."

“He is very rich, Livy,” said the elder sister, with a most dry gravity.

“That can scarcely be called a fault, still less a misfortune,” replied Olivia, slyly.

“Well, well, let us have done with aphorisms, and speak openly. If you are really pleased with his manner and address, say so at once, and I ‘ll promise never to criticise too closely a demeanor which, I vow, does not impress me highly, – only be candid.”

“But I do not see any occasion for such candor, my dear. He is no more to me than he is to *you*. I ask no protestations from *you* about this Mr. Roland Cashel.”

Miss Kennyfeck bit her lip and seemed to repress a rising temptation to reply, but was silent for a moment, when she said, in a careless, easy tone, —

“Do you know, Livy dearest, that this same manolo you danced this evening is not by any means a graceful performance to look at, at least when danced with long, sweeping drapery, flapping here and flouncing there. It may suit those half-dressed Mexican damsels who want to display a high arched instep and a rounded ankle, and who know that they are not transgressing the ordinary limits of decorum in the display; but certainly your friend Mr. Softly did not accord all his approval. Did you remark him?”

“I did not; I was too much engaged in learning the figure: but Mr. Softly disapproves of all dancing.”

“Oh, I know he does,” yawned Miss Kennyfeck, as if the very mention of his name suggested sleep; “the dear man has his own notions of pleasantry, – little holy jokes about Adam and Eve. There is nothing so intolerable to me as the insipid playfulness of your young parson, except, perhaps, the coarse fun of your rising barrister. How I hate Mr. Clare Jones!”

“He is very underbred.”

“He is worse; the rudest person I ever met, – so familiar.”

“Why will he always insist on shaking hands?”

“Why will he not at least wash his own, occasionally?”

“And then his jests from the Queen’s Bench, – the last *mot*– I’m sure I often wished it were so literally – of some stupid Chief Justice. Well, really, in comparison, your savage friend is a mirror of good looks and good manners.”

“Good night, my dear,” said Olivia, rising, as though to decline a renewal of the combat.

“Good night,” echoed her sister, bluntly, “and pleasant dreams of ‘Roland the brave, Roland the true;’ the latter quality being the one more in request at this moment.” And so, humming the well-known air, she took her candle and retired.

CHAPTER VIII. LOVE v. LAW

Ay! marry – they have wiles,
Compared to which, our schemes are honesty.

The Lawyer's Daughter.

Notwithstanding all that we hear said against castle-building, how few among the unbought pleasures of life are so amusing, nor are we certain that these shadowy speculations – these “white lies” that we tell to our own conscience – are not so many incentives to noble deeds and generous actions. These “imaginary conversations” lift us out of the jog-trot path of daily intercourse, and call up hopes and aspirations that lie buried under the heavy load of wearisome commonplaces of which life is made up, and thus permit a man, immersed as he may be in the fatigues of a profession, or a counting-house, harassed by law, or worried by the Three per Cents, to be a hero to his own heart at least for a few minutes once a week.

But if “castle-building” be so pleasurable when a mere visionary scheme, what is it when it comes associated with all the necessary conditions for accomplishment, – when not alone the plan and elevation of the edifice are there, but all the materials and every appliance to realize the conception?

Just fancy yourself “two or three and twenty,” waking out of a

sound and dreamless sleep, to see the mellow sun of an autumnal morning straining its rays through the curtains of your bedroom. Conceive the short and easy struggle by which, banishing all load of cares and duties in which you were once immersed, you spring, as by a bound, to the joyous fact that you are the owner of a princely fortune, with health and ardent spirit, a temper capable of, nay, eager for engagement, a fearless courage, and a heart unchilled. Think of this, and say, Is not the first waking half-hour of such thoughts the brightest spot of a whole existence? Such was the frame of mind in which our hero awoke, and lay for some time to revel in! We could not, if we would, follow the complex tissue of day-dreams that wandered over every clime, and in the luxuriant rapture of power created scenes of pleasure, of ingredients the most far-fetched and remote. The “actual” demands our attention more urgently than the “ideal,” so that we are constrained to follow the unpoetical steps of so ignoble a personage as Mr. Phillis, – Cashel’s new valet, – who now broke in upon his master’s reveries as he entered with hot water and the morning papers.

“What have you got there?” cried Cashel, not altogether pleased at the intrusion.

“The morning papers! Lord Eittlecombe – his former master, and his universal type – “always read the ‘Post,’ sir, before he got out of bed.”

“Well, let me see it,” said Cashel, who, already impressed with the necessity of conforming to a new code, was satisfied to take

the law even from so humble an authority as his own man.

“Yes, sir. Our arrival is announced very handsomely among the fashionable intelligence, and the ‘Dublin Mail’ has copied the paragraph stating that we are speedily about to visit our Irish estates.”

“Ah, indeed,” said Cashel, somewhat flattered at his newborn notoriety; “where is all this?”

“Here, sir, under ‘Movements in High Life’: ‘The Duke of Uxoter to Lord Debbington’s beautiful villa at Maulish; Sir Harry and Lady Emeline Morpas, etc.; Rosenorris; Lord Fetcherton – ‘No, here we have it, sir, – ‘Mr. Roland Cashel and suite’ – Kennyfeck and self, sir – ‘from Mivart’s, for Ireland. We understand that this millionaire proprietor is now about to visit his estates in this country, preparatory to taking up a residence finally amongst us. If report speak truly, he is as accomplished as wealthy, and will be a very welcome accession to the ranks of our country gentry.’”

“How strange that these worthy people should affect to know or care anything about me or my future intentions,” said Cashel, innocently.

“Oh, sir, they really know nothing, – that little thing is mine.”

“Yours, – how yours?”

“Why, I wrote it, sir. When I lived with Sir Giles Heathcote, we always fired off a certain number of these signal-guns when we came to a new place. Once the thing was set a-going, the newspaper fellows followed up the lead themselves. They look

upon a well-known name as of the same value as a fire or a case of larceny. I have known a case of seduction by a marquis to take the 'pas' of the last murder in the Edgware Road."

"I have no fancy for this species of publicity," said Cashel, seriously.

"Believe me, sir, there is nothing to be done without it. The Press, sir, is the fourth estate. They can ignore anything nowadays, from a speech in Parliament to the last novel; from the young beauty just come out, to the newly-launched line-of-battle ship. A friend of mine, some time back, tried the thing to his cost, sir. He invented an admirable moustache-paste; he even paid a guinea to an Oxford man for a Greek name for it; well, sir, he would not advertise in the dailies, but only in bills. Mark the consequence. One of the morning journals, in announcing the arrival of the Prince of Koemundkuttingen on a visit to Colonel Sibthorp, mentioned that in the fraternal embrace of these two distinguished personages their moustaches, anointed with the new patent adhesive Eukautherostickostecon, became actually so fastened together (as the fellow said, like two clothes-brushes) that after a quarter of an hour's vain struggle they had to be cut asunder. From that moment, sir, the paste was done up; he sold it as harness stuff the week after, and left the hair and beard line altogether."

As Cashel's dressing proceeded, Mr. Phillis continued to impose upon him those various hints and suggestions respecting costume for which that accomplished gentleman's gentleman was

renowned.

“Excuse me, but you are not going to wear that coat, I hope. A morning dress should always incline to what artists call ‘neutral tints;’ there should also be nothing striking, nothing that would particularly catch the eye, except in those peculiar cases where the wearer, adopting a certain color, not usually seen, adheres strictly to it, Just as we see my Lord Blenneville with his old coffee-colored cut-away, and Sir Francis Heming with his light-blue frock; Colonel Mordaunt’s Hessians are the same kind of thing.”

“This is all mere trifling,” said Casbel, impatiently; “I don’t intend to dress like the show-figure in a tailor’s shop, to be stared at.”

“Exactly so, sir; that is what I have been saying: any notoriety is to be avoided where a gentleman has a real position. Now, with a dark frock, gray trousers, and this plain single-breasted vest, your costume is correct.”

If Cashel appeared to submit to these dictations with impatience, he really received them as laws to which he was, in virtue of his station, to be bound. He had taken Mr. Phillis exactly as he had engaged the services of a celebrated French cook, as a person to whom a “department” was to be intrusted; and feeling that he was about to enter on a world whose habits of thinking and prejudices were all strange, he resolved to accept of guidance, with the implicitness that he would have shown in taking a pilot to navigate him through a newly visited channel.

Between the sense of submission, and a certain feeling of shame at the mock importance of these considerations, Casbel exhibited many symptoms of impatience, as Mr. Phillis continued his revelations on dress, and was sincerely happy when that refined individual, having slowly surveyed him, pronounced a faint, "Yes, very near it," and withdrew.

There was a half glimmering suspicion, like a struggling ray of sunlight stealing through a torn and ragged cloud, breaking on Roland's mind that if wealth were to entail a great many requirements, no matter how small each, of obedience to the world's prescription, that he, for one, would prefer his untrammelled freedom to any amount of riches. This was but a fleeting doubt, which he had no time to dwell upon, for already he was informed by the butler that Mrs. Kennyfeck was waiting breakfast for him.

Descending the stairs rapidly, he had just reached the landing opposite the drawing-room, when he heard the sounds of a guitar accompaniment, and the sweet silvery tones of a female voice. He listened, and to his amazement heard that the singer was endeavoring, and with considerable success, too, to remember his own Mexican air that he had sung the preceding evening.

Somehow, it struck him he had never thought the melody so pretty before; there was a tenderness in the plaintive parts he could not have conceived. Not so the singer; for after a few efforts to imitate one of Roland's bolder passages, she drew her finger impatiently across the chords, and exclaimed, "It is of no use; it

is only the caballero himself can do it.”

“Let him teach you, then!” cried Cashel, as he sprang into the room, wild with delight.

“Oh, Mr. Cashel, what a start you ‘ve given me!” said Olivia Kennyfeck, as, covered with blushes, and trembling with agitation, she leaned on the back of a chair.

“Oh, pray forgive me,” said he, eagerly; “but I was so surprised, so delighted to hear you recalling that little song, I really forgot everything else. Have I startled you, then?”

“Oh, no; it’s nothing. I was trying a few chords. I thought I was quite alone.”

“But you’ll permit me to teach you some of our Mexican songs, won’t you? I should be so charmed to hear them sung as you could sing them.”

“It is too kind of you,” said she, timidly; “but I am no musician. My sister is a most skilful performer, but I really know nothing; a simple ballad and a canzonette are the extent of my efforts.”

“For our prairie songs, it is the feeling supplies all the character. They are wild, fanciful things, with no higher pretensions than to recall some trait of the land they belong to; and I should be so flattered if you would take an interest in the Far West.”

“How you must love it! How you must long to return to it!” said Olivia, raising her long drooping lashes, and letting her eyes rest, with an expression of tender melancholy, on Cashel.

What he might have said there is no guessing, – nay, for his

sake, and for hers too, it is better not even to speculate on it; but ere he could reply, another speaker joined in the colloquy, saying, —

“Good morning, Mr. Cashel. Pray don’t forget, when the lesson is over, that we are waiting breakfast.” So saying, and with a laugh of saucy raillery, Miss Kennyfeck passed down the stairs, not remaining to hear his answer.

“Oh, Mr. Cashel!” exclaimed Olivia, with a tone half reproachful, half shy, “we shall be scolded, — at least, I shall,” added she. “It is the unforgivable offence in this house to be late at breakfast.”

Cashel would very willingly have risked all the consequences of delay for a few minutes longer of their interview; but already she had tripped on downstairs, and with such speed as to enter the breakfast-parlor a few seconds before him. Roland was welcomed by the family without the slightest shade of dissatisfaction at his late appearance, cordial greetings and friendly inquiries as to how he had rested pouring in on every side.

“What ‘s to be done with Mr. Cashel to-day? I hope he is not to be teased by business people and red-tapery,” said Mrs. Kennyfeck to her husband.

“I am afraid,” said the silky attorney, “I am very much afraid I must trespass on his kindness to accompany me to the Master’s office. There are some little matters which will not wait.”

“Oh, they must,” said Mrs. Kennyfeck, peremptorily. “Who

is the Master, – Liddard, is n't it? Well, tell him to put it off; Mr. Cashel must really have a little peace and quietness after all his fatigues."

"It will only take an hour, at most, Mrs. Kennyfeck," remonstrated her submissive mate.

"Well, that is nothing," cried Cashel. "I 'm not in the least tired, and the day is long enough for everything."

"Then we have a little affair which we can manage at home here about the mortgages. I told you –"

"I believe you did," replied Cashel, laughing; "but I don't remember a word of it. It's about paying some money, isn't it?"

"Yes, it's the redemption of two very heavy claims," exclaimed Kennyfeck, perfectly shocked at the indifference displayed by the young man, – "claims for which we are paying five and a half per cent."

"And it would be better to clear them off?" said Cashel, assuming a show of interest in the matter he was far from feeling.

"Of course it would. There is a very large sum lying to your credit at Falkner's, for which you receive only three per cent."

"Don't you perceive how tiresome you are, dear Mr. Kennyfeck?" said his wife. "Mr. Cashel is bored to death with all this."

"Oh, no! not in the least, madam. It ought to interest me immensely; and so all these things will, I 'm sure. But I was just thinking at what hour that fellow we met on the packet was to show us those horses he spoke of?"

“At four,” said Mr. Kennyfeck, with a half-sigh of resignation; “but you ‘ll have ample time for that. I shall only ask you to attend at the judge’s chambers after our consultation.”

“Well, you are really intolerable!” cried his wife. “Why cannot you and Jones, and the rest of you, do all this tiresome nonsense, and leave Mr. Cashel to us? I want to bring him out to visit two or three people; and the girls have been planning a canter in the park.”

“The canter, by all means,” said Cashel. “I ‘m sure, my dear Mr. Kennyfeck, you ‘ll do everything far better without me. I have no head for anything like business; and so pray, let me accompany the riding-party.”

“The attendance at the Master’s is peremptory,” sighed the attorney, – “there is no deferring that; and as to the mortgages, the funds are falling every hour. I should seriously advise selling out at once.”

“Well, sell out, in Heaven’s name! Do all and anything you like, and I promise my most unqualified satisfaction at the result.”

“There, now,” interposed Mrs. Kennyfeck, authoritatively, “don’t worry any more; you see how tiresome you are!”

And poor Mr. Kennyfeck seemed to see and feel it too; for he hung his head, and sipped his tea in silence.

“To-day we dine alone, Mr. Cashel,” said Mrs. Kennyfeck; “but to-morrow I will try to show you some of the Dublin notorieties, – at least, such as are to be had in the season. On Friday we plan a little country party into Wicklow, and have

promised to keep Saturday free, if the Blackenburgs want us.”

“What shall we say, then, about Tubberbeg, Mr. Cashel?” said Kennyfeck, withdrawing him into a window-recess. “We ought to give the answer at once.”

“Faith! I forgot all about it,” said Cashel. “Is that the fishery you told me of?”

“Oh, no!” sighed the disconsolate man of law. “It’s the farm on the terminable lease, at present held by Hugh Corrigan; he asks for a renewal.”

“Well, let him have it,” said Cashel, bluntly, while his eyes were turned towards the fire, where the two sisters, with arms entwined, stood in the most graceful of attitudes.

“Yes, but have you considered the matter maturely?” rejoined Kennyfeck, laying his hand on Cashel’s arm. “Have you taken into account that he only pays eight and seven pence per acre, – the Irish acre, too, – and that a considerable part of that land adjoining the Boat Quay is let, as building plots for two and sixpence a foot?”

“A devilish pretty foot it is, too,” murmured Cashel, musingly.

“Eh! what?” exclaimed Kennyfeck, perfectly mystified at this response.

“Oh! I meant that I agreed with you,” rejoined the young man, reddening, and endeavoring to appear deeply interested. “I quite coincide with your views, sir.”

Kennyfeck seemed surprised at this, for he had not, to his knowledge, ventured on any opinion.

“Perhaps,” said he, taking breath for a last effort, “if you ‘d kindly look at the map of the estate, and just see where this farm trenches on your own limits, you could judge better about the propriety of the renewal.”

“Oh, with pleasure!” exclaimed Cashel, while he suffered himself to be led into the study, his face exhibiting very indifferent signs of satisfaction.

“Shall we assist in the consultation, Mr. Cashel?” said Mrs. Kennyfeck, smiling in reply to his reluctant look at leaving.

“Oh, by all means!” cried he, enthusiastically; “do come, and give me your advice. Pray, come.”

“Come, girls,” said the mother, “although I perceive Mr. Kennyfeck is terribly shocked at the bare thought of our intrusion; but be of good courage, we only accompany Mr. Cashel to save him from any long imprisonment.” And so she moved majestically forward, her daughters following her.

An alchemist would probably have received company in his laboratory, or a hermit admitted a jovial party in his cell, with less of constraint and dissatisfaction than did Mr. Kennyfeck watch the approach of his wife and daughters to the sanctum of his study.

Save at rare intervals, when a disconsolate widow had come to resolve a question of administration, or a no less forlorn damsel had entered to consult upon an action for “breach of promise,” St. Kevin himself had never been less exposed to female intervention. It needed, then, all his reverence and fear of

Mrs. Kennyfeck to sustain the shock to his feelings, as he saw her seat herself in his office-chair, and look around with the air of command that he alone used to exhibit in these regions.

“Now for this same map, Mr. Kennyfeck, and let us bear the question for which this Privy Council has been convened.”

“This is the map,” said Mr. Kennyfeck, unfolding a large scroll, “and I believe a single glance will enable Mr. Cashel to perceive that some little deliberation would be advisable before continuing in possession a tenant whose holding completely destroys the best feature of the demesne. This red line here is your boundary towards the Limerick road; here, stands the house, which, from the first, was a great mistake. It is built in a hollow without a particle of view; whereas, had it been placed here, where this cross is marked, the prospect would have extended over the whole of Scariff Bay, and by the west, down to Killaloe.”

“Well, what’s to prevent our building it there yet?” interrupted Cashel. “I think it would be rare fun building a house, – at least if I may judge from all the amusement I’ve had in constructing one of leaves and buffalo-hides, in the prairies.”

Mrs. Kennyfeck and her eldest daughter smiled their blandest approbation, while Olivia murmured in her sister’s ear, “Oh, dear, he is so very natural, isn’t he?”

“That will be a point for ulterior consideration,” said Mr. Kennyfeck, who saw the danger of at all wandering from the topic in hand. “Give me your attention now for one moment,

Mr. Cashel. Another inconvenience in the situation of the present house is, that it stands scarcely a thousand yards from this red-and-yellow line here.”

“Well, what is that?” inquired Cashel, who already began to feel interested in the localities.

“This – and pray observe it well, sir – this red-and-yellow line, enclosing a tract which borders on the Shannon, and runs, as you may remark, into the very heart of the demesne, this is Tubberbeg, the farm in question, – not only encroaching upon your limits, but actually cutting you off from the river, – at least, your access is limited to a very circuitous road, and which opens upon a very shallow part of the stream.”

“And who or what is this tenant?” asked Cashel.

“His name is Corrigan, a gentleman by birth, but of a very limited fortune; he is now an old man, upwards of seventy, I understand.”

“And how came it that he ever obtained possession of a tract so circumstanced, marring, as you most justly observe, the whole character of the demesne?”

“That would be a long story, sir; enough, if I mention that his ancestors were the ancient owners of the entire estate, which was lost by an act of confiscation in the year forty-five. Some extenuating circumstances, however, induced the Government to confer upon a younger branch of the family a lease of this small tract called Tubberbeg, to distinguish it from Tubbermore, the larger portion; and this lease it is whose expiration, in a few years,

induces the present query.”

“Has Mr. Corrigan children?”

“No; his only child, a daughter, is dead, but a granddaughter lives now with the old man.”

“Then what is it he asks? Is it a renewal of the lease, on the former terms?”

“Why, not precisely. I believe he would be willing to-pay more.”

“That’s not what I mean,” replied Cashel, reddening; “I ask, what terms as to time, he seeks for. Would it content him to have the land for his own life?”

“Mr. Kennyfeck, you are really very culpable to leave Mr. Cashel to the decision of matters of this kind, – matters in which his kindness of heart and inexperience will always betray him into a forgetfulness of his own interest. What has Mr. Cashel to think about this old creature’s ancestors, who were rebels, it appears, or his daughter, or his granddaughter? Here is a simple question of a farm, which actually makes the demesne worthless, and which, by a singular piece of good fortune, is in Mr. Cashel’s power to secure.”

“This is a very correct view, doubtless,” said her meek husband, submissively, “but we should also remember – ”

“We have nothing to remember,” interrupted Mrs. Kennyfeck, stoutly; “nothing, save his interests, who, as I have observed, is of too generous a nature to be trusted with such matters.”

“Is there no other farm, – have we nothing on the property he ‘d like as well as this?” asked Cashel.

“I fear not. The attachment to a place inhabited for centuries by his ancestry – ”

“By his fiddlestick!” struck in Mrs. Kennyfeck; “two and sixpence an acre difference would be all the necessary compensation. Mr. Kennyfeck, how can you trifle in this manner, when you know how it will injure the demesne!”

“Oh, ruin it utterly!” exclaimed Miss Kennyfeck.

“It completely cuts off the beautiful river and those dear islands,” said Olivia.

“So it does,” said Cashel, musing.

“I wonder are they wooded? I declare I believe they are. Papa, are these little scrubby things meant to represent trees?”

“Oaks and chestnut-trees,” responded Mr. Kennyfeck, gravely.

“Oh, how I should love a cottage on that island, – a real Swiss cottage, with its carved galleries and deep-eaved roof. Who owns these delicious islands?”

“Mr. Cashel, my dear,” said papa, still bent on examining the map.

“Do I, indeed!” cried Roland, in an ecstasy. “Then you shall have your wish, Miss Kenny feck. I promise you the prettiest Swiss cottage that your own taste can devise.”

“Oh, dear, oh, pray forgive me!”

“Oh, Mr. Roland Cashel, don’t think of such a thing! Olivia

was merely speaking at random. How silly, child, you are to talk that way!”

“Really, mamma, I had not the slightest suspicion – I would n’t for the world have said anything if I thought – ”

“Of course not, dear; but pray be guarded. Indeed, I own I never did hear you make a lapse of the kind before. But you see, Mr. Cashel, you have really made us forget that we were strangers but yesterday, and you are paying the penalty of your own exceeding kindness. Forget, then, I beseech you, this first transgression.”

“I shall assuredly keep my promise, madam,” said Cashel, proudly; “and I have only to hope Miss Kennyfeck will not offend me by declining so very humble a present. Now, sir, for our worthy friend Mr. Corrigan.”

“Too fast, a great deal to fast, love,” whispered the elder sister in the ear of the younger, and who, to the credit of her tact and ingenuity be it spoken, only gave the most heavenly smile in reply.

“I really am puzzled, sir, what advice to give,” said the attorney, musing.

“I have no difficulties of this sentimental kind,” said Mrs. Kennyfeck, with a glance of profound depreciation towards her husband; “and I beg Mr. Cashel to remember that the opportunity now offered will possibly never occur again. If the old man is to retain his farm, of course Mr. Cashel would not think of building a new mansion, which must be ill-circumstanced; from what I can hear of the present house, it is equally certain that he would

not reside in that.”

“Is it so very bad?” asked Cashel, smiling.

“It was ill-planned originally, added to in, if possible, worse taste, and then suffered to fall into ruin. It is now something more than eighty years since it saw any other inhabitant than a caretaker.”

“Well, the picture is certainly not seductive. I rather opine that the best thing we can do is to throw this old rumbling concern down, at all events; and now once more, – what shall we do with Mr. Corrigan?”

“I should advise you not giving any reply before you visit the property yourself. All business matters will be completed here, I trust, by Saturday. What, then, if we go over on Monday to Tubbermore?”

“Agreed. I have a kind of anxiety to look at the place, – indeed, a mere glance would decide me if I ever care to return to it again.”

“Then, I perceive, our counsel is of no avail here,” said Mrs. Kennyfeck, rising, with a very ill-concealed chagrin.

“Nay, madam, don’t say so. You never got so far as to give it,” cried Cashel.

“Oh, yes, you forget that I said it would be absurd to hesitate about resuming possession.”

“Unquestionably,” echoed Miss Kennyfeck. “It is merely to indulge an old man’s caprice at the cost of your own comfort and convenience.”

“But he may cling to the spot, sister dear,” said Olivia, in an accent only loud enough to be audible by Cashel.

“You are right,” said Roland, in her ear, with a look that spoke his approval far more eloquently.

Although Miss Kennyfeck had heard nothing that passed, her quickness detected the looks of intelligence that were so speedily interchanged, and as she left the room she took occasion to whisper, “Do take advice, dear; there is no keeping up a pace like that.”

CHAPTER IX. AN EXCITING ADVENTURE

“Bravo, Toro.”

As it chanced that many of Mr. Kennyfeck's clients were Western gentlemen, whose tastes have an unequivocal tendency to all matters relating to horse-flesh, his stable was not less choicely furnished than his cellar; for, besides being always able to command the shrewdest judgments when he decided to make a purchase, many an outstanding balance of long duration, many a debt significantly pencilled “doubtful” or “bad,” in his note-book, was cleared off by some tall, sinewy steeplechaser from Galway, or some redoubted performer with the “Blazers.”

So well known was this fact that several needed no other standard of a neighbor's circumstances, than whether he had contributed or not to the Kennyfeck stud. This brief explanation we have been induced to make, to account for the sporting character of a stable whose proprietor never was once seen in the saddle. Far otherwise the ladies of the house; the mother and daughters, but in particular the elder, rode with all the native grace of Galway; and as they were invariably well mounted, and their grooms the smartest and best appointed, their “turn-out” was the admiration of the capital.

It was in vain that the English officials at the Castle, whose superlative tastes were wont to overshadow mere Irish pretension, endeavored to compete with these noted equestrians. Secretaries' wives and chamberlains' daughters, however they might domineer in other matters, were here, at least, surpassed, and it was a conceded fact, that the Kennyfecks rode better, dressed better, and looked better on horseback than any other girls in the country. If all the critics as to horsemanship pronounced the elder unequivocally the superior rider, mere admirers of gracefulness preferred the younger sister, who, less courageous and self-possessed, invested her skill with a certain character of timidity that increased the interest her appearance excited.

They never rode out without an immense *cortège* of followers, every well-looking and well-mounted man about town deeming it his *devoir* to join this party, just as the box of the reigning belle at the opera is besieged by assiduous visitors. The very being seen in this train was a kind of brevet promotion in fashionable esteem, to which each newly-arrived cornet aspired, and thus the party usually presented a group of brilliant uniforms and dancing plumes that rivalled in brilliancy, and far excelled in amusement, the staff of the viceroy himself.

It would be unfair to suppose that, with all their natural innocence and artlessness, they were entirely ignorant of the sway they thus exercised; indeed, such a degree of modesty would have trenched upon the incredulous, for how could they doubt

what commanders of the forces and deputy-assistant-adjutants assured them, still less question the veracity of a prince royal, who positively asserted that they “rode better than Quentin’s daughter”?

It was thus a source of no small excitement among the mounted loungers of the capital, when the Kennyfecks issued forth on horseback, and not, as usual, making the tour of the “Square” to collect their forces, they rode at once down Grafton Street, accompanied by a single cavalier.

“Who have the Kennyfeck girls got with them?” said a thin-waisted-looking aide-de-camp to a lanky, well-whiskered fellow in a dragoon undress, at the Castle gate.

“He is new to me – never saw him before. I say, Lucas, who is that tall fellow on Kennyfeck’s brown horse – do you know him?”

“Don’t know – can’t say,” drawled out a very diminutive hussar cornet.

“He has a look of Merrington,” said another, joining the party.

“Not a bit of it; he’s much larger. I should n’t wonder if he’s one of the Esterhazys they’ve caught. There is one of them over here – a Paul or a Nicholas, of the younger branch; – but here ‘s Linton, he ‘ll tell us, if any man can.”

This speech was addressed to a very dapper, well-dressed man of about thirty, mounted on a small thoroughbred pony, whose splashed and heaving flanks bespoke a hasty ride.

“I say, Tom, you met the Kennyfecks, – who was that with them?”

“Don’t you know him, my Lord?” said a sharp, ringing voice; “that’s our newly-arrived millionaire, – Roland Cashel, our Tipperary Croesus, – the man with I won’t say how many hundred thousands a year, and millions in bank besides.”

“The devil it is – a good-looking fellow, too.”

“Spooney, I should say,” drawled out the hussar, caressing his moustache.

“One need n’t be as smart a fellow as you, Wheeler, with forty thousand a year,” said Linton, with a sly glance at the others.

“You don’t suppose, Tom,” said the former speaker, “that the Kennyfecks have any designs in that quarter, – egad! that would be rather aspiring, eh?”

“Very unwise in us to permit it, my Lord,” said Linton, in a low tone. “That’s a dish will bear carving, and let every one have his share.”

My Lord laughed with a low cunning laugh at the suggestion, and nodded an easy assent.

Meanwhile the Kennyfecks rode slowly on, and crossing Essex Bridge continued their way at a foot pace towards the park, passing in front of the Four Courts, where a very large knot of idlers uncovered their heads in polite salutation as they went.

“That’s Kennyfeck’s newly-discovered client,” cried one; “a great card, if they can only secure him for one of the girls.”

“I say, did you remark how the eldest had him engaged? She never noticed any of us.”

“I back Olivia,” said another; “she’s a quiet one, but devilish

sly for all that.”

“Depend upon it,” interposed an older speaker, “the fellow is up to all that sort of thing.”

“Jones met him at dinner yesterday at Kennyfeck’s, and says he is a regular soft one, and if the girls don’t run an opposition to each other, one is sure to win.”

“Why not toss up for him, then? that would be fairer.”

“Ay, and more sisterly, too,” said the elder speaker. “Jones would be right glad to claim the beaten horse.”

“Jones, indeed, – I can tell you they detest Jones,” said a young fellow.

“They told you so, eh, Hammond?” said another; while a very hearty laugh at the discomfited youth broke from the remainder.

And now to follow our mounted friends, who, having reached the park, continued still at a walking pace to thread the greasy paths that led through that pleasant tract; now hid amid the shade of ancient thorn-trees, now gaining the open expanse of plain with its bold background of blue mountains.

From the evident attention bestowed by the two sisters, it was clear that Cashel was narrating something of interest, for he spoke of an event which had happened to himself in his prairie life; and this alone, independent of all else, was enough to make the theme amusing.

“Does this convey any idea of a prairie, Mr. Cashel?” said Miss Kennyfeck, as they emerged from a grove of beech-trees, and came upon the wide and stretching plain, so well known to

Dubliners as the Fifteen Acres, but which is, in reality, much greater in extent. "I have always fancied this great grassy expanse must be like a prairie."

"About as like as yonder cattle to a herd of wild buffaloes," replied Roland, smiling.

"Then what is a prairie like? Do tell us," said Olivia, eagerly.

"I can scarcely do so, nor, if I were a painter, do I suppose that I could make a picture of one, because it is less the presence than the total absence of all features of landscape that constitutes the wild and lonely solitude of a prairie. But fancy a great plain – gently – very gently undulating, – not a tree, not a shrub, not a stream to break the dreary uniformity; sometimes, but even that rarely, a little muddy pond of rain-water, stagnant and yellow, is met with, but only seen soon after heavy showers, for the hot sun rapidly absorbs it. The only vegetation a short yellowed burnt-up grass, – not a wild flower or a daisy, if you travelled hundreds of hundreds of miles. On you go, days and days, but the scene never changes. Large cloud shadows rest upon the barren expanse, and move slowly and sluggishly away, or sometimes a sharp and pelting shower is borne along, traversing hundreds of miles in its course; but these are the only traits of motion in the death-like stillness. At last, perhaps after weeks of wandering, you descry, a long way off, some dark objects dotting the surface, – these are buffaloes; or at sunset, when the thin atmosphere makes everything sharp and distinct, some black spectral shapes seem to glide between you and the red twilight, – these are Indian

hunters, seen miles off, and by some strange law of nature they are presented to the vision when far, far beyond the range of sight. Such strange apparitions, the consequence of refraction, have led to the most absurd superstitions; and all the stories the Germans tell you of their wild huntsmen are nothing to the tales every trapper can recount of war parties seen in the air, and tribes of red men in pursuit of deer and buffaloes, through the clear sky of an autumn evening.”

“And have you yourself met with these wild children of the desert?” said Olivia; “have you ever been amongst them?”

“Somewhat longer than I fancied,” replied Roland, smiling. “I was a prisoner once with the Camanches.”

“Oh, let us hear all about it, – how did it happen?” cried both together.

“It happened absurdly enough, at least you will say so, when I tell you; but to a prairie-hunter the adventure would seem nothing singular. It chanced that some years ago I made one of a hunting-party into the Rocky Mountains, and finally as far as Pueblo Santo, the last station before entering the hunting-grounds of the Camanches, a very fierce tribe, and one with whom all the American traders have failed to establish any relations of friendship or commerce. They care nothing for the inventions of civilization, and, unlike all other Indians, prefer their own bows and arrows to firearms.

“We had been now four days within their boundary, and yet never met one of the tribe. Some averred that they always learned

by the scouts whenever any invasion took place, and retired till they were in sufficient force to pour down and crush the intruders. Others, who proved better informed, said that they were hunting in a remote tract, several days' journey distant. We were doubly disappointed, for besides not seeing the Camanches, for which we had a great curiosity, we did not discover any game. The two or three trails we followed led to nothing, nor could a hoof-track be seen for miles and miles of prairie. In this state of discomfiture, we were sitting one evening around our fires, and debating with ourselves whether to turn back or go on, when, the dispute waxing warm between those of different opinions, I, who hated all disagreements of the kind, slipped quietly away, and throwing the bridle on my horse, I set out for a solitary ramble over the prairie.

“I have the whole scene before me this instant, – the solemn desolation of that dreary track; for scarcely had I gone a mile over what seemed a perfectly level plain, when the swelling inequalities of the ground shut out the watch-fires of my companions, and now there was nothing to be seen but the vast expanse of land and sky, each colored with the same dull leaden tint of coming night; no horizon was visible, not a star appeared, and in the midst of this gray monotony, a stillness prevailed that smote the heart with something more appalling than mere fear. No storm that ever I listened to at sea, not the loudest thunder that ever crashed, or the heaviest sea that ever broke upon a leeward shore at midnight, ever chilled my blood like that terrible

stillness. I thought that the dreadful roll of an avalanche or the heaving ground-swell of an earthquake had been easier to bear. I believe I actually prayed for something like sound to relieve the horrible tension of my nerves, when, just as if my wish was heard, a low booming sound, like the sea within a rocky cavern, came borne along on the night wind. Then it lulled again, and after a time grew louder. This happened two or three times, so that, half suspecting some self-delusion, I stopped my ears, and then on removing my hands, I heard the noise increasing till it swelled into one dull roaring sound, that made the very air vibrate. I thought it must be an earthquake, of which it is said many occur in these regions, but, from the dreary uniformity, leave no trace behind.

“I resolved to regain my companions at once; danger is always easier to confront in company, and so I turned my horse’s head to go back. The noise was now deafening, and so stunning that the very ground seemed to give it forth. My poor horse became terrified, his flanks heaved, and he labored in his stride as if overcome by fatigue. This again induced me to suspect an earthquake, for I knew by what singular instincts animals are apprised of its approach. I therefore gave him the spur, and urged him on with every effort, when suddenly he made a tremendous bound to one side, and set off with the speed of a racer. Stretched to his fullest stride, I was perfectly powerless to restrain him; meanwhile, the loud thundering sounds filled the entire air, – more deafening than the greatest artillery; the crashing uproar

smote my ears, and made my brain ring with the vibration, and then suddenly the whole plain grew dark behind and at either side of me, the shadow swept on and on, nearer and nearer, as the sounds increased, till the black surface seemed, as it were, about to close around me; and now I perceived that the great prairie, far as my eyes could stretch, was covered by a herd of wild buffaloes; struck by some sudden terror, they had taken what is called 'the Stampedo,' and set out at full speed. In an instant they were around me on every side, – a great moving sea of dark-backed monsters, – roaring in terrible uproar, and tossing their savage heads wildly to and fro, in all the paroxysm of terror. To return, or even to extricate myself, was impossible; the dense mass pressed like a wall at either side of me, and I was borne along in the midst of the heaving herd, without the slightest hope of rescue. I cannot – you would not ask me, if even I could – recall the terrors of that dreadful night, which in its dark hours compassed the agonies of years. Until the moon got up, I hoped that the herd might pass on, and at last leave me at liberty behind; but when she rose, and I looked back, I saw the dark sea of hides, as if covering the whole wide prairie, while the deep thunder from afar mingled with the louder bellowing of the herd around me.

“I suppose my reeling brain became maddened by the excitement; for even yet, when by any accident I suffer slight illness, terrible fancies of that dreadful scene come back; and I have been told that, in my wild cries and shouts, I seem

encouraging and urging on the infuriate herd, and by my gestures appearing to control and direct their headlong course. Had it been possible, I believe I should have thrown myself to the earth and sought death at once, even in this dreadful form, than live to die the thousand deaths of agony that night inflicted; but this could not be, and so, as day broke, I was still carried on, not, indeed, with the same speed as before; weariness weighed on the vast moving mass, but the pressure of those behind still drove them onward. I thought the long hours of darkness were terrible; and the appalling gloom of night added tortures to my sufferings; but the glare of daylight, the burning sun, and the clouds of dust were still worse. I remember, too, when exhaustion had nearly spent my last frail energy, and when my powerless hands, letting fall the bridle, dropped heavily to my side, that the herd suddenly halted, – halted, as if arrested by some gigantic hand; and then the pressure became so dreadful that my bones seemed almost bursting from my flesh, and I screamed aloud in my agony. After this, I remember little else. The other events of that terrible ride are like the shadowy spectres of a magic lantern; vague memories of sufferings, pangs that even yet chill my blood, steal over me, but unconnected and incoherent, so that when, as I afterwards heard, the herd dashed into the Camanche encampment, I have no recollection of anything, except the terror-struck faces of the red men, as they bent before me, and seemed to worship me as a deity. Yes, this terrible tribe, who had scarcely ever been known to spare a white man, not only did not injure, but they treated

me with the tenderest care and attention. A singular incident had favored me. One of the wise men had foretold some days before that a herd of wild buffaloes, sent by their god, Anadongu, would speedily appear, and rescue the tribe from the horrors of impending starvation. The prediction was possibly based upon some optical delusion, like that I have mentioned. Whatever its origin, the accomplishment was hailed with ecstasy; and I myself, a poor, almost dying creature, stained with blood, crushed and speechless, was regarded as their deliverer and preserver.”

“How long did you remain amongst them?” cried Miss Kennyfeck.

“And how did you escape?” asked Olivia.

“Were they always equally kind?”

“Were you sorry to leave them?” were the questions rapidly poured in ere Cashel could reply to any one of them.

“I have often heard,” said Miss Kennyfeck, “that the greater mental ability of the white man is certain to secure him an ascendancy over the minds of savage tribes, and that, if he be spared at first, he is sure in the end to become their chief.”

“I believe they actually worship any display of intelligence above their own,” said Olivia.

“These are exaggerated accounts,” said Cashel, smiling. “Marriage is, among savage as among civilized nations, a great stepping-stone to eminence. When a white man is allied with a princess – ”

“Oh, how shocking!” cried both together. “I’m sure no person,

anything akin to a gentleman, could dream of such a thing," said Miss Kennyfeck.

"It happens now and then, notwithstanding," said Cashel, with a most provoking gravity.

While the sisters would have been well pleased had Cashel's personal revelations continued on this theme, they did not venture to explore so dangerous a path, and were both silent. Roland, too, appeared buried in some recollection of the past, for he rode on for some time without speaking, – a preoccupation on his part which seemed in no wise agreeable to his fair companions.

"There are the MacFarlines, Livy," said Miss Kennyfeck; "and Linton, and Lord Charles, and the rest of them. I declare, I believe they see us, and are coming this way."

"What a bore! Is there no means of escape? Mr. Cashel, pray invent one."

"I beg pardon. What was it you said? I have been dreaming for the last three minutes."

"Pleasant dreams I 'm certain they were," said Miss Kennyfeck, with a very significant smile; "evoked, doubtless, by some little memory of your life among the Cainanches."

Cashel started and grew red, while his astonishment rendered him speechless.

"Here they come; how provoking!" exclaimed Livy.

"Who are coming?"

"Some friends of ours, who, strange to say, have the

misfortune to be peculiarly disagreeable to my sister Livy to-day, although I have certainly seen Lord Charles contrive to make his company less distasteful at other times.”

“Oh, my dear Caroline, you know perfectly well – ” broke in Olivia, with a tone of unfeigned reproach.

“Let us ride for it, then,” said Miss Kepnyfeck, without permitting her to finish. “Now, Mr. Cashel, a canter, – a gallop, if you will.”

“Quite ready,” said Cashel, his animation at once returning at the bare mention; and away they set, down a gentle slope with wooded sides, then they gained another grassy plain, skirted with trees, at the end of which a small picturesque cottage stood, the residence of a ranger; passing this, they arrived at a thick wood, and then slackened their pace, as all pursuit might be deemed fruitless. This portion of the park, unlike the rest, seemed devoted to various experiments in agriculture and gardening. Here were little enclosed plots of Indian corn and Swedish turnips; here, small plantations of fruit trees. Each succeeding secretary seemed to have left behind him some trace of his own favorite system for the improvement of Ireland, and one might recall the names of long-departed officials in little experimental specimens of drainage, or fencing, or drill culture around. Less interested by these patchwork devices, Cashel stood gazing on a beautiful white bull, who grazed in a little paddock carefully fenced by a strong oak paling. Although of a small breed, he was a perfect specimen of strength and proportion, his

massive and muscular neck and powerful loins contrasting with the lanky and tendinous form of the wild animal of the prairies.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.